

Welcome to Christ Lutheran Church & Preschool

December 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

Rev. Mark Selbo

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Member of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
(ELCA – www.elca.org)



All Are Welcome – All the Time!

You do not need to be a member of this church or Lutheran to participate in any part of worship. If you wish to take communion, we ask that you desire a relationship with Jesus. His body and blood were given and shed for you.



Christ Lutheran Church & PreSchool is a community committed to the work of equity and inclusion, bringing justice and support for all of God's beloveds. We welcome those who are seeking God's love and grace for the first time or as a life-long believer. We welcome because Jesus shows us how to welcome, regardless of race, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, economic resources, relationship status, health challenges or anything else that too often divides us. It is in our welcome which we commit ourselves to being an anti-racist space, a space where we seek daily to deepen our work of inclusion in the life of our church. Our unity is in Christ. All are welcome here.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SHARING OF PRAYER CONCERNS

By Kathy Davis, who will provide updated Prayers of Intercession

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, who comes to wake us from sleep, who leads us into the light of grace. **Amen.**

Let us prepare the way of the Lord by confessing our sin against God and neighbor.
– *Silence for reflection and self-examination* –

God of all time,

**we confess that we have not prepared for your merciful reign among us.
We ignore our neighbors in need and fail in the labor of justice and peace.
In your mercy forgive us. Grant us wisdom to welcome your light
and to seek the things that will endure until Christ comes again in glory.
Amen.**

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

In + Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven

and all things are made new. Rejoice in this good news!

Amen.

SONG: Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn, ELW #242

Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning.

Sing out your joy, for soon he is born. Behold! The Child of our longing.

 Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together.

He opens wide the heavenly door, and lives now inside us forever.

To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emmanuel comes a-singing;

His humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing;

 Music to heal the broken soul, and hymns of loving kindness,

The thunder of his anthems roll to shatter all hatred and blindness.

In darkest night his coming shall be, when all the world is despairing;

As morning light so quiet and free, so warm and gentle and caring.

 Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in wonder,

The weak be raised above the strong, and weapons be broken asunder.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, though dark the winter and cheerless.

The rising sun shall crown you with light; Be strong and loving and fearless.

 Love be our song and love our prayer, and love our endless story;

May God fill every day we share, and bring us at last into glory.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you. **And also with you!**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

SONG: Light One Candle, ELW #240 (vs 3)

Light three candles to watch for Messiah; Let the light banish darkness.
Lift up your heads and lift high the gateway, for the King of glory.

LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

From Prepare: An Advent Devotional, Bethany Fellows/Chalice Press, (c)2019

Matthew 11:10 says: *See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.*

John the Baptist was called by God to prepare the way for the coming of Christ Jesus, to speak hard truths, to live a life shaped by the goodness of Christ's saving power and the challenge of his prophetic wisdom. On this third Sunday of Advent, let us see ourselves in the call of John the Baptist and celebrate with joy the challenge and call to proclaim the Christ who comes to us in flesh and blood in a manger to teach, preach and proclaim God's goodness.

– We reflect as the third Advent candle is lit; then we read together –

**We light this candle, the third candle of Advent,
as a sure, steady promise
of your joy *in us* and *for us* as we are
called to serve and proclaim your Word.**

Let us pray: God of everlasting promises, meet us in the complicated space where joy resides. Meet us in our grief for what has been lost and in our hope of what is to come in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

READING – Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

“For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed.”

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

RESPONSIVE READING – Psalm 26

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.

Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”

The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev.
Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.

Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

READING – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

(Paul, Silas and Timothy write to the church of the Thessalonians:)

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

– Please stand as you are able –

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (SUNG) – ELW 172

Halle, halle, halle – lujah. Halle, halle, halle – lujah.
Halle, halle, halle – lujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah!

THE GOSPEL – John 1:6-8, 19-28

The Holy Gospel according to John. Glory to You, O Lord.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No."

Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of our Lord. Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON – "Worship the Light"

SONG: He Came Down, ELW #253

(Printed on bulletin insert or in hymnal)

He came down that we may have **love**; He came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love; Hallelujah forevermore.

