



ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Our Mission

Growing Disciples - Making Christ Known



DECEMBER 21, 2025

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

10:30 AM SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. In Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of Jesus, he is called "Emmanuel, God-with-us." Joseph responds to this message with faith and trust in God's command, setting an example for us. As Paul writes, God calls us and when we respond, we are "set apart for the gospel of God," to live trusting God's plan of grace for our lives.

GATHERING

Bold responses are spoken by the congregation.

Prelude

"Away in a Manger"

Tune CRADLE SONG by William J. Kirkpatrick

Setting for handbells by Anna Laura Page

The congregation stands as the cross is carried into the sanctuary.

Processional Hymn

"Blessed Be the God of Israel" ELW 250

FOREST GREEN

Text: Carl P. Daw Jr., b. 1944, based on Luke 1:68-79 © 1989 Hope Publishing company, Arr. Oxford University Press,
Music: English folk tune; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958

1. Blessed be the God of Israel who comes to set us free
and raises up new hope for us: a Branch from David's tree.
So have the prophets long declared that with a mighty arm
God would turn back our enemies and all who wish us harm.
2. With promised mercy will God still the covenant recall,
the oath once sworn to Abraham, from foes to save us all;
that we might worship without fear and offer lives of praise,
In holiness and righteousness to serve God all our days.
3. My child, as prophet of the Lord you will prepare the way,
to tell God's people they are saved from sin's eternal sway.
Then shall God's mercy from on high shine forth and never cease
to drive away the gloom of death and lead us into peace.

Please be seated.

Welcome

Pastor Timothy McKenzie

Confession and Forgiveness

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is
marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God,
whose home is heaven and earth,
whose salvation is sure.

Amen.

The congregation may kneel or sit for the Confession. Silence is kept for reflection.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Long-expected God,
**we confess that we look to ourselves
for the peace and security only you can provide.**
**We reach for swords and spears,
reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war.**
**We become impatient while waiting
and weary of keeping awake.**

**Free us from self-reliance,
and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors.**
**Increase our trust in God's timing,
and awaken us to your advent among us,
that we may abound in the hope you have promised.**
Amen.

God judges us not as we deserve,
But according to God's own righteousness.
✠ You are freed and forgiven
Saved by grace,
And ready to welcome the Savior.
Amen.

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.

Please stand as able.

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.

Please be seated.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

As the pastor lights the Advent wreath, verse eight of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is sung.

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" ELW 257 VENI, EMMANUEL

8. O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

WORD

First Reading

Isaiah 7:10-16

Marty Schwartz, lector

¹⁰Again 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.” ¹²But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore 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. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For 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

Carol Interlude

“Prelude on ‘O Come, All Ye Faithful’”

Tune ADESTE FIDELES; Setting for handbells by Mitchell Eithun

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Nick Hanewinckel, Amy Woodall, cantors

Psalm 80:7 (Robert A. Hobby) from *Psalter for Worship Year A*; © 2007 Augsburg Fortress



Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph | like a flock; shine forth, you that are enthroned up- | on the cherubim. ²In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, | and Manasseh, stir up your strength and | come to help us. ³Restore | us, O God; let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved. ⁴O LORD | God of hosts, how long will your anger fume when your | people pray? R ⁵You have fed them with the | bread of tears; you have given them bowls of | tears to drink. ⁶You have made us the derision | of our neighbors, and our enemies laugh | us to scorn. ⁷Restore us, O | God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved. ¹⁷Let your hand be upon the one at | your right hand, the one you have made so strong | for yourself. ¹⁸And so will we never turn a- | way from you; give us life, that we may call up- | on your name. ¹⁹Restore us, O LORD | God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved. R

Second Reading

Romans 1:1-7

Marty Schwartz, lector

¹Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷To 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

