Welcome to Christ Lutheran Church & Preschool

December 21, 2025

Fourth Sunday in Advent – LOVE

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, PRAYER CONCERNS, THANKSGIVINGS

After chimes, Kathy Davis will take requests to add to the Prayers of Intercession,
and provide Pastor with the updated sheet.

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, #242

Printed on bulletin insert or in hymnal

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 all. **And also with you!**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE (LOVE)

Adapted from *The Word Made Flesh: Daily Devotions for Advent,* Creative Communications, Jacob Torbeck, *(c)2024*

Today his the Fourth Sunday of Advent. On our Advent Wreath, we have already lit three candles – the candles representing hope, peace, and joy. Today we will light the fourth candle – the candle of LOVE.

With this flame we signify the love of God that surrounds and fills us at all time. And today we recognize in a special way that the Christmas story and the arrival of Baby Jesus fills the world with love.

To a world of empires-builders and dictators, war and greed, grief and apathy, we proclaim that love is strong enough to overcome all evil – that compassion is more powerful than fear.

The angel Gabriel reassured Mary that "nothing will be impossible with God." The power of love is the power to overcome what we think is impossible. There is no greater power than LOVE. It is stronger than rulers and empires, stronger than grief or despair, stronger than even death. And we, in turn, love because *God LOVES us.*

Take heart and remember that God so loves this world that he sent his only son, Jesus, to save each of us. We light the candle of Love in honor of those who have shown us how to love even when doing so is not convenient or sensible. We remember those who show us that compassion – that unconditional love — is central to a Christian's life. Let us pray together:

> **All-loving God, magnify your LOVE within us.**
> **Renew our faith to relive the wonder of your love.**
> **Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you**
> **that we may shine the light of your compassionate love in the world.**
> **Amen.**

We light the 4th Advent candle and sing…

SONG: Light A Candle Bright and Tall, verse 4

(Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette; Tune: As with Gladness Men of Old, #302)

> **Light a candle bright and tall, for the Love which knows no end.**
> **Love that comes to one and all. Fear and hatred to upend.**
> **Shine within our hearts today Come, O Love, to us, we pray.**

READING – Isaiah 7:10-16

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, “Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.” Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? 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. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. 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.**

READING – Romans 1:1-7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 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, 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, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, 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.**

– 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 – Matthew 1:18-25

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

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. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly.

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. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

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

SERMON: “The Man Who Loved Mary”

SONG: Love Has Come, #292

Printed on bulletin insert or in hymnal

Love has come – a light in the darkness! Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it; Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

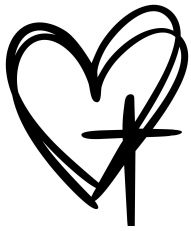
Love is born! Come, share in the wonder. Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother; What is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers;
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

Love has come and never will leave us! Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us. Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION *(on separate sheet)*

God of grace… **hear our prayer.**

PASSING OF THE PEACE



The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

– *Please share a greeting or sign of peace –*

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 *(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 receive Communion or a blessing. If you would like Communion brought to you, please let an usher know. You are also welcome to remain in your seat to pray. Welcome!

Today we will offer both traditional distribution of bread and wine as well as single-serving Communion kits. Please choose as you feel comfortable. If you would like **Traditional Communion,** select an empty cup from the tray and come forward to receive a piece of bread in your open hand. The assistant will then pour wine into your cup. Your empty cup may be placed in the trays at each side as you return to your seat. **Single-serving kits** are available in the second tray. Select a sealed cup and bring it back to your seat to open and partake. Once at your seat, peel back the top layer to find the wafer, and then the bottom seal to drink. An usher will offer a basket to collect the empty container.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

BENEDICTION

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

SONG: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, #270

Printed on bulletin insert or in hymnal

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king;
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinner reconciled."
Joyful, all you nations, rise; Join the triumph of the skies;
with angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord.
Late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise each child of earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

DISMISSAL

We prepare the way. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

All are invited to enjoy refreshments and conversation after worship

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Christmas Eve Worship** – Wednesday, December 24 at 4p
- **Poinsettias** – consider sharing a poinsettia of any color or size for Christmas Eve worship. You may take it home after service. Thank you!
- **Stock the Pantries! – Non-Perishables Needed.** Bring your donations of nonperishable food, paper goods, hygiene supplies, etc. and we will deliver to local pantries, which need all they help they can get. Also collecting fresh milk, eggs, meat, produce for specific families.Thank you!
- **Meals in a Bag** – 2 gal ziplocks with all the nonperishable ingredients needed to make a hearty meal – bags and ingredient list/recipe cards available in the Narthex or on our website. We will provide these as needed and encourage everyone to have a couple to hand out.
- **Here to help.** Do you or someone you know need food or support, especially with the loss of benefits? Reach out to the church at ChristLutheranVH@aol.com or 847-367-5787**.**
- **Alert Whistles & Rights Cards** – On the bulletin table. To use or share as needed.
- **Pray Over Our PreSchool Ministry** – May we continue to effectively bring the message of God's love for all into our community.
- **Cub Scout Pack 273 Popcorn Sale –** email committee.chair@Pack273VH.org.
- **Donating to Victims of Flood, Earthquake, Fire, Drought, War** – ELCA's Lutheran Disaster Response is one of the oldest, most effective and most respected organizations for getting money where it can be put to good use. Donate at ELCA.org. There is also a link on our website under "WORK."
- **Caring Hands** – On break until January 17. Making prayer shawls, comfort blankets, hat and mittens. Reach out for information or projects for home. (CaringHandsVernonHills@gmail.com)
- **Scouting! –** Christ Lutheran is the Charter Organization for Pack 273 & Troop 273. Programs for girls and boys ages Kindergarten through high school, building skills, making connections and having fun. For younger kids, email committee.chair@Pack273VH.org. For older kids, email committeechair@troop273vh.net. Thanks to Holly & Bill Jones and their volunteers for their efforts in leading the groups. Thanks for supporting our Pack/Troop 273!
- **Sue's Pantry** – Sue has moved her pantry to a space in Arlington Heights. We will continue to collect anything needed to keep a home and family clean.
- **Love INC** – Housewares, nonperishables and volunteers. Know a family in need of a bundle of clothes or housewares? Give the details to Natalie! (https://loveinclakecounty.org/)
- **COOL Ministries** – We support the COOL pantry in Waukegan with non-perishables. Collection bins in hallway or give online. (CoolMinistries.org)
- **Prayer concerns?** Consider reaching out so that our network of Prayer Warriors can pray. You may remain anonymous. Email ChristLutheranVH@aol.com with your request. Would you join with us in prayer? Send an email to be included on the prayer mailing list. The task is simple-but-powerful – when time permits, open the email and read/pray with us.
- **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.** Thank you for being part of this community of faith. If you would like to support our service, 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!