

Holy Nativity Lutheran Church

3 Lenape Trail
Wenonah, NJ 08090

OUR MISSION

Graced by a loving God to be a caring community of faith the fellowship of Holy Nativity is called to support one another, warmly welcoming others into our community, sharing in the mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and reaching out in witness and service to the communities to which we belong as one in the Body of Christ.

Worship Service for Sunday, December 14, 2025

Third Sunday of Advent LBW Holy Communion Setting Two

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

In response to God's overwhelming love, we stand in awe of the wideness of God's mercy and by God's Spirit we welcome all who are seeking God's love and grace. In faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, mindful of our Lutheran emphasis on grace, and rejoicing in the celebration of our shared baptismal journey, we welcome all as members of our church family including any who have ever felt excluded by the Church for any of the reasons that too often divide us.

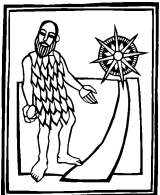
We are so glad you have joined us today!

First-time guests: *Please fill out a Communion Card and place it in the offering plate.* Newcomer orientations are held on various days several times a year for those who are interested in learning more about HNLC.

Restrooms are located in the hallway between the lobby and our fellowship hall.

Today's Altar Flowers are given by the DeFrank family to the Glory of God and in memory of Scott and Jessie MacGregor.

The Sanctuary Candle is given to the Glory of God.



Introduction to the day

A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.

PRELUDE

A Tender Rose Has Blossomed

arr. J. Rasley

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (The congregation responds with text in bold print.)

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.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another. *Silence is kept for reflection.*

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.**

GATHERING SONG *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn* (WOV 633 v. 1 and 2)



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for
2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when
4 Re - jice, re - jice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing, Sing out your joy, for
man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is
all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing,
qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;
qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -
Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in
Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and
kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to
won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and
sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



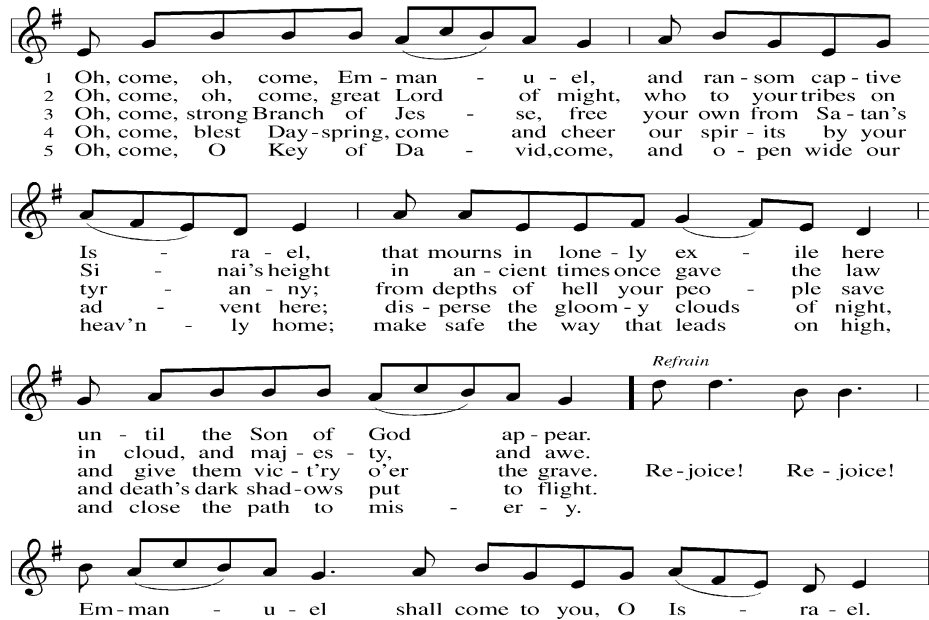
lives now in - side us for - ev - er.
shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.
weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

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.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Advent Canticle For Candle Lighting LBW 34 *O Come O Come Emmanuel* (v. 1-3)



1 Oh, come, oh, come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
2 Oh, come, oh, come, great Lord of might, who to your tribes on
3 Oh, come, strong Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's
4 Oh, come, blest Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by your
5 Oh, come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our

Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
Si - nai's height in an - cient times once gave the law
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save
ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,
heav'n - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high,

Refrain
un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!
and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.
and close the path to mis - er - y.

Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

Advent Wreath Lighting Prayer

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. **Your prophets spoke of a day when the desert would blossom and waters would break forth in the wilderness. Bless us as we light the candles on this reath. Strengthen our hearts as we prepare for the coming of the Lord. May he give water to all who thirst, for he is our light and our salvation. Blessed be God forever. Amen.**

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10 A reading from Isaiah.

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.]]

³ Strengthen the weak hands
and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

“Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;
⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert;
⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God’s people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.
⁹ No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 146:5-10 (The Psalm is sung responsively by verse.)



Refrain: The LORD | lifts up those * who | are bowed down. (*Ps. 146:8*)

Refrain: The LORD | lifts up those * who | are bowed down.

⁵ Happy are they who have the God of Jacob | for their help, * whose hope is in the | LORD their God;
⁶ **who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that | is in them; * who keeps promis- | es forever;**
⁷ who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to | those who hunger. * The LORD sets the | captive free.

⁸ **The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who | are bowed down; * the LORD | loves the righteous.**

Refrain: The LORD | lifts up those * who | are bowed down.

⁹ The LORD cares ¹ for the stranger; * the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way ¹ of the wicked.

¹⁰ **The LORD shall ¹ reign forever, * your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. ¹ Hallelujah!**

Refrain: The LORD ¹ lifts up those * who ¹ are bowed down.

SECOND READING: James 5:7-10 A reading from James.

In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

WE RISE TO GREET THE GOSPEL

Alleluia. I am sending my messen- ¹ ger before you,* who will prepare your ¹ way before you. *Alleluia.* (Matt. 11:10)



GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11 The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" ⁴ Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.'

¹¹ "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON *Silence for reflection follows the sermon.*

HYMN OF THE DAY *Prepare the Royal Highway (LBW 26 v. 1 and 2)*



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
 2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
 3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
 4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
 Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
 Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
 His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
 God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
 All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
 So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Refrain
 Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

NICENE CREED (LBW p. 84)

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

John of the Cross, renewer of the church, died 1591 Sunday, December 14, 2025

John was a member of the Carmelite monastic order, and worked to reform it. His writings reflect a deep interest in mystical thought and meditation.

Las Posadas (LLC) Tuesday, December 16, 2025

This celebration, long popular in Mexico, takes its name from the "posadas," or lodgings, sought by Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Their search is reenacted in a neighborhood, unsuccessfully, until finally they are welcomed in, and a party commences.

Katharina von Bora Luther, renewer of the church, died 1552 Saturday, December 20, 2025

Born to an impoverished nobleman, Katie eventually took vows as a nun, but around age twenty-four she and several other nuns who were influenced by the writings of Martin Luther left the convent. Six children were born to Katie and Martin.