Carol Interlude

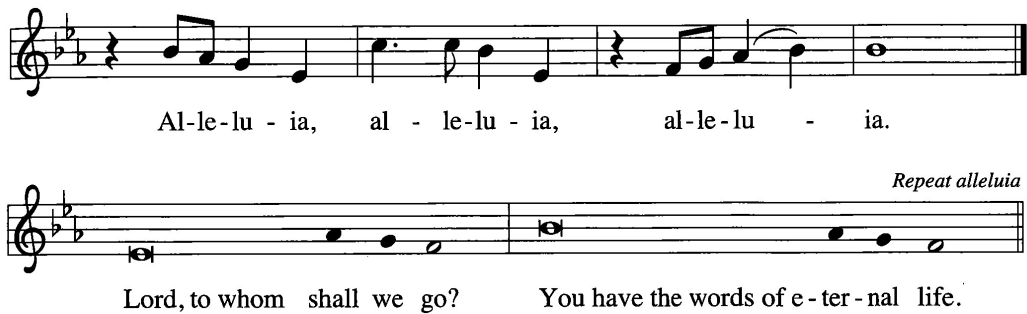
“He Is Born”

Traditional French carol IL EST NE
Setting for handbells by Kevin McChesney

Please stand as able.

Gospel Acclamation

“Alleluia, Lord, to Whom Shall We Go” from *ACS Holy Communion Setting Twelve*



Al-le-lu - ia, al - le-lu - ia, al-le-lu - ia.

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

Repeat alleluia

The Holy Gospel

Matthew 1:18-25

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 1st chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁸Now 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. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But 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. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All 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.” ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵but 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.

Please be seated.

Sermon

“Set apart for the gospel”

Pastor Timothy McKenzie

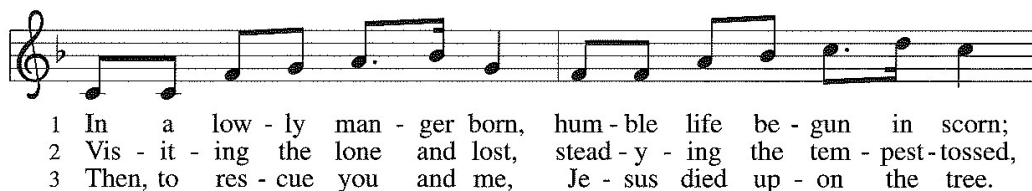
Please stand as able.

Hymn of the Day

“In a Lowly Manger Born” ELW 718

MABUNE

Text: Ko Yuki, 1896-1985; tr. Composite © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress
Music: Seigi Abe, 1891-1974 © Seigi Abe, admin. Christian Conference of Asia



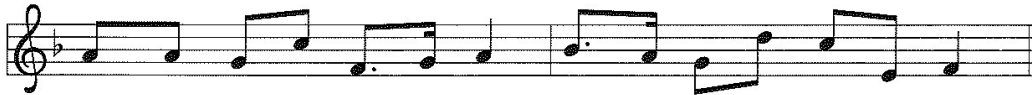
1 In a low - ly man - ger born, hum - ble life be - gun in scorn;
2 Vis - it - ing the lone and lost, stead - y - ing the tem - pest - tossed,
3 Then, to res - cue you and me, Je - sus died up - on the tree.



un - der Jo - seph's watch - ful eye, Je - sus grew as you and I;
giv - ing of him - self in love, call - ing minds to things a - bove.
See in him God's love re - vealed; by his pas - sion we are healed.



knew the suf - f'ring of the weak, knew the pa - tience of the meek,
Sin - ners glad - ly hear his call; pub - li - cans be - fore him fall,
Now he lives in glo - ry bright, lives a - gain in pow'r and might;



hun - gered as but poor folk can; this is he. Be - hold the man!
for in him new life be - gan; this is he. Be - hold the man!
come and take the path he trod, son of Mar - y, Son of God.

The Apostles' Creed

Together, let us confess our faith in the words of the 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.

Please be seated.

Prayers of Intercession

Pastor McKenzie, prayers

The congregation may kneel or sit for the prayers.

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.*

God with us, prepare us for the coming of Jesus Christ. Stir our spirits and our hearts to faith in him that your church in every nation might proclaim him in word and deed through every language and culture that all the world might know his saving grace and love.

God of grace,
hear our prayer.

God with us, the earth breaks forth in singing as it heralds the Messiah's coming. Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in announcing the holy advent of the One through whom all things were created and in whom all things hold together.

God of grace,
hear our prayer.

God with us, send your saving grace and wisdom to all nations and leaders; help them to work for justice and peace, an end to war, and to care for the common good. As you welcome all people, guide all leaders to lift the poor and oppressed, and to welcome the stranger and the foreigner.

