

P R E P A R E Y E



Proclaim



December 21st, 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Reaching Out in Christian Love to All

1375 Highway 210

P.O. Box 189

Huxley, IA 50124

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4th Sunday of Advent
Sunday, December 21st, 2025

Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

*=Stand as you are able **Bold Print** = congregation responds

ELW=Red Evangelical Lutheran Worship

Prelude

Ringling of the Bell

GATHERING *The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness. Psalm 145:6

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.

Prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the desert a highway for our God!

Let us proclaim the name of the Lord and ascribe greatness to our God!

He is the Rock, his work is perfect and all his ways are just.

He is the God of faithfulness who does no wrong.

John came proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

As it is written in the book of Isaiah the prophet—all flesh shall see the salvation of our God!

Confession and Forgiveness

Deuteronomy 32:2-4 says, “May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb. For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

Moses writes, “I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock, his work is perfect and all his ways are just. He is the God of faithfulness who does no wrong.” Therefore, with contrite and broken hearts, we confess our sin.

Heavenly Father, we come to you because you are faithful and your ways are just.

But we are soiled by sin.

Dirty from misdeeds.

Grimy from guilt.

Lost in a cesspool of selfishness.

Though you are faithful.

We are faithless.

Though you are just and upright.

We can be unjust and dishonest. Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!

John the Baptist came proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He pointed to the one who is mightier—Christ Jesus our Lord. Jesus loves you. Jesus died for you. Jesus lives for you. And Jesus forgives your every sin. And so we say to the world—

All flesh shall see the salvation of our God!

Light Advent Candle 4

Almighty and everlasting God, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus whose birth, baptism, teaching, miracles, death and resurrection empower us to see your mighty salvation. With the open eyes of faith we thank, praise, serve and

obey you; through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

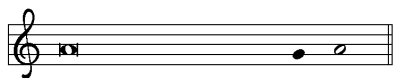
“Christmas Story/Rejoice and Be Glad”

Sr. Choir

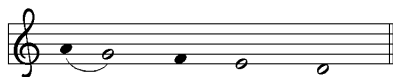
AUTHORS John Mason Neale, Thomas Helmore, Tom Fettke; CCLI SONG #5149308; CATALOG Curb Word Music / Public Domain; COPYRIGHTS Words: Public Domain; Music: 1986, 2007 Curb Word Music (Admin. by WC Music Corp.) Reprinted under CCLI #2551458

***KYRIE**

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In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



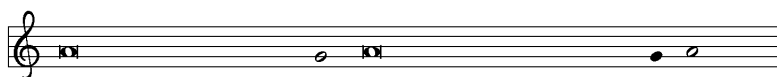
Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



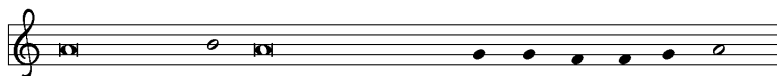
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



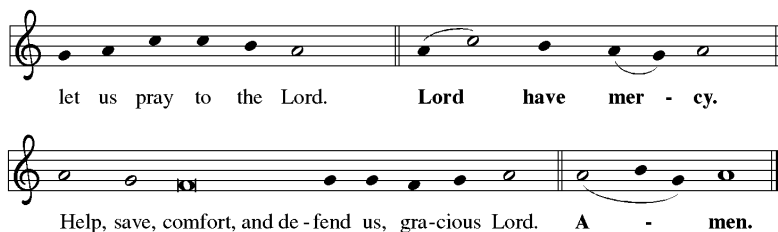
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



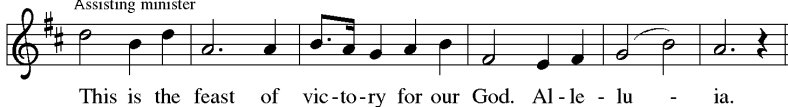
For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



