

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Third Sunday of Advent



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2023

10 A.M.

INTRODUCTION

“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

PRELUDE

The assembly stands.



+ GATHERING +

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation (C) Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

P Most merciful God,

C we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. 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. 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 In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of word and sacrament in the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
 2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
 3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
 4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come

prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
 bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
 shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal
 soul to cure, and with the trea - sures
 shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal

pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
 fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
 of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
 arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.


Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702-1751
 Music: CHESTERFIELD, Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820

GREETING

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


KYRIE

Leader or All



O Lord, have . . . mer-cy up-on us. Christ, have mer - cy.

All



O Lord, have . . . mer-cy up-on us. Christ, have mer - cy.

Leader or All



Have mer - cy, O Lord. Have mer - cy, O Lord.



PRAYER OF THE DAY

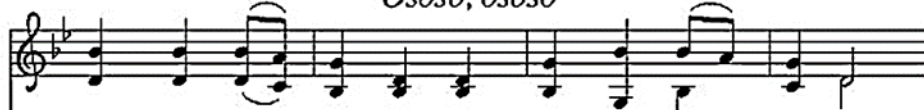
B Let us pray.

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.

C Amen.

Come Now, O Prince of Peace

Ososŏ, ososŏ



O - so - sŏ o - so - sŏ, pyong - hwa - ūi - im - gŭm
 1 Come now, O Prince of peace, make us one bod - y.
 2 Come now, O God of love, make us one bod - y.
 3 Come now and set us free. O God. our Sav - ior.



u - ri - ga han - mom i - ru - ge ha - so - sŏ.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile all na - tions.

Text: Geonyong Lee, b. 1947; tr. Marion Pope
 Music: OSOSŎ, Geonyong Lee, b. 1947
 Text and music © Geonyong Lee.

The assembly is seated.

CHILDREN'S TIME



+ WORD +

FIRST READING: FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

¹The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

⁸For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. ¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Reader The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 126 *We sing the psalm in response to the first reading.*



Leader ¹When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,
then were we like | those who dream.

**C ²Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with | shouts of
joy.**

**Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done
great | things for them.”**

L ³The LORD has done great | things for us,
and we are | glad indeed.

**C ⁴Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses | of the Negeb.**

L ⁵Those who | sowed with tears
will reap with | songs of joy.

**C ⁶Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing their sheaves.**

Spoken after the psalm is sung:

Amen.

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

R The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(Sung twice)*

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

Al-le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. Christ is ris - en, ris'n in - deed.

GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28

John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

P The holy gospel according to Mark, the first chapter.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

The assembly stands.

Refrain



Go tell it on the moun - tain, o-ver the hills and ev - 'ry - where;



go tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!



1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
 2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when, lo, a - bove the earth
 3 Down in a lone - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born;



Refrain



be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.
 rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
 and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless - ed Christ - mas morn.



Text: African American spiritual, refrain; John W. Work Jr., 1872-1925, stanzas, alt.
 Music: GO TELL IT, African American spiritual

CHOIR, ANTHEM: *“Mary Did You Know?”* -Lowry/Greene

INTERPRATIVE DANCE Rita Ford and Colleen Holdcraft

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
would one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy
has come to make you new?
This child that you delivered will soon deliver you
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
would calm the storm with his hand?
Did you know that your baby boy
has walked where angels trod?
and when you kissed your little baby
you've kissed the face of God
Oh, Mary, did you know?
Mary, did you know?
The blind will see, the deaf will hear
the dead will live again
the lame will leap, the mute will speak
the praises of the Lamb
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy
is heaven's perfect Lamb?
That sleeping child you're holding is the great I Am.

APOSTLES' CREED

A Let us confess our faith.

C 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

Each petition ends: Merciful God,

Congregational response: receive our prayer.

PEACE

A The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

We greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

The assembly is seated.

OFFERING

An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

ANTHEM "Comfort, My People" - Callanan

Comfort, my people, and calm all your fear;
 the day of salvation is quickly drawing near.
 The one you long to see will soon set you free.
 O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Silence the thunder, silence sounds of war.
 End all destruction and comfort those who mourn.
 Your dream draws near; your vision is here.
 O come, Lord Jesus, come.

Be light in the darkness; be truth for our lives.
 Be strength for the helpless, the poor and lost who cry.
 O saving voice, O living choice,
 O come, Lord Jesus, come.

