

First Lutheran Church

Get Ready. The Days are Coming.

Advent 2021

*An asterisk * invites you to stand in body or in spirit, and you are invited to read responses found in **bold**.*

You are welcome to sing during worship if you are vaccinated!

Welcome to First Lutheran Church + Sunday, December 12, 2021

Gathering in God's Presence

Prelude — “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel/Let All Mortal Flesh”

Setting by Stephen DeCesare

Lauren Russell, viola

Welcome

***Call to Worship**

The time is surely coming
when our love for one another
and all of God's children will increase.

**We would live into that time
with hope and joy.**

The day is surely coming
when God will strengthen our hearts
with humility and holiness.

We would anticipate that day

**as we reach out to serve
all of those in need.**

The days are surely coming
when we will walk the paths
of faithfulness and steadfast love.

**We begin this journey,
knowing that all of God's promises
will be fulfilled.**

***Gathering Hymn** — no. 239

“Hark, the Glad Sound”

Led by Sophie Martinez

*Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who alone does wonders,
who lifts up the lowly,
who fills the hungry with good things.
Amen.

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the tender mercy of
our God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God for whom we wait,
in the presence of one another,
we confess our sin before you.
We fail in believing that your good news is for us.
We falter in our call to tend your creation.
We find our sense of self in material wealth.
We fear those different from ourselves.
We forget that we are your children
and turn away from your love.
Forgive us, Blessed One,
and assure us again of your saving grace.
Amen.

God, in Christ Jesus, has looked with favor
upon you!

Through the power of the Holy Spirit,
and God's amazing grace,
† your sins are forgiven.

You are children of the Most High,
inheritors of the eternal promise,
and recipients of divine mercy.

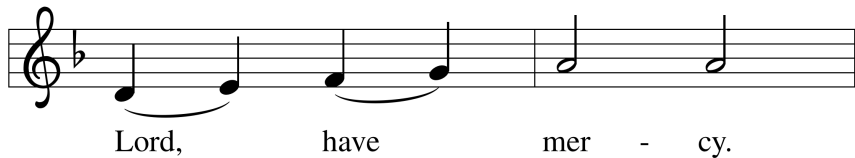
God strengthens you anew to follow the way of
peace.

Amen.

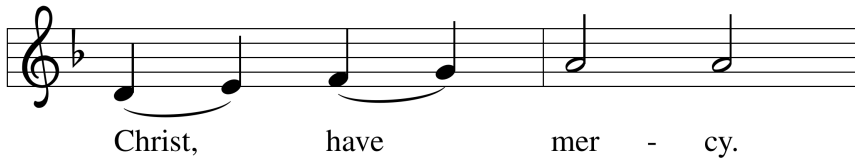
*Kyrie — FLC Liturgy for Advent

“Turn to Us Again”

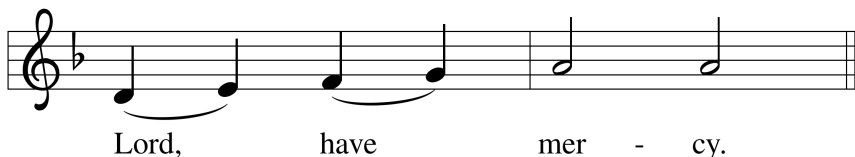
Turn to us again, O God our Savior. Send to us your gift of Love. Lord, have mercy.



Show us your compassion, O God our Lord, grant us your salvation. Christ, have mercy.



Come and bring salvation; we wait, O God; may your glory dwell in us. Lord, have mercy.



***Canticle of Praise — “We Are Awaiting the Coming”**



1 We are a - wait - ing the com - ing of Je - sus,
2 We are the vine you have plant - ed and tend - ed;
3 We bring these signs of our lives whol - ly giv - en;



yearn - ing in dark - ness for light and for peace,
we are the wheat you have wa - tered and sown.
let them for us be Christ's wine and Christ's bread



long - ing at last to re - joice on that
Take our first - fruits, take our bowed heads of
poured out in love for the heal - ing of



day when all peo - ple join in this feast.
grain, in - crease them and make them your own.
all and bro - ken that all may be fed.