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God with us, come to the aid of all who grieve, battle illness, fight addiction, and struggle with depression. Uphold all for whom this season is difficult and help us to care for those around us who need encouragement. Bless, heal, and sustain our church family, especially, Kendal Turner, Sheila Pierfelice, Rochelle Dagenhart, Janice Darnell, Pastor Glen Sea, Mark Barbee, Diane Thornton, Polly Needham, John Graham, Mark Thornton, Tom Tolbert, Dr. Samuel Davis, Bob Roach, Payton McAdams, Dale Hopp, Bill Coppedge, Marcia Newlin, Andres and Silvia Puky, Ashlyn Bordelon, Betsy League, Carmelita Harris, Lucille Johnson, Marilyn Stevens, Satoko Yamada, Judy Cox, Ross Boheler, Charlene Oppermann, Elaine Ketner Sherman, Gene Ellington, Tanner Grant, Christopher Shirley, Eileen Dunlap, Dannye Olin Bragdon, Mindy Curley, Louisa and Oakley Coburn, Roxi Tolbert, Bill Schwartz, Arlene Fielding, David Kutscher, Danielle Clausen, Joseph Tolbert, and Jay Harbinson. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God with us, we remember St. Mark's ministries of compassion, the Soup Kitchen, Kairos Prison Ministry, and Room in the Inn; as well as the AA groups that meet here seeking your help to live sober lives. Bless all who come into our church seeking hope and your healing presence.

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God with us, we offer our humble thanks for all the saints, who in treasuring the gospel, faithfully followed Jesus' call. Strengthen us in our earthly pilgrimage until, at the last, your face shines upon us in your kingdom, where we will forever behold your glory.

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

(Please stand as able, sharing the peace of the risen Christ.)

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

Please be seated.

OFFERING

(Offerings for the mission of the church are gathered by the ushers.)

Anthem

"Every Valley Shall Be Exalted"

John Ness Beck

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry mountain made low; and the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Please stand as able.

Offertory

(The offering is brought forward by the ushers)

“What Child Is This” ELW 296 stanza one

GREENSLEEVES

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898; Music: English ballad, 16th cent.

1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar-y's lap is sleep-ing?

Whom an - gels greet with an-thems sweet while shep-herds watch are keep-ing?

This, this is Christ the king, whom shep-herds guard and an - gels sing;

haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y!

Offering Prayer

Let us pray. Nourishing God, you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come. Amen.

Holy Communion

The Great Thanksgiving

Holy Communion Setting Three

S 144a

The Lord be with you. And al - so 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.

Proper Preface

Sanctus

“Holy, Holy, Holy” from *All Creation Sings*

Holy Communion Setting Twelve



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

Words of Institution

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.

The 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

Here is life, God is with us.
Come, receive what God has promised.

Please be seated.

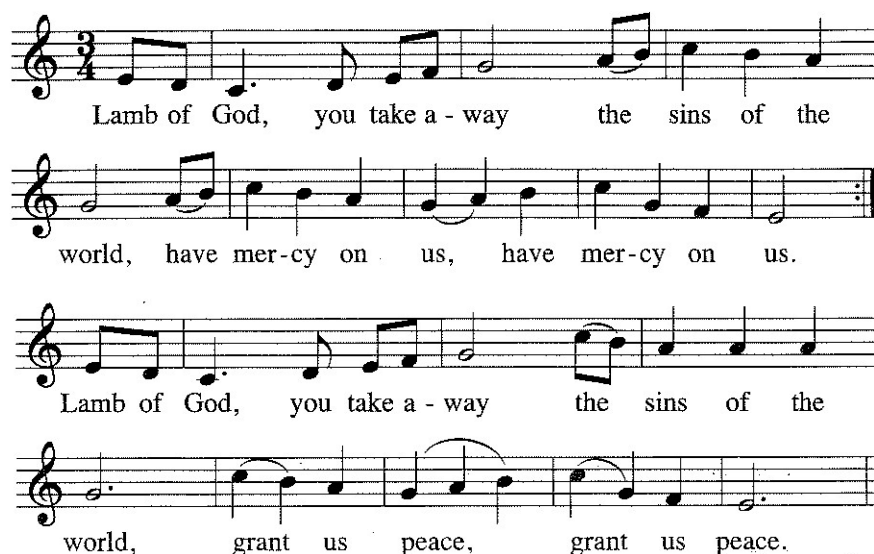
Distribution of Holy Communion

Holy Communion is offered continuously at the Lord's table and at the high altar. Please follow the ushers' prompts, walking forward to the desired communion station and returning via the side aisles. On the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month, distribution is by wafers and small cups, and on the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Sundays of the month distribution is by intinction. Gluten free wafers and grape juice are always available.