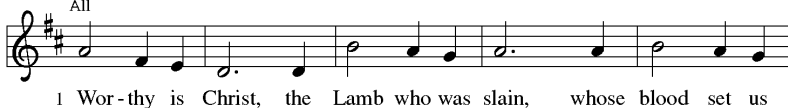
*CANTICLE OF PRAISE

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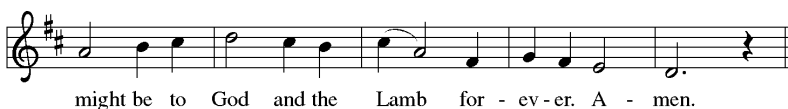
Refrain
Assisting minister



All



Refrain





*PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD *God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10-16

An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the

evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

¹ Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

² In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.

³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

⁴ O LORD God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?

⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

⁶ You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

¹⁷ Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.

¹⁸ And so will we never turn away from you;
give us life, that we may call upon your name.

¹⁹ Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

SECOND READING: Romans 1:1-7

Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew the 1st chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way.

When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before

they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly.²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,

and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

No children's church today

SERMON

HYMN OF THE MONTH: "Night of Silence"

W&P 101

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Night of Silence



1 Cold are the peo - ple, win - ter of life; we
 2 Voice in the dis - tance, call in the night; on
 3 Spir - it a - mong us, shine like the star; your

trem - ble in shad - ows this cold end - less night.
 wind you en - fold us, you speak of the light.
 light that guides shep - herds and kings from a - far

Fro - zen in the snow lie ros - es sleep - ing,
 Gen - tle on the ear you whis - per soft - ly,
 shim - mer in the sky so emp - ty, lone - ly,

flow - ers that will ech - o the sun - rise;
 ru - mors of a dawn so em - brac - ing;
 ris - ing in the warmth of the Son's love;

fire of hope is our on - ly warmth;
 breath - less love a - waits dark - ened souls;
 star un - know - ing of night and day;

wea - ry, its flame will be dy - ing soon,
 soon will we know of the morn - ing.
 Spir - it, we wait for the lov - ing Son.

*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

Response: God of grace,
Hear our prayer.

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

Amen.

***PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL *God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

OFFERING

OFFERING HYMN:

“Noel”

Addy Siepker

AUTHORS Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, Matt Redman; **CCLI SONG** #7050419; **CATALOG**; Capitol CMG Paragon / Rising Springs Music / S. D. G. Publishing / Said And Done Music / Thankyou Music Ltd / Twelve Lions Music / Worship Together Music / worshiptogether.com songs; **COPYRIGHTS** 2015 Capitol CMG Paragon (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing); Rising Springs Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing); S. D. G. Publishing (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing); Said And Done Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing); Thankyou Music Ltd (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Twelve Lions Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing); Worship Together Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing); worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing); Reprinted under CCLI #2551458

***OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us pray.

God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

***DIALOGUE**

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer,
through whom you will also make all things new
in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

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Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san-na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san-na in the high - est.

*THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:

Blessed are you for the birth of creation.

Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.

Blessed are you for your promise to your people.

Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.

Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.

Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup
we remember your Word dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.
We look with hope for his coming.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.

Come among us.

Bless this meal.

May your Word take flesh in us.

Awaken your people.

Fill us with your light.

Bring the gift of peace on earth.

Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours,

Holy One of Israel,

Word of God incarnate,

Power of the Most High,

one God, now and forever.

Amen.

*LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

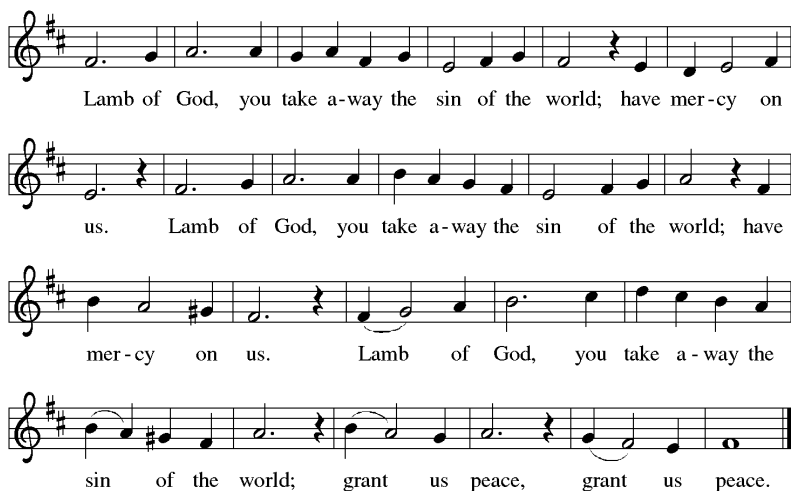
*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION SONG

(Page 154)



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on

us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have

mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the

sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMNS:

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

ELW 279

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893; Music: Lewis H. Redner, 1831-1908; public domain.



O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
For Christ is born of Mar - y, and, gath - ered all a - bove
How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is giv'n!
O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - d'ring love.
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heav'n.
cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.



yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light.
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
No ear may hear his com - ing; but, in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;



The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
and prais - es sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!
where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
oh, come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Im - man - u - el!

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”

ELW 272

Text: German carol, 15th cent.; tr. Theodore Baker, 1851-1934, sts. 1-2; Harriet R. Krauth, 1845-1925, st. 3; John C. Mattes, 1876-1948, st. 4; Music: *Alte catholische geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Köln, 1599; arr. Michael Praetorius, 1571-1621; public domain.

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming



1 Lo, how a rose e'er bloom-ing from ten-der stem hath
 2 I - sai - ah had fore - told it, the rose I have in
 3 This flow'r, whose fra-grance ten-der with sweet-ness fills the
 4 O Sav-ior, child of Mar-y, who felt our hu-man

sprung! Of Jes-se's lin-eage com-ing as
 mind; with Mar-y we be-hold it, the
 air, dis-pels with glo-rious splen-dor the
 woe; O Sav-ior, king of glo-ry, who

seers of old have sung, it came, a flow'r so bright, a -
 vir-gin moth-er kind. To show God's love a-right, she
 dark-ness ev-'ry-where. True man, yet ver-y God, from
 dost our weak-ness know: bring us at length, we pray, to

mid the cold of win-ter, when half-spent was the night,
 bore to us a Sav-ior, when half-spent was the night.
 sin and death he saves us and light-ens ev-'ry load.
 the bright courts of heav-en and in-to end-less day.

*TABLE BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

Amen

*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

God for whom we wait, in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when the hungry will be fed with good things. Send us forth to make known your deeds and to proclaim the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

SENDING *God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

***BLESSING**

Gracious and merciful God, on this day when Advent is ending and little more can be done by human preparation, we commit to you all our incomplete tasks, our unfulfilled hopes, and our unprepared hearts. Lift them from us and give us in exchange peace and serenity to accept the gift of your Word and to hear anew the gospel of the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

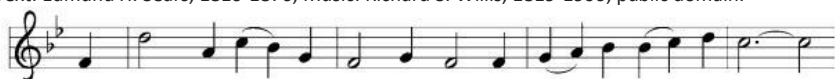
Amen.

May the God of Grace and Hope fill you with the gifts of life everlasting.

Amen.

***SENDING SONG “It Came upon the Midnight Clear” ELW 282**

Text: Edmund H. Sears, 1810-1876; Music: Richard S. Willis, 1819-1900; public domain.