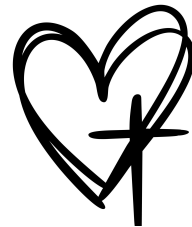
He came down that we may have **light**; He came down that we may have light;
He came down that we may have light; Hallelujah forevermore.

He came down that we may have **peace**; He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace; Hallelujah forevermore.

He came down that we may have **joy**; He came down that we may have joy;
He came down that we may have joy; Hallelujah forevermore.

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 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 *(on separate sheet)*

Merciful God... Receive our prayer.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. And also with you.
– *Please share a socially distanced sign of peace or greeting* –

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks & praise.**



WORDS OF INSTITUTION *(not printed/Presider's book on altar)*

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION AT THE FRONT

All are welcome to receive the Real Presence of Christ in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. You do not need to be a member of this church or Lutheran to receive the sacrament. We ask that you desire a relationship with Jesus Christ. Those who are interested will be invited by an usher to come up the center aisle to the front to select a single-serving Communion kit from the tray, or to receive a blessing. Then return to your seat via the side aisle to open the kit and partake in Communion. An usher will offer a basket to collect the container. *For those worshipping at home, please consider joining in Holy Communion by taking a bit of bread or cracker and a sip of wine or juice.* **All are welcome.**

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

BENEDICTION

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord look upon you with favor and give you His peace.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

SONG: The First Noel, ELW #300 (verses 1-4)

(Printed on bulletin insert or in hymnal)

The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star, shining in the east beyond them far;
And to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. **Noel...**

And by the light of that same star, three wisemen came from country afar;
To seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went. **Noel...**

This star drew near to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay, right over the place where Jesus lay. **Noel...**

DISMISSAL

Worship the light!

Go in peace!

Serve the Lord! Thanks be to God!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Christmas Worship – Sunday, December 24 at 9:30 a.m.**
- **Thank you for the Joy Bags!** More than 50 kids served by Sue's Emergency Pantry in Vernon Hills will receive a little bit of joy, thanks to you.
- **Encampment Collection** – Thank you to all who contributed to our first delivery to the Chicago homeless encampment near Pastor Padraig's house. We continue to collect blankets/sleeping bags (new or gently used/clean), socks, hand warmers, gloves, feminine products, and Mariano's gift cards (store closest to camp).
- **Sanctuary Support** – Our first batch of sleeping mats, small suitcases and OTC medicines were delivered to asylum seekers living in Police Stations and community centers in Chicago, a Sanctuary City. This collection continues as need does not end.
- **Sue's Pantry** – Looking for small sizes of flour, cooking oil, sugar. Also anything needed to keep a home and family clean – dish soap, laundry detergent, body wash, shampoo.
- **Love INC** – Always looking for housewares, nonperishables and volunteers. Want to learn more about this amazing organization? Have a child or family in need of a bundle of clothes or housewares? Give the details to Natalie and on behalf of the church, we will request support – and Natalie will get us covered! (Thanks, Natalie.)
- **COOL Ministries** – We support the COOL pantry in Waukegan as well as Vernon Township Pantry with non-perishables. Collection bins in hallway or give online.
- **BSA Troop 273** – Thank you to all who support our partner Scouts as they have supported us.
- **Looking to restart Cub Scout Pack 273!** Children/families ages Kindergarten through 4th grade are encouraged to reach out to Theresa (tcabrese98@gmail.com).
- **Prayer concerns?** Please consider reaching out, so that our network of Prayer Warriors can pray for you or your concerns. You may remain anonymous. Please email ChristLutheranVH@aol.com with your request, and we will email the prayer team to lift up your prayer. If you would like to be part of the Prayer Team, please send an email.
- **Thank you for your support.** Your presence in worship is very important as we join together in worship and praise. Thank you for being part of this community of faith so that we can lift our prayers together. If you would like to support the efforts of this community, we welcome donations, which can be provided by credit card or Paypal through the link at the bottom of our webpage, ChristLutheranVH.org. Thank you.