Communion Music

"Lamb of God" from *Christmas Carol Mass*

Traditional English Carol



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the
world, have mer-cy on us, have mer-cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the
world, grant us peace, grant us peace.

"What Child Is This" from *Four Carol Preludes*

16th century English ballad GREENSLEEVES

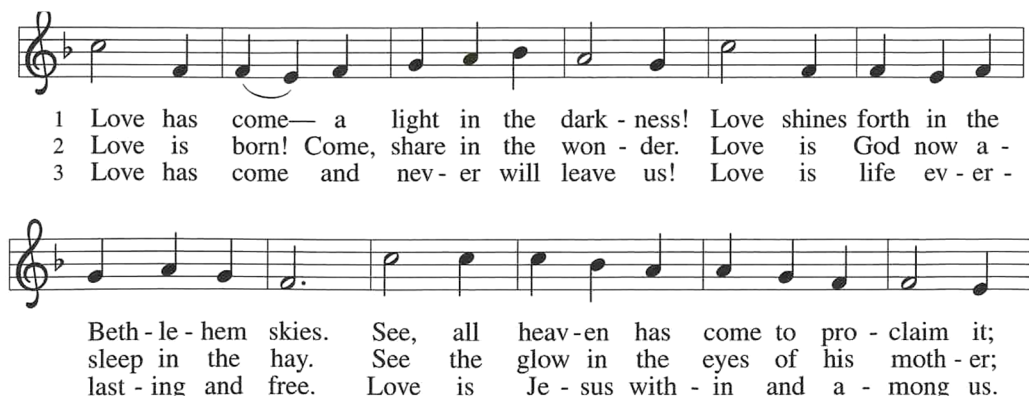
Setting for organ by Richard Purvis

Communion Hymn

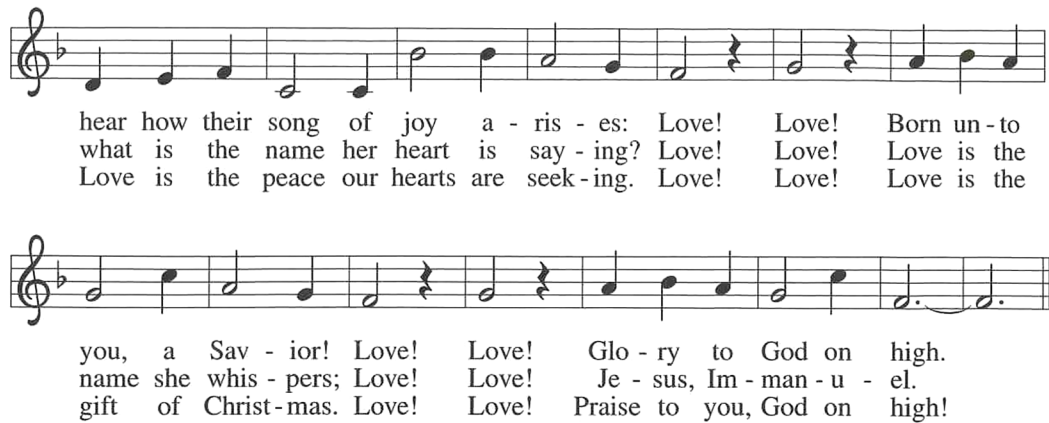
"Love Has Come" ELW 292

UN FLAMBEAU

Text: Ken Bible, b. 1950 © 1996 Integrity's Hosanna! Music; F. Seguin, *Recueil de moels composés en langue provençale*, 1856



1 Love has come— a light in the dark - ness! Love shines forth in the
2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der. Love is God now a -
3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us! Love is life ev - er -
Beth - le - hem skies. See, all heav-en has come to pro - claim it;
sleep in the hay. See the glow in the eyes of his moth - er;
last - ing and free. Love is Je - sus with - in and a - mong us.



hear how their song of joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to
 what is the name her heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the
 Love is the peace our hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the

you, a Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
 name she whis - pers; Love! Love! Je - sus, Im - man - u - el.
 gift of Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Please stand as able.