1 It came up - on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come with peace - ful wings un - furled,
3 And you, be - neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing low,
4 For lo! The days are has - t'ning on, by proph - ets seen of old,



from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
and still their heav'n - ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world.
who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow:
when with the ev - er - cir - cling years shall come the time fore - told,



“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all - gra - cious king.”
A - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov - 'ring wing.
look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing;
when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors fling,



The world in sol - emn still - ness lay to hear the an - gels sing.
and ev - er o'er its ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.
oh, rest be - side the wea - ry road and hear the an - gels sing!
and all the world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

Ring of the Bell

Postlude

For streaming and printing:

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Those Serving in Today's Service

Pastor: Eric Klimpel

Accompanist: Mindy DeVries

Youth Liaison: Nels Dovre

Lector: Leonard Larson

Acolytes: Anna Engler; Rex Clark Altar Guild: Lesa Lewis; Jen Pote

Communion Assistants: Bruce Hartman; McKenzie Bushaw

Technicians: Brent Emerson, Owen Williams

This Week at Palestine

Today, December 21st, 2025 *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

8:30 a.m. Choir

9:30 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion

Sr. Tea

Tuesday, December 23rd, 2025

10:00 a.m. Area Pastor's Study

7:00 p.m. Bible Study via Zoom

Wednesday, December 24th, 2025

10:30 a.m. Green Hill's Worship (*Pastor*)

4:00 p.m. Holy Nativity Worship; Holy communion (livestreamed)

7:00 p.m. Holy Nativity Worship; Holy communion

Thursday, December 25th, 2025

Pre-recorded message on website

Sunday, December 28th, 2025 *First Sunday of Christmas*

9:30 a.m. Worship; *Lessons and Carols*

Lectionary texts: Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18;

Matthew 2:13-23



Thank you for your Gifts for Ministry:

Sunday, December 14, 2025:

General: \$5,678.00

Fellowship: \$4

Attendance: 93

Benevolence: \$90.00

THANK YOU!!! We celebrate your generosity and thank you in advance for your support.



Palestine will accept your offering!

1. **Bring** to worship service with you and place in offering plates.
2. **Mail** check to:
Palestine Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 189
Huxley, IA 50124
3. **Give online through Easy Tithe.**
Go to our website www.plchuxley.com
and click on the bright red ONLINE GIVING
tab on the right located above our
"Reaching out in Christian love to all"
statement. **OR** scan the QR code to take
you right to our tithing page.
4. **Text GIVE** to 515-207-6435.



Thank you. Continue to pray and know God is with us.



Thanks to those of you who have so generously supported the ministries of our church through your financial gifts! We are grateful for all that you have offered and for all the good things we've been able to do in Jesus' name because of them. Don't forget that your gifts are tax deductible but must be received by December 31st to qualify for a 2025 deduction.



*Senior Tea
Rescheduled for
Today, December 21st
Following worship*

No need to RSVP again.



**Join us Wednesday, December 24th
for worship:
4 p.m. & 7 p.m. with
Holy Communion
(4 p.m. is livestreamed)**



SPECIAL ADVENT OFFERING:

Each Sunday of Advent you are invited to contribute to our special advent offering. Please designate on your offering if you wish for it to be towards the special offering.

SPECIAL OFFERING FOR ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2025

Children & Families of Iowa

FAMILY ADVENT DEVOTIONS 2025 – ELCA GOOD GIFTS FOR THE HOLIDAY. School supplies for a classroom. Far too many of the world's children don't go to school because they can't afford the supplies. By providing school books, paper and pencils, you provide the building blocks for a brighter future. \$300 for classroom of 30, \$10 per child

ANNUAL MEETING



The annual meeting is scheduled for
January 18, 2026.

Deadline for submitting annual reports is
January 4, 2026!

