



# ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

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## ORDER OF DIVINE SERVICE



**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
DECEMBER 21, 2025

## WELCOME! TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE LORD'S HOLY COMMUNION

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For baptized Christians (Matthew 28:19) who have been instructed in the faith (Galatians 6:6), The Lord's Supper is our participation in the body and blood of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16), as the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17), to receive forgiveness of sin (Matthew 26:28) and to proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

So that those who partake of the Lord's Supper do so in a worthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27) and not to their harm (1 Corinthians 11:29), let us each examine ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28):

- Do you believe that you are a sinner? That you have sinned in thought, word and deed?
- Are you sorry for your sin?
- Do you trust that Jesus Christ gives forgiveness of sin through His Supper?
- Do you believe that the body and blood of Jesus are present in, with and under the bread and wine?
- Do you seek to lead godly lives by the power of the Holy Spirit?

Please speak to a pastor or usher if you have questions. Gluten-free wafers are provided upon request. Non-alcoholic grape juice is provided in the center of each communion tray. Those who are not communing may come forward for a blessing from the pastor.

## AS WE GATHER

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It is still Advent, but today we hear an account of the Christmas story early so that we may know what to look for later this week. The Son of Mary by the Holy Spirit is Jesus, who saves us from our sins and who fulfills the promise of Immanuel: God is with us. Perhaps the richness of the details of Luke's account sometimes distracts us from the message. The Lord has come to keep His Word, to save us from our sins, and to keep us in His hand so that we may be His eternally. None of this was obvious to either Mary or faithful Joseph, and yet the Lord was at work through it all to deliver to us His Son to be our Savior. We will still worry when things do not go as we plan, and we will still struggle with doubts and fears, but the angel of God's presence is no mere messenger sent in His place. No, the angel of God's presence is His only-begotten Son, whose name is Jesus and whose work is our salvation.

## THE PRELUDE

## THE TOLLING OF THE BELL

## WELCOME

## INVOCATION HYMN

356 The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came



1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,  
2 "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,  
3 Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly bowed her head;  
4 Of her, Em - man - u - el, the Christ, was born



With wings as drift - ed snow, with eyes as flame:  
All gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or thee;  
"To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said.  
In Beth - le - hem all on a Christ - mas morn,



"All hail to thee, O low - ly maid - en Mar - y,  
Thy son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,  
"My soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy God's ho - ly name."  
And Chris - tian folk through - out the world will ev - er say:



Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!  
Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!  
Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy, Glo - ri - a!  
"Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!

## BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

**P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**G** Amen.

**P** Beloved in the Lord, as we end the season of Advent, we are reminded that Jesus Christ came to conquer the darkness of sin and to lead us into the light of His glorious kingdom. As the prophet Isaiah says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined."

**P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
**C** who made heaven and earth.

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

**P** Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the true light who comes into the world to enlighten all people, bless us as we light the **FOURTH** candle of this wreath in preparation for Your coming, and enkindle in our hearts the fire of Your love that we may receive You with joy and gladness and evermore remain steadfast in the faith; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

**P** The Lord Almighty, the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless this wreath for use in His Church throughout this holy season of Advent.

**C** Amen.

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

**P** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

**C** But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*Kneel*

*Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.*

**P** Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

**C** Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

**P** Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

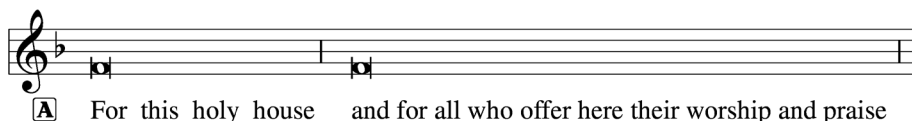
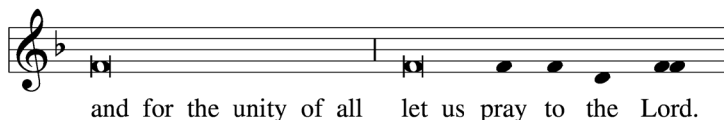
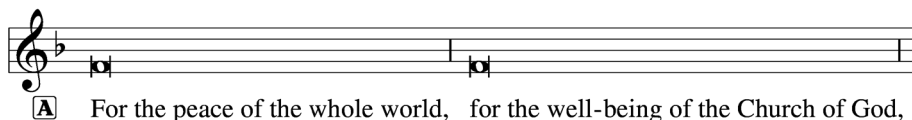
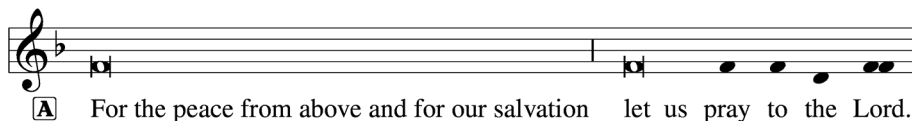
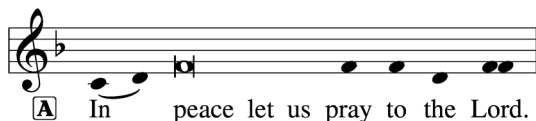
*Stand*