Post-Communion Blessing

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

Amen.

Post-Communion Prayer

Let us pray. God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

SENDING

Sending Blessing

May God who comes among us,
 Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit,
 grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness,
 and good news to share today and always.

Amen.

Recessional Hymn “It Came upon the Midnight Clear” ELW 282 stanzas 1, 2 & 4

CAROL

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

1. It came upon a midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
 from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
 “Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav’n’s all-gracious king.”
 The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.
2. Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,
 and still their heav’nly music floats o’er all the weary world.
 Above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hov’ring wing,
 and ever o’er its babel sounds the blessed angels sing.
4. For lo! The days are hast’ning on, by prophets seen of old,
 when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,
 when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
 and all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Keep awake.

Thanks be to God.

Worship has ended. You are free to depart or you may remain for the postlude.

Postlude

“Toccata on ‘God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen’” from *An Advent Christmas Suite*

18th century English carol, organ setting by Alfred V. Fedak



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Worship Leaders: Pastor Timothy McKenzie (prayers); Pastor Alexandra Joy Rode; crucifer/acolyte: Michael Lakeman; lector: Marty Schwartz; live streaming camera: Charles Lakeman; soundboard: Kevin Feezor; ushers: Doug Milheim, Marc & Susan Ginns, Eddie Goodall, Rod Stephens; greeters: Neil & Charlotte Dixon, Susan Lakeman; communion assistants: Barbara Baker, Rebecca Huang, Virginia Molan, Jonathan Lakeman; communion helper: Kay Finlon; tabulators: Karen Feezor, Doug Milheim; musicians: St. Mark's Choir; St. Mark's Handbells; Nick Hanewinkel, Amy Woodall, cantors; Lester Ackerman, Director of Music Ministry and Organist

Christmas Eve Leaders: prayer assistant: Pastor McKenzie; crucifer Andrew Puky; acolyte: Ella Puky; lector: 5pm Chuck Baynard, 8:30 Andrea Long; live streaming camera: Needed; soundboard: Kevin Feezor; ushers: 5 pm: Karen Covington, John Simon; 8:30 pm: Marc Ginns, Susan Ginns, Sally McCauley, Rod Stephens; greeters: Needed; communion assistants: 5pm: Chris Stevenson, Kimberly Zimmerman; 8:30: Andea Long, Andrew Puky, Tom Puky, John Simon; communion helper: Chris Miller

Next Sunday Leaders: prayer assistant: Melissa Smith; crucifer/acolyte: Needed; lector: Flora Chance; live streaming camera: Joe Barrett; soundboard: Alan Harms; ushers: Team B; greeters: Tom & Kay Sehorn, Ted Seman, David Thomason; communion assistants: Bonnie Eckerd, Janice Miller, John Simon, Betsy Wenzel; communion helper: Karen Covington; tabulators :Joe Barrett, Meg Fielding, Diane Thomas



From the pastor -

"Watch, Prepare, Rejoice, and Behold" are the four traditional themes of Advent. In Week 1, Jesus tells us to "Watch" because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. In Week 2, John the Baptist echoes Isaiah's words, saying, "Prepare the way of the Lord" making straight his paths in this world. In Week 3, Isaiah writes that the desert will "rejoice and blossom," for God will come with vengeance to save creation, and "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads." And in Week 4, Matthew writes of Jesus' birth as the prophetic fulfillment, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel." These themes of Advent encourage us to be attentive and awake to Christ's ongoing advent in our lives and relationships. These themes encourage us to be prayerful and alert, always ready to point to Christ's ongoing and yet new presence in this world. I encourage you to take time for quiet and prayer during this busy season, that your hearts might be open to Jesus Christ raised and alive in your life, and through you, in this world.

In the peace and light of Christ,
Pastor Tim McKenzie
pastortim@saintmarkscharlotte.org

Coming Up at St. Mark's

Worship and Congregational Life

Altar Flowers Today are given to the glory of God by Virginia and Brendan Molan.