(Please submit in word format to palestinelutheran@gmail.com)



**Poinsettias for our worship were given to the
Glory of God and *in Honor of or in Memory of a
Loved One (as noted) by:***

Sandra Kalsem, Sharon Davis, David and Margret Anderson

In loving memory of Helen & Irvin Anderson

In loving memory of Alice & Byron Anderson

In loving memory of Ralph Kalsem

In loving memory of Gary Davis

Mary, Chris, Sariah, Cayden, and Callie Brendeland

In loving memory of Charlie Brendeland

Merle Brendeland, Janis Brendeland, Megan Russell and Families

In loving memory of Omar & Valerie Brendeland

In loving memory of Marla Simmons

Denise Elliott and families

In loving memory of:

Lowell Elliott, Elman & Harriett Sheldahl

Nancy Fausch, Craig, Jeannie, Julie, Melanie and Families

In loving memory of LaVerne Fausch

Bruce and Angie and Sarah Hartman, Emma and Riley Peterson,
and Marlys Hartman

In loving memory of Earl Hartman

In loving memory of Tom Noll

Dolores Hauge and Family

In loving memory of Orville Hauge

Helen Kepler and Families

In loving memory of Dick Kepler

Eric and Teri Klimpel

In loving memory of Donald Klimpel

In honor of Marlene Klimpel

In honor of Dick & Penny Brown

Leona Larson, Jim and Arlene Bates, Leonard and Sue Larson and
Families

In loving memory of Noel Larson

Virgil Larson and Families

In loving memory of Diane Larson

Quinn and Norma McBride

In loving memory of their parents

Roger and Deb Moore

Richard and Christine Nelson

In loving memory of Dena & Tom Bloodsworth

In loving memory of Thelma & Lawrence Nelson

Andrew and Christine Polich

In loving memory of Ryan Polich



Deidre Qual

In loving memory of Lorraine & Otis Qual

In loving memory of Laura & Keith Lyon

In loving memory of Merlin Lyon

David and Jean Saveraid

In loving memory of Thomas Bacher

In loving memory of Doris Keeton

In loving memory of Kenneth & Shirley Saveraid

Tracy, Cindi, Rick and Families

In loving memory of Arlin & Marge Sheldahl

Tracy Sheldahl

In loving memory of grandparents:

Gordon & Agnes Rullestad

Osmund & Christine Sheldahl

Garry Wirtz, Troy, Holly and Families

In loving memory of Sandy Wirtz

Dennis and Diane Wright

In loving memory of Harold & Pauline Wright

In loving memory of Kenneth & Margaret Johnson



Welcome to Worship! We're glad you're here (physically or virtually), guests and members alike, and pray that you will find in our worship an opportunity to praise God and hear God's Word.

All baptized Christians who believe that Christ Jesus is truly present in the sacrament to forgive, strengthen and bless us, are welcome to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Promises Made Real (*based on Matthew 1*)

Dreams are delicate things, often hanging in our minds only long enough to evaporate in the morning like dew on the grass. Yet dreams can also endure and shape the arc of social movements and the identities of people near and far. Joseph has the rare privilege of an *angelic* dream, of all things—a visitation from a divine messenger, beckoning a change of heart and a change of direction for him and the person he loves.

It is no small thing to change direction in life, especially when family expectations and social norms can make life harder than it needs to be. Yet, Joseph and Mary do a remarkable thing as they face uncertainty: They trust God's promise that something incredible is about to happen. They take the angel's words to heart and lean into the possibility of God's Holy Spirit doing something neither of them expected.

Joseph and Mary are at a precipice, a pivot point, a threshold, a new beginning. Isaiah's language reminds us of the relationship that stands at the center of this divine arrival: God is with us, God is with humanity, God is with (and in) the world! *Emmanuel!*

We stand at a similar threshold every time God gathers us in worship. In word and sacrament, God's promise unfolds anew, birthing love and grace in our lives. Such mercy may seem like a fever dream, a vanishing vision, an impossibility. Yet it is the very thing that undergirds our lives of faith, turning us time and again to what is most important: God's promises fulfilled. As God chose to be with Mary and Joseph, God has chosen to be with us, as we together bear witness to the Spirit who brings about a world where sin is forgiven and God is ever near.