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy: Joy

Read by the Szybnisk Family

Joy is seeing people you love after months apart.
Joy is hearing, “Come on over, it has been too long!”
Joy is the stretches and giggles of a newborn child.
Joy is making it home when the journey is long.
Joy is your dog sliding to meet you at the door.
Joy is the energy of a new season.
Joy is feeling found when you thought you were lost.
So today we light the candle of joy, because the welcome God has for us is nothing short of joyful.
Rest in that good news. Let it wash over you.
Family of faith, we are close to home. Amen.

Three candles are lit while stanza 3 of “Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah” (hymn no. 240) is sung:

**Light three candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway for the King of glory.**

Hearing & Responding to Scripture

A Reading from Hebrew Scriptures — Zephaniah 3:14-20

14Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
15The Lord has taken away the judgments
against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.
16On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
17The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing

18as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.
19I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
20At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the Lord.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people. **Thanks be to God.**

Canticle — Isaiah 12:2-6 — *sung responsively by verse*



2Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not | be afraid,
for the Lord God is my strength and my might, and has become | my salvation.
3**With joy you | will draw water**
from the wells | of salvation.
4And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call | on God's name;
make known the deeds of the Lord among the nations; proclaim that this name | is exalted.
5**Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done | gloriously;**
let this be known in | all the earth.
6Shout aloud and sing for joy, O | royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy | One of Israel.

A Reading from the Epistles — Philippians 4:4-7

4Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people. **Thanks be to God.**

*Gospel Acclamation



*Come to us, O God. Be the hope with - in our long-ing. Dwell with-in us,



O Light of the world: O God-with - us, Em - man - u - el.

*Gospel — Luke 3:7-18

The Gospel of Luke, the 7th chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

7John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

10And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” 11In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” 12Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” 13He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” 14Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

15As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

18So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon — “Get Ready: Rejoice!”

Pastor Bill Nelsen

*Hymn — no. 257, stanzas 1, 3, & 7

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”
Led by Sophie Martinez

*Affirmation of Faith — Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

*Prayers of Intercession

God of open doors and porch lights, of welcome mats and candles in the window— we cannot thank you enough for your open-door policy. You are forever welcoming us home.

In a world that puts handrails on park benches so that those without a roof over their heads cannot lay down, you offer something radically different. You welcome all of us, just as we are.

You paint a picture of a world that could be. You remind us that there is enough love to go around, and that neighbor helping neighbor is who we are called to be.

Thank you for the voice in the wilderness that calls to us.

Thank you for the radical welcome and the unchanging love.

Today, God, we give extra gratitude for the people and places that are home to us, but we also pray for all those without a home.

We pray for immigrants and refugees navigating the waters of trauma, change, and loss.

We pray for those who experience homelessness and for those scraping together every coin to pay last month's rent.

We pray for those who do not feel at home in their body— assigned a gender or an identity that does not fit their spirit.

We pray for those who do not feel at home in your church—wounded by strict rules or judgmental accusations.

We pray for those who long to build a home with another, but instead find themselves eating another meal alone.

We pray for all who experience loss, suffering, and rejection.

God, there are so many who need a home, so help us be builders of that new day. Give us the courage of John, who saw a way forward so clearly. Turn our words into action and our conviction into change.

Gracious God, you are a God of open doors and welcome home celebrations. Teach us to be the same.

And as we learn, and as we grow, we continue to pray the words your son taught us to pray, saying...

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Offering

Music at the Offering

“As the Dark Awaits the Dawn”

Setting by David Lasky

*Shine your future on this place, enlighten ev'ry guest, that through us steam your holiness,
bright and blest, bright and blest; come dawn, O Sun of grace.*

-Susan Palo Cherwien, full text found at hymn no. 261

Reception of New Members

Departing to Serve God's World

Announcements

***Sending Hymn** — no. 242

“Awake, Awake, and Greet the New Morn”

***Blessing & Dismissal**

As you leave *this* service, *your* service begins:

Comfort the homesick.