Today: Queen City Ringers "A Winter Star" Concert, 5 pm. All are Welcome!

Christmas Eve Worship

5 pm Family Christmas: "Carols, Communion & Candlelight"

8:30 pm Nativity of Our Lord Holy Communion (Music begins at 8 pm): Choir, Brass & Candlelight.

Next Sunday: There will be ONE Service on 12/28, First Sunday of Christmas, at 10:30 am.

Pastor Ali Rode's Installation: 1/11 at 3 pm. Please join us for the Rite of Installation, followed by a reception.

Aid for Hurricane Helene Victims If you would like to help, please hover your phone camera over the QR code to connect to the NC Synod's website.



Thinking of joining St. Mark's? Please see Pastor Tim to

set up a time to talk. All people are welcome at St. Mark's!

The Christian Education Hour is at 9:30 am on Sundays. You are invited to join the Faith Forum for lively discussions. The class meets in the Large Conference room. New members are always welcome.

St. Mark's email list If you are not receiving emails from St. Mark's, we may not have your correct email address. Please contact the church to let us know. We send at least 2 emails every week.

Family Ministry

Nursery: A fun-filled nursery, staffed by volunteers, is located downstairs. An usher is available to show you the way. Our safety protocols offer peace of mind so you can worship without worry.

Confirmation Class meets every other Sunday at 9:30.

Stewardship

Your pledge helps St. Mark's ministries of worship, service and fellowship continue over the coming year. **2026** Pledge cards are available in the Gathering Place. Thank you for your faithful gifts to St. Mark's ministries. An online pledge option is also available from our website, or you may use the QR code.

You may use the QR code at left (hover your phone camera to connect) for immediate access to St. Mark's website donation page. Pledges and donations for Altar Flowers may also be made using this code.



2026 Altar Flower Sponsorship If you would like to sponsor live flowers for our Sunday worship service, please sign up on the calendar by the mailbox room or contact the church office.

Social Ministry

ROOM IN THE INN Requesting donations of BEDTIME SNACKS for our 10 homeless men we host every Tuesday during January and February ----- lunch size bags of chips, pretzels goldfish; granola bars (preferably without nuts); small bags of fruit snacks. The collection basket is in the hall on the table across from the large conference room. All donated toiletries have been bagged and ready. Your donations are greatly appreciated by the Social Ministry committee and the homeless men we serve.

NOURISH UP (formerly Loaves & Fishes) is facing **empty shelves**. Nourish Up is also unable to replenish this shortage because of a sharp cut in federal funding. They need financial assistance to purchase fresh produce, dairy products and bread to accompany the donated non-perishables. Checks

can be sent to St. Mark's with "Nourish Up" on the memo line. Our baker's rack will always be waiting for your generous donations of "unbreakable nonperishable" food items. Thank you for your continuous support.

Soup Kitchen St. Mark's Soup Kitchen will close Thursdays 12/25/2025 and 1/1/2026. See you 1/8/26! You can help support the Soup Kitchen through financial donations sent to the church, or through St.

Mark's online giving portal. Help us share God's love!

Announcements

AA meets in the Fellowship Hall: Monday nights "Third Tradition", 7 pm; Wednesday nights "Just the Basics", 7:30 pm; & Thursday nights "Not a Glum Lot", 6:30 pm; "SLAA" meets in Room 106: Mondays men only at 6 pm; Thursdays at 6:30 pm; Fridays women only at 6 pm & Saturday mornings 10:30 am.

Music Notes

"Blessed Be the God of Israel" ELW 250 Carl P. Daw, Jr. (b. 1944), an American Episcopal priest, wrote this hymn in 1985 for a competition for new Advent hymns sponsored by The Hymn Society of America. It is a paraphrase of the Song of Zechariah in Luke 1:68-79, the Benedictus, the song of thanksgiving offered by Zechariah on the occasion of the circumcision of his son, John the Baptist. The canticle received its name from its first words in Latin ("Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel", "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel"). **FOREST GREEN** is an English folk tune, collected and notated by the great English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1871-1958), after he heard it sung by a man named Garman of Forest Green, near Ockley, Surrey.