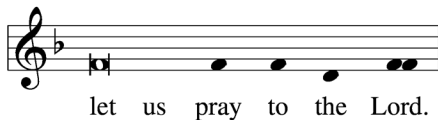
## SERVICE OF THE WORD

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### KYRIE

*Mark 10:47*

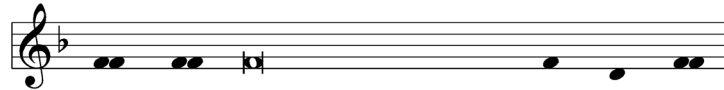




let us pray to the Lord.



**C** Lord, have mer - cy.



**A** Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord.



**C** A - men.

## SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** And also with you.

**P** Let us pray.

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

*Sit*

## OLD TESTAMENT READING

*Isaiah 7:10–17*

**L** The Old Testament Reading is from Isaiah, chapter 7.

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, “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.” And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father’s house such days as

have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.”

**L** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## PSALM

*Psalm 24; antiphon: v. 7*

**L** The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein,  
for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

**C** **Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?  
And who shall stand in his holy place?**

**L** He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

**C** **He will receive blessing from the LORD  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.**

**L** Such is the generation of those who seek him,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

**C** **Lift up your heads, O gates!  
And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.**

**L** Who is this King of glory?  
The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!

**C** **Lift up your heads, O gates!  
And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.**

**L** Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!

## EPISTLE

*Romans 1:1–7*

**L** The Epistle is from Romans, chapter 1.

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, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:  
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**L** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

*Stand*

## ALLELUIA AND VERSE

*John 6:68*



## HOLY GOSPEL

*Matthew 1:18–25*

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the first chapter.

**C** Glory to You, O Lord.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** Praise to You, O Christ.





1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come, Vir - gin's Son, make  
 2 Not by hu - man flesh and blood, By the Spir - it  
 3 Here a maid was found with child, Yet re - mained a  
 4 Then stepped forth the Lord of all From His pure and



here Your home! Mar - vel now, O heav'n and earth,  
 of our God, Was the Word of God made flesh—  
 vir - gin mild. In her womb this truth was shown:  
 king - ly hall; God of God, yet ful - ly man,



That the Lord chose such a birth.  
 Wom - an's off - spring, pure and fresh.  
 God was there up - on His throne.  
 His he - ro - ic course be - gan.

7 From the manger newborn light  
 Shines in glory through the night.  
 Darkness there no more resides;  
 In this light faith now abides.

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## SERMON

**"Joseph, a Man of Waiting and Hope"**

Pastor Mark Stapleton

Stand

## NICENE CREED

**C** I believe in one God,  
 the Father Almighty,  
 maker of heaven and earth  
 and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
 the only-begotten Son of God,

begotten of His Father before all worlds,  
God of God, Light of Light,  
very God of very God,  
begotten, not made,  
being of one substance with the Father,  
by whom all things were made;  
who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven  
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary  
and was made man;  
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.  
He suffered and was buried.  
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures  
and ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of the Father.  
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,  
whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord and giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,  
who spoke by the prophets.  
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,  
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,  
and I look for the resurrection of the dead  
and the life ✝ of the world to come. Amen.

*Kneel*

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

**P** As the time of Advent comes to an end, let us go to our heavenly Father on behalf of the Church around the world and all people in their various needs.

“Call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” For people who have not heard a word of forgiveness from their society or circle of friends, that God would use the Church to bring them news of God’s mercy and grace, available from His Son, born in a stable, killed on a cross, and risen from the grave, let us pray to the Lord.

**C** Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free;

**P** Paul's apostleship was to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of Christ's name among all the nations. For our communities and country and for all the nations of the world, that God would put into positions of authority and influence capable and faithful people who would work for order at home and peace with neighboring states, let us pray to the Lord.

**C** **From our fears and sins release us; Let us find our rest in Thee.**

**P** For people who are weighed down by illness, strife, or oppression, our friends and neighbors "who seek the face of the God of Jacob," that God would bring healing, peace of body and mind, [*including . . .*], let us pray to the Lord.