OFFERING HYMN 690 *We Raise Our Hands to You, O Lord (vs. 1 & 5)*



1	We	raise	our hands to	you, O Lord,	like
2	What	good	and bless - ing	you be - stow	are
3	Oh,	make	our bar - ren	trees to grow,	our
4	As	sum -	mer fol - lows	spring-time's rain,	grace
5	Through	grace	your new cre -	a - tion lies	in



emp - ty	ves - sels.	Oh, come to us	and
free - ly	giv - en.	Your pow'r will make	the
hands to	blos - som,	and let our lives	bring
fol - lows	sor - row,	and grief and joy	shall
hands held	o - pen.	O Giv - er of	all



give us life	from springs where liv - ing wa - ters flow.
weak - est strong	and bar - ren branch - es start to bud.
forth such fruit	that heals our neigh - bor's grief and pain.
bear much fruit,	though hid - den from our hu - man eyes.
good - ness, come,	dwell with us in our earth - ly home.

Text: Sverin Ellingsen, b. 1929; tr. Hedwig T. Durnbaugh, b. 1929
 Music: Trond Kvernø, b. 1945
 1. © Hedwig T. Durnbaugh;
 Music © 1978 Norsk Musik forlag

+ SENDING +

BLESSING *We receive the blessings of the triune God.*

P The holy Three, the holy One increase your hope, strengthen your faith, deepen your love, and ✝ grant you peace.

C **Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The assembly stands.

SENDING HYMN

251

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness

1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav-ior's praise!
 2 To all who live in ho-ly fear your mer-cy ev-er flows.
 3 To Is-ra-el, your ser-vant blest, your help is ev-er sure;

You looked up-on my low-li-ness, and I am full of grace.
 With might-y arm you dash the proud, their schem-ing hearts ex-pose.
 the prom-ise to our par-ents made their chil-dren will se-ure.

Now ev-'ry land and ev-'ry age this bless-ing shall pro-claim—
 The ruth-less you have cast a-side, the low-ly throned in-stead;
 Sing glo-ry to the Ho-ly One, give hon-or to the Word,

great won-ders you have done for me, and ho-ly is your name.
 the hun-gry filled with all good things, the rich sent off un-fed.
 and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all a-dored.

Text: *Wink One Onez*, 1995, based on the Magnificat
 Music: KINGSFOLD, English folk tune; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958
 Text © 1995 Augsburg Fortress.
 Outside USA: Arr. from *The English Journal*, © Oxford University Press 1996. All rights reserved.

DISMISSAL

- A We believe out loud that God’s mission for us is:
- C to be an active community that welcomes all people to nurture and share their faith and gifts with everyone, according to God’s call.**
- A Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
- C Thanks be to God.**

+ + +

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**Rita Ford dedicates today's altar flowers
to the glory of God
and in thanksgiving
for family and friends.**

Calendar for December 17-24

Dec.	17	Sun.	9:00 am	Book study
			9:30 am	Choir practice
			10:00 am	Worship, Third Sunday of Advent /Children’s Program
	20	Wed.	7:00 pm	Choir practice
	24	Sun.	9:00 am	Book study
			9:30 am	Choir practice
			10:00 am	Worship, Fourth Sunday of Advent /Children’s Program
			7:00 pm	Christmas Eve worship service

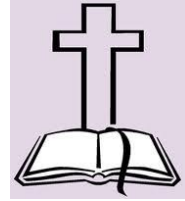
Next Sunday's Readings, Fourth Sunday of Advent:

[2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16](#)

[Luke 1:46b-55](#)

[Romans 16:25-27](#)

[Luke 1:26-38](#)



SERVING EVERY SUNDAY

Pastor Tom, presiding and preaching

Katharine Gossman, piano

Karl Barton, flute

Denise Bookwalter, announcements

Choir: Karl Barton, Melissa Barton, Mark Canning, Judi Duffy, Kirsten Ebbesen, Rita Ford, Martin Guttenplan, Vicki Guttenplan, Ron Hartung, Rudy Hehn, Susan Hehn, Colleen Holdcraft, Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Sandy Ness, Dave Suhrweir, Cassandra White