PRAYER LIST

Prayers for the two National Guardsmen who were shot in Washington, DC and their families, Holly & Duane, Dawn Allen, The family of Anthony Assante as they mourn his passing, James Barth, Hal Battindorf, Nicholas Baud, Madelene Budd, Carol Carty, Sal Castelli, Jenn Causey and family, Tracey Causey, Lisa Clark, Josh Clarke, Sean Cleavenger, Baby Landyn and Kristen Compagoni, Sherwood Cotton, Bob Counbs, Craig (diagnosed with cancer), Rocco Cristinzio, Leslie Criston, Milton Cuevas, Sr., Milton Cuevas, Jr., The family of John Cusack as they grieve his passing, Nicholas Damiani, The family of Tony DelMonte as they mourn his passing, Alicia DiRienzo, Kathy Drew, Barbara Esposito, Barbara Facchine, Scott Fey, Bill Flynn, Francis, Bobby G., Alma Garcia, Gavin Gigliotti, Lauren Stott Gilbert, Marie Giliberti, Mark Gismondi, Terry Gismondi, Wilma Gismondi, Jay Goheen and family, Randi Gordon, Collet Grasso, Steve Harris, the Hatcher family, the Hogan family, The friends and family of Tom Jones as they mourn his passing, Marilyn Kaiser, The family of Robert Keen as they mourn his passing, Corinne Klotz, Clara Kuter, The family and friends of Doris Lail as they mourn her passing, Grace Laphan, Pat Larkin, Joseph Lonia, The friends and family of Jessie MacGregor as they mourn her passing, The family of Doris Manogue as they mourn her passing, Joseph Mansfield, Rob and Nona McDonough & family, Caroline Miles, Jim Montisano, The friends and family of Mary Alice Morrison as they mourn her passing, George Muth, Bob and Sue Nevins, Janet Ostrowski, Lucas Otey, Otis, Donna Paone, Danielle Peters, The family of Lewis Richards as they mourn his passing, Dan Richardson, The friends and family of Carole Rund as they mourn her passing, The family of Charles Rust as they mourn his passing, The family of Scott Rust as they mourn his passing, Noreen Ruyuh, Dylan Sauer, Meleta Seher, Billy Shea, Sue Sheeley, Helen Simkunas & Family, Joyce and Arvin Skramsdad, Julia Stanz, Donna Testa, Frank Temean, Ed Tutka, Lynne Rasmussen Walker, Sharon Walker, Wayne Weaver, The family of Michelle Whiting as they mourn her passing, the Wilke family including Tim & Catherine, Jill Wilt, Sue Wise, Shirley Yancer.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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 of power and mercy, we praise you for Jesus and his acts of healing and liberation. Lead us to proclaim the good news from generation to generation, that all may place their hope in you. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When lands are parched and dry, bring rain and snow; where wilderness is barren, sow seeds of life. Fill the lands with trees that grow, plants that flower, and creatures that thrive, as nature proclaims the wonder of your works. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When there is injustice or corruption among nations and leaders, root it out. Turn their attention to inequity and the cries of the poor. Instill a deeper sense of compassion and care in all who govern. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. (*We pray especially for . . .*) In uncertain times, remind us of the promise spoken to our ancestors in faith. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When people are imprisoned or held captive, break the chains and offer release. Strengthen the work of the church in restorative justice, breaking cycles of poverty, and welcoming the immigrant (*especially we pray for Global Refuge and Lutheran Social Services*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

As we await your coming, we give thanks for the faithful who have lived and died in faith (*especially Mary, mother of Jesus, John of the Cross and . . .*). May their boldness of faith inspire our witness and work. 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

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

The ministers and congregation may greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Peace be with you. **Peace be with you.**

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

CHORAL OFFERTORY

Lift Up Your Heads

arr. L. Shackley

Flute—Caryl Carthew

OFFERTORY VERSE

Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that
we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of
all; u-nite them with the prayers we of-fer. Grace our ta-ble
with your pres-ence, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

ADVENT OFFERING PRAYER

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.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING

DIALOGUE, PREFACE AND SANCTUS

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

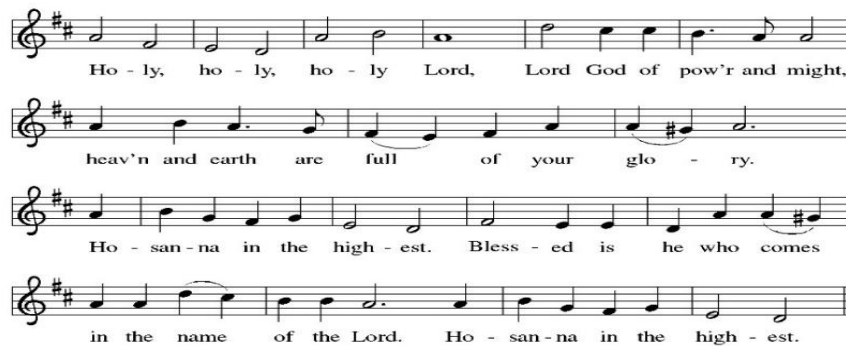
Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:

Blessed are you for the birth of creation.

Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.

Blessed are you for your promise to your people.

Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.

Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.

Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

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.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection. We look with hope for his coming.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit. Come among us. Bless this meal. May your Word take flesh in us. Awaken your people. Fill us with your light. Bring the gift of peace on earth.

Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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.

ADVENT INVITATION TO COMMUNION

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

COMMUNION SONG



COMMUNION (LBW p. 91)

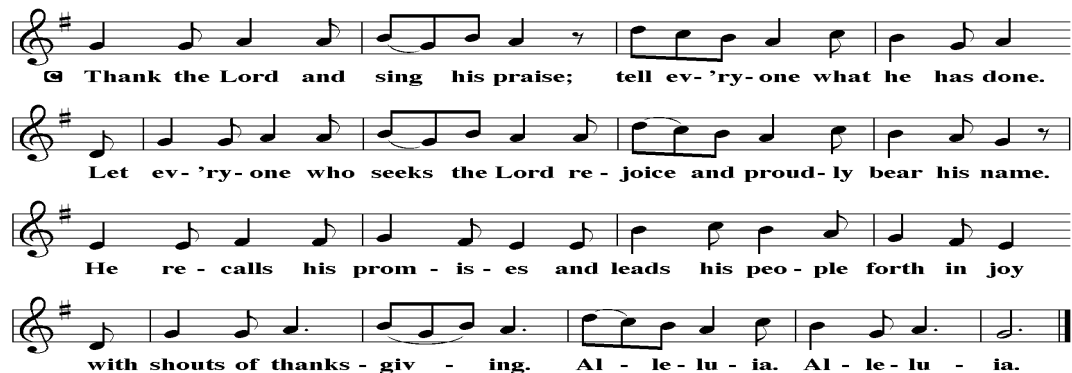
The body of Christ, given for you. **Amen.**

The blood of Christ, shed for you. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

May the body and blood of our risen Savior Jesus Christ Bless you and keep you now and forever in God's Grace! **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION CANTICLE



PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

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

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

SENDING OF COMMUNION

Gracious God, loving all your family with a mother's tender care: As you sent the angel to feed Elijah with heavenly bread, assist those who set forth to share your word and sacrament with those who are *sick, homebound, and imprisoned*. In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those who will receive this sacrament, and give us all the comfort of your abiding presence through the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

ADVENT 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.**

SENDING SONG *Prepare the Royal Highway* (LBW 26 v. 3 and 4)

3 Then fling the gates wide open
to greet your promised king!
Your king, yet ev'ry nation
its tribute too may bring.
All lands will bow before him;
their voices join your singing:

Refrain

Hosanna to the Lord,
for he fulfills God's word!

4 His is no earthly kingdom;
it comes from heav'n above.
His rule is peace and freedom
and justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding
for kindness so abounding:

Refrain

Hosanna to the Lord,
for he fulfills God's word!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Offering received December 6th and 7th - \$2739.00. (This amount does not include money donated for Thrivent and Pastor's Gift.) Weekly amount needed to meet the spending plan--\$2498.00. Total received to date—\$114091.45. Amount needed to date--\$122402.00. (We are currently about \$8310.00 behind our spending plan goal. Please don't forget the church if you will be away.)
- We are currently running a campaign to re-paint the church tower ("Paint the Tower" fund). The total cost of the project is \$4000 and we need to have half of this amount to schedule the work (\$2000). To date, we have received \$3170 so we will be able to schedule the work. We still need an additional \$830 to pay the final bill. Please mark your donations "Tower" so we can accurately track our progress. Thank you for your generosity in helping us to maintain our church property!
- If you have not yet returned your commitment card for 2026, please do so as soon as possible.
- Offering envelopes for 2026 are available in the Narthex.
- The weekly bulletin is emailed to members each Thursday or Friday prior to the weekend. If for some reason you did not receive the email or have trouble opening the file, you can also access the bulletin on the church's website.
- A "Thank You" from Doris Manogue's family:
 - * Our mother always loved taking care of her home inside and outside to make it feel beautiful, warm and welcoming. She would be pleased that these two lovely shrubs are adorning her

“church home” giving it the same beautiful and welcoming feel. She would also be very touched that dear, longtime family friends, Larry and Nick Baud, chose the shrubs and then planted them at the church. We appreciate all of their efforts and time in digging out the old shrubs and selecting and planting the new ones. (Funds from Doris’ memorial were used to purchase the shrubs.)