"Love Has Come" ELW 292 This hymn was penned by Ken Bible (b. 1950) former director for thirty years at the Lillenas Publishing Company, an American music publishing firm. His text highlights "love" in relation to Christmas. Paul Westermeyer writes: "the word love appears twenty-two times, partly by itself as a refrain that fits this tune, but it is also refracted through a variety of interpretive prisms, which collectively help define it: coming, shining, proclaimed, born, peace, Jesus' name, life, gift, free, with us, and ultimately God." **UN FLAMBEAU** is a 17th century tune from Provencal, France, associated with the text "Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella." **UN FLAMBEAU** translates "a flaming torch", especially one made of several thick wicks dipped in wax.

"In a Lowly Manger Born" ELW 718 Ko Yuki (1896-1985) wrote this hymn in 1923 and included it as a prologue in his *Poems on the Life of Jesus* (1929) He served as pastor of Tokyo Futaba Independent Church from 1921 until 1971, which eventually became part of the Church of Christ in Japan. In addition to many writings and translations, he served as editor of the Japanese Common Hymnal, and wrote or translated over five hundred hymns. This hymn begins with the baby Jesus in the manger, then moves through Jesus' life, ministry, passion, and exaltation. **MABUNE** is the first word of the hymn in Japanese and means "manger." The tune was written for this hymn in 1930 by Seigi Abe (1892-1974) and published in *Sambika* (1931).

This Week: From the Lutheran Church Calendar

December 26, Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

Stephen was a deacon and the first martyr of the church. He was one of those seven upon whom the apostles laid hands after they had been chosen to serve widows and others in need. Later, Stephen's preaching angered the temple authorities, and they ordered him to be put to death by stoning, with Saul (later Paul) as one of the observers. As he died, Stephen witnessed to his faith and spoke of a vision of heaven.

December 27, John Apostle and Evangelist

The son of Zebedee and brother of James, John was the one among the twelve disciples known as "beloved," and was a witness to the Transfiguration. Tradition has named him the writer of the Gospel of John, the three New Testament letters that bear his name, and the Book of Revelation. Tradition has also witnessed to John being the youngest of the disciples, and one who lived to an advanced age in Ephesus, having taught Polycarp, who was later to teach Irenaeus. John is a saint for Christmas through his proclamation that the light shines in the darkness, and the Word became flesh, dwelling among us.

Adapted from Sundays and Seasons

St. Mark's Prayer List

Kendal Turner, Sheila Pierfelice, Rochelle Dagenhart, Janice Darnell, Pastor Glen Sea, Mark Barbee, Diane Thornton, Polly Needham, John Graham, Mark Thornton, Tom Tolbert, Dr. Samuel Davis, Bob Roach, Payton McAdams, Dale Hopp, Bill Coppedge, Marcia Newlin, Andres & Silvia Puky, Ashlyn Bordelon, Betsy League, Carmelita Harris, Lucille Johnson, Marilyn Stevens, Satoko Yamada, Judy Cox, Ross Boheler, Charlene Oppermann, Elaine Ketner Sherman, Gene Ellington, Tanner Grant, Christopher Shirley, Eileen Dunlap, Dannye Olin Bragdon, Mindy Curley, Louisa and Oakley Coburn, Roxi Tolbert, Bill Schwartz, Arlene Fielding, David Kutscher, Danielle Clausen, Joseph Tolbert, and Jay Harbinson.

Please email Pastor McKenzie with Prayer List and other prayer requests (pastortim@saintmarkscharlotte.org)

Readings for 12/28/2025

First Sunday of Christmas (one service at 10:30am)

Isaiah 63:7-9

Psalm 148

Hebrews 2:10-18

Matthew 2:13-23

Birthdays

12/23 Andrea Long

12/23 Ben McCall

12/25 Marc Ginns

12/25 Tyler Andujar

12/25 Phillip Foust

12/27 Sally McCauley



Do you feel like you are in crisis? In Isaiah it is written, "Fear not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God." Stephen ministers are here to show the Lord's love and comfort for you in times of trial. If you would like to confidentially speak to a Stephen Minister, please contact Pastor Tim (pastortim@saintmarkscharlotte.org)



Our Ministers

All the people of God at St. Mark's

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St. Mark's Lutheran Church

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