SERVING TODAY AND ONE WEEK FROM TODAY

Serving	December 17	December 24
Assisting Minister	Kirsten Ebbesen	Beth Alexander
Cup Minister	Rob Schiffer	Rita Ford
Cantor	Cassandra White	
Lector	Jennifer Buchanan	Judi Duffy
Acolyte	Cup Minister - or Colton Allen or Graham Reece	
Tech Team	Audrey Post Cindy Suhrweir	Caroline Collins Audrey Post
Ushers	Colin Hackley Patrick Kennell	Bob Eshleman Lawana Lamb-Daniels
Altar Guild	Rita Ford Susan Warren	Linda Eshleman Lawana Lamb-Daniels Sandy Lamb-Daniels
Counters	Kirsten Ebbesen Rob Schiffer	Janet Barber Susan Warren

PRAYER REQUESTS

New concerns: Judy Renwick (friend of Judi Duffy), in therapy for Glioblastoma; Gil Johnson (friend of Judi Duffy), in therapy for pancreatic cancer; Steve Michael (cousin of Rob Schiffer), in rehab after a serious accident.

For the sick: Val Sullivan; Margarete Decker (mother of Caroline Collins); Sallie Robinson (wife of Erik Robinson); Don Dowd; Isabelle Taylor (granddaughter of Bill & Connie Taylor), being treated for rheumatoid arthritis and Primary Immunodeficiency; Theresa Martin (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Dan Graney (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Sarah (friend of Cassandra White).

In treatment for cancer: Phil Williams; Gordon Fleischer; Stephanie Barber; Jenny (niece of Laura Sullivan & Colin Hackley); Rosalinda Wright; James Sablan (brother of Donna Schiffer); Bruce Blubbaum (cousin of Sharon Simmons); Craig Timm (friend of Cheryl & Steve); Laura Ketchum-Jahn, (friend of Cheryl & Steve); Aubrey Thonvold (Reconciling Works Exec. Dir.).

Health and protection: For all affected by the coronavirus – especially those experiencing mental-health difficulties due to isolation, those struggling to recover from the disease, those on the front lines fighting, researching and treating the disease (doctors, nurses, medical personnel, EMTs), the millions of unemployed people, etc.; for the unaccompanied children entering the U.S., including those “unaccounted for.”

For prisoners: All those on Death Row.

Other concerns: For Karen Olson; Kevin Robinson (son of Erik Robinson), in need of encouragement; Isaac (son of Terri Schmitt), for physical and emotional healing.

Church concerns: St. Stephen’s Church Council; the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council; all congregations searching for ways to stay connected and proclaim the Good News; Reconciling Works; Grace Lutheran Church; Bishop Pedro Suarez; for rest and rejuvenation for Presiding Bishop Eaton as she takes a leave of absence for several months; Interim Presiding Bishop Michael Burk, providing leadership in Bp. Eaton's absence; Our Savior Lutheran Church in Freeport, Bahamas; the ELCA Advocacy offices and ministry; St. Paul Lutheran Church, Pensacola.

World concerns: For all people suffering and/or recovering from hurricanes; migrants and asylum seekers; civil rights for people around the world; a ceasefire in Ethiopia and in Ukraine; peace in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PLEDGE DRIVE: We are collecting pledge cards for 2024. Please prayerfully consider your planned contributions for the ministry of St. Stephen. The estimate of giving is vital information for our Church Council to begin preparing our budget. Our planned gifts are also vital to our own spiritual development and maturity. Thank you in advance for your generous stewardship and trust in God's mercy. *(Cards are in the narthex and can be dropped in the collection plate. You also have the option of pledging directly to Lori via email or calling.)*

FLOWER CHART FOR 2024: Do you have an anniversary, birthday or special memory you would like to honor? Celebrate the occasion by sponsoring the flowers for our service by signing up for the 2024 Flower Chart located in the narthex. The cost is \$40, and you can place it in the offering plate.

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: Want to read a sermon you missed? Visit <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters>. Want to read the latest newsletters? Go to <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters>. Want to browse a collection of St. Stephen songs? They're at <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters>.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

We'll be decorating the chancel area with poinsettias for Christmas. Would you like to dedicate one (or more)? The cost is \$10, and the dedication list will be in the Dec. 18 and Dec. 25 bulletins. Just fill out the form below and place it with your payment in the offering plate, or email Lori with the information.

The deadline is this Sunday, Dec. 17.

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

NAME _____ QUANTITY _____

DEDICATION _____