**C** **Dear desire of ev'ry nation, Joy of ev'ry longing heart.**

**P** Joseph was a just man and unwilling to put Mary to shame. For those who have succumbed to the criticisms of their circle of acquaintances, the fallen morality of their society, and the consequences of their own mistakes, that God would open their eyes to the forgiveness He offers through Christ so that they lift up their heads to the gates through which our Savior walks, let us pray to the Lord.

**C** **Born to reign in us forever, Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.**

**P** For the Church around the world, wherever it experiences active persecution or increasing indifference, that God would strengthen, guide, and protect laity and clergy alike and that it receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

**C** **By Thine own eternal Spirit Rule in all our hearts alone;**

**P** These and any other things You would have us ask of You, heavenly Father, grant to us for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**C** **By Thine all-sufficient merit Raise us to Thy glorious throne.**

*Sit*

OFFERING

ANTHEM | 10:45am

**E'EN SO LORD JESUS, QUICKLY COME**

Paul Manz

*Peace be to you and grace from him, who frees us from our sins.  
Who loves us all and shed his blood, that we might saved be.*



**C** What shall I ren-der to the Lord for all His ben-e-fits to  
me? I will of - fer the sac-ri-fice of thanks-giv - ing and will  
call on the name of the Lord. I will take the cup of sal-  
va - tion and will call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my  
vows to the Lord now in the pres-ence of all His peo-ple, in the  
courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Je - ru - sa - lem.

## SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

### PREFACE

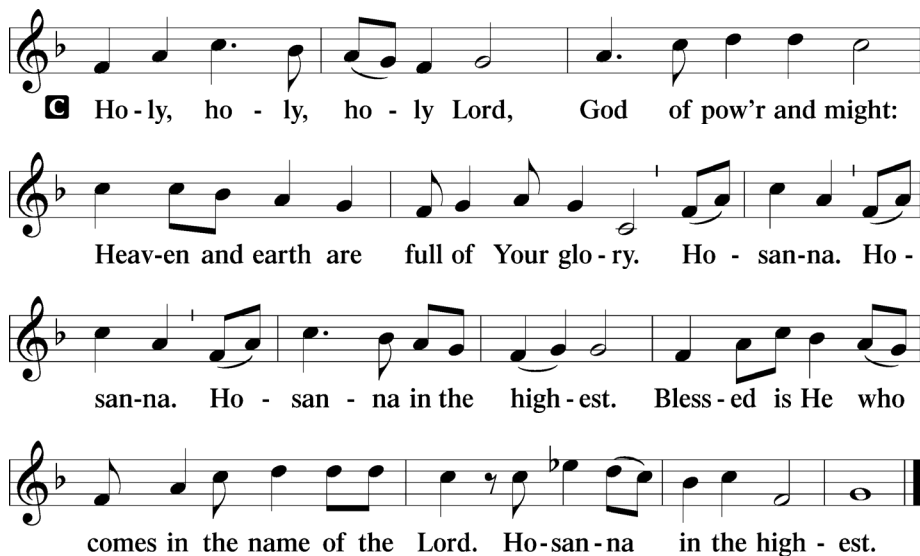
2 Timothy 4:22; Colossians 3:1; Psalm 136

- P** The Lord be with you.
  - C** And also with you.
  - P** Lift up your hearts.
  - C** We lift them to the Lord.
  - P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
  - C** It is right to give Him thanks and praise.
- P** It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose way John the Baptist prepared, proclaiming

Him the promised Messiah, the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and calling sinners to repentance that they might escape from the wrath to be revealed when He comes again in glory. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

## SANCTUS

*Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9*



**C** Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might:  
Heav-en and earth are full of Your glo - ry. Ho - san-na. Ho -  
san-na. 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.

## THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

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**P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My ✝ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My ✝ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

## PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST

**P** As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

**C** Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

**P** O Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, in giving us Your body and blood to eat and to drink, You lead us to remember and confess Your holy cross and passion, Your blessed death, Your rest in the tomb, Your resurrection from the dead, Your ascension into heaven, and Your coming for the final judgment. So remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