Open your doors to others.

Seek sanctuary.

Be brave enough to go home by another way.

And remember that here in God's house, all are welcomed—so come back soon.

In the name of our Foundation—God, Spirit, and Son—

go in peace. Get ready. Rejoice!

Thanks be to God.

***Postlude** — “Nun Komm Der Heiden Heiland”

Setting by Dieterich Buxtehude
Sophie Martinez, GAC Music Scholar

Acknowledgements

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“Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy”; “Prayers of Intercession”; “Blessing and Dismissal” written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org, from the Advent series *Close to Home*, adapted for local use.

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Worship Assistants

Interim Pastor: Bill Nelsen
Director of Music: Emily Bruflat
Audio/Video: Leif Hammar

Greeter/Reader: Paul Aasen
Ushers: Betsy Paul
Advent Candle Blessing: Szybnski Family
Musicians: Sophie Martinez, Lauren Russell

Advent Paraments

Isaiah 11, the source of the **Jesse tree** imagery which appears on our Advent paraments, is the first use of a tree to describe the genealogy of a family, in this case beginning with Jesse the father of David from whose house the Messiah will come. The image of this tree first appears in an eleventh century manuscript and some say is the most illustrated symbol from the Old Testament. Our Jesse tree paraments were handwoven by Ann Widness of Mankato.

Prayers

- We lift up prayers for those on our long-term list: Tom and Deb Johnson, Tom Michels, Abigail Christenson, Betty Gustafson, Elgene Lund, Chuck Petry, Bob Cady, Joan Williams, Myrene Bunge, Glen Stryker, Erika Schuldt, Tim Sebring, Mary Pieklo, Gloria Kane, Gwen Powell, Nancy Maag, Ellen Conover and Urusla McRostie.
- We pray for all those families continuing to adjust to the loss of loved ones, including the families of Pastor Heidi Hagstrom, Beverly Wetherill, Tom Stenson, Mary Lee Denley, Marion Peterson, and Bob Isenberg.

Announcements

- **Flowers** today are given in honor of Bruce and Sue Gray's 65th wedding anniversary. Happy Anniversary!
- Those who would like to take home the poinsettias that they donated for the Christmas altar may do so after the Sunday service, December 26. The remaining poinsettias will grace the altar through the last Sunday of the season of Christmas, Jan. 2
- **Adult Forum** *Meet & Greet Pastor Chris Culuris* at 9am on January 9 in the Gathering Space.
- **Midweek Advent Youth Services:** We had a wonderful attendance for the first Midweek Advent Youth Service, Dec. 1, led by our Faith Formation Youth, and for the service last Wednesday, Dec. 8, led by the 7th and 8th grade classes. Because of this response, we decided to move the Midweek services to the Sanctuary to allow for more space, and to have our Confirmation youth leading these relatively brief but meaningful services in that special locale. The final midweek service is:
 - **Wednesday, Dec. 15, 6:35 p.m. Service led by the 9th grade class**(Note: The Bell Choir will be rehearsing until 6:25 p.m. in the Sanctuary on these evenings, so if you arrive early for these services, you may enter quietly to hear some beautiful Christmas music being rehearsed.)
- Be sure to check out all the wonderful items for sale at the **FLC Christmas Shoppe** in the Gathering Space. Proceeds will benefit out FLC youth attending the National ELCA Youth Gathering nex summer.
- Be sure to **register** yourself and your family members for the particular service you plan to attend on **Christmas Eve**. This process allows us to prepare for and adjust as necessary for health safety in attendance at these services.
- As we near the close of this calendar year (and the fiscal year for our church), we encourage all our members to **fulfill pledges** and make sure that **year-end gifts** arrive in good time. Thanks to all for your important support of the mission and programs of First Lutheran Church.