## LORD'S PRAYER

**C** 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.

## PAX DOMINI

*John 20:19*

**P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C** Amen.

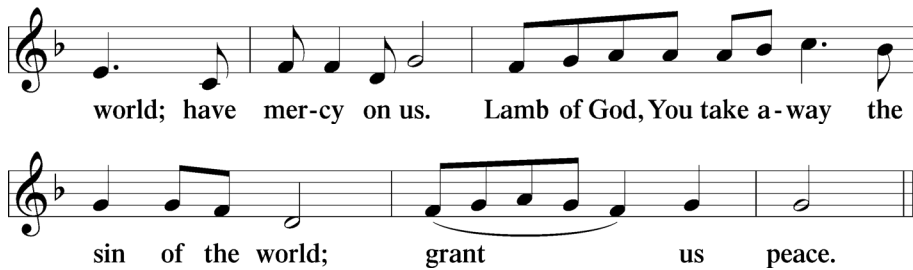
*The people may greet one another in the name of the Lord, saying, "Peace be with you," as a sign of reconciliation and of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Matt. 5:22–24; Eph. 4:1–3).*

## AGNUS DEI

*John 1:29*



**C** 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



*Sit*

## DISTRIBUTION HYMN

357 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Em-man-u-el, And ran-som  
2 O come, Thou Wis-dom from on high, Who or-d'rest  
3 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy  
4 O come, Thou Branch of Jes-se's tree, Free them from  
cap-tive Is-ra-el, That mourns in lone-ly  
all things might-i-ly; To us the path of  
tribes on Si-nai's height In an-cient times didst  
Sa-tan's tyr-an-ny That trust Thy might-y  
ex-ile here Un-til the Son of God ap-pear.  
knowl-edge show, And teach us in her ways to go.  
give the Law and maj-es-ty and awe.  
pow'r to save, And give them vic-t'ry o'er the grave.  
*Refrain*  
Re-joyce! Re-joyce! Em-man-u-el  
Shall come to thee, O Is-ra-el!

- 5 O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heav'nly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery. Refrain

6 O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,  
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight. Refrain

7 O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace. Refrain

## DISMISSAL

**P** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in  
body and soul to life everlasting. Depart ✝ in peace.

**C** Amen.

*Stand*

## THANK THE LORD

*Psalm 105:1-3, 42-43; 1 Chronicles 16:8-10*



**C** Thank the Lord and sing His praise; tell ev-'ry-one what He has done.



Let all who seek the Lord re - joice and proud-ly bear His name.



He re-calls His prom-is - es and leads His peo-ple forth in joy



with shouts of thanks-giv-ing. Al-le - lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia.

## POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

**P** Let us pray.

Gracious God, our heavenly Father, You have given us a foretaste of the feast  
to come in the Holy Supper of Your Son's body and blood. Keep us firm in



the true faith throughout our days of pilgrimage that, on the day of His coming, we may, together with all Your saints, celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

## BENEDICTION

*Numbers 6:24–26*

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

**C** Amen.

## CLOSING HYMN

398 Hail to the Lord's Anointed



1 Hail to the Lord's a - noint - ed, Great Da - vid's great - er Son!  
2 He comes with res - cue speed - y To those who suf - fer wrong,  
3 He shall come down like show - ers Up - on the fruit - ful earth;  
4 Kings shall fall down be - fore Him And gold and in - cense bring;



Hail, in the time ap - point - ed, His reign on earth be - gun!  
To help the poor and need - y And bid the weak be strong;  
Love, joy, and hope, like flow - ers, Spring in His path to birth.  
All na - tions shall a - dore Him, His praise all peo - ple sing.



He comes to break op - pres - sion, To set the cap - tive free,  
To give them songs for sigh - ing, Their dark - ness turn to light,  
Be - fore Him on the moun - tains Shall peace, the her - ald, go;  
To Him shall prayer un - ceas - ing And dai - ly vows as - cend;



To take a - way trans - gres - sion And rule in eq - ui - ty.  
Whose souls, con - demned and dy - ing, Were pre - cious in His sight.  
And righ - teous - ness in foun - tains From hill to val - ley flow.  
His king - dom still in - creas - ing, A king - dom with - out end.

## POSTLUDE

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



## SERVING IN WORSHIP

Rev. Mark Stapleton, Homilist & Liturgist

Dr. Marc Brunelle, Director of Music/Organist

The Cantata Choir of St. John's | 10:45am

Art Schroeder, Lector | 8:00am

Bonnie Kane, Lector | 10:45am

## ALTAR FLOWERS

Flowers at the altar are given to the Glory of God by Art Schroeder on this my 65th trip around the sun, I give thanks and praise to my Lord for blessings received.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# CHRISTMAS at St. John's



## CHRISTMAS EVE

Family Service

4:30pm

Carol Prelude

10:00pm

Candlelight Service

Cantata Choir

Royal String Quartet

10:30pm

## CHRISTMAS DAY

10:00am

*he is the Messiah, the Lord.*

Luke 2:11, NIV

**EQUIPPING ✝ ENGAGING ✝ ENCOURAGING**

St. John's Lutheran Church and School

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