- Donations through Venmo and PayPal--Please note that, per council policy, if you make an electronic donation through Venmo or PayPal, it will not be recorded on your annual giving statement. It is the member’s responsibility to track these donations for tax purposes.
- Shop Rite shopping cards are available for purchase after the services.
- ST. PETER’S COMMUNITY PANTRY is here to help serve those facing food insecurity in Gloucester County. If you are having a difficult time buying food for yourself, or your family, please let us try to make a small difference for you. The Pantry is located behind St. Peter’s Episcopal Church at 304 Kings Highway in Clarksboro. We are open every 3rd Saturday of the Month from 9 AM to 1 PM. Next distribution date: Saturday, December 20, 2025.
- Coffee hour between services is scheduled for the first Sunday of each month, hosted by the 8:30 service. Come and join us for coffee and fellowship Sunday, January 4th.
- Save the following dates:
 - * Saturday, December 13—Holiday Sing-along at Memorial Presbyterian @ 1:00 pm. It is a family event for the whole community. There will be a combined choir and rehearsal for the choir will be held at Memorial Presbyterian on Thursday, December 11 @ 6:30 pm.
 - * Saturday, December 13 and Sunday December 14—Bake sale after the services
 - * Sunday, December 21—Gift Wrapping ONLY between services (Please RSVP by 12/7)
 - * Sunday, December 21—“The King is Here” Christmas Cantata @ 4:00 (Mantua United Methodist Church, 201 Mantua Blvd, Mantua, NJ)
 - * Wednesday, December 24—Services at 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm
 - * Thursday, December 25—Service at 10:30 am
 - * Tuesday, **March 19, 2026**-1-6 pm. Red Cross Blood Drive (Please note the date change.)
 - * Tuesday, September 29th –1-6pm.
- GROWING IN FAITH: THE DIAKONIA PROGRAM Growing in Faith is a ministry within the ELCA committed to fostering learning environments for followers of Jesus to grow in faith. Lay members of congregations are integral to healthy discipleship in the church and community. If you would be interested in this program, check out the website www.njdiakonia.com for more information.
- There are two Planet Aid clothing bins in the parking lot. Clean items may be placed in the yellow bins: including clothing, shoes, bedding, towels, curtains, sleeping bags, socks, underwear, bras. They do not accept items that are tattered beyond repair, dirty, wet or moldy.
- If you have someone that you would like on the prayer list, please fill out a form in the narthex and place it in the offering plate or contact the church office email: hnlc.secretary@hotmail.com.
- Choir rehearsals are on Sunday mornings @ 9:40. All are welcome to join us.
- Live Sunday School sessions are held every Sunday at 9:30. We welcome students of all ages. Church school resources continue to be available on our website on a weekly basis.

ADVENT DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Keep awake. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

arr. H. Hopson

GOSPEL MESSAGE (Keeping Watch)

There's nothing quite like the first smell of springtime flowers emerging from the earth. The sensory explosion often catches us by surprise, reminding us that new life is surely coming soon, even though the world still seems to be slumbering and the buds we watch impatiently refuse to open. This third Sunday of Advent lifts the church and stirs our senses as we receive word, along with John the Baptizer, that Jesus is indeed the one we've been waiting for, the one who will turn buds into blooms. This is good news!

We might wonder, however, why we are hearing this news from John's perspective, out of all the voices in the growing community of Jesus-followers. Can we trust his word? After all, John is sitting behind bars at this time, caught in the gears of the world's injustice. John's unjust imprisonment reminds us that working for justice in the world can cause conflict with those in power. But while the world imprisons the innocent and strains to protect the corrupt and cruel, God sees such injustices and works to undo their power. This, too, is good news!

This third Sunday of Advent is sometimes called *Gaudete*, meaning "Rejoice." Cultivating joy amid the brokenness seen in the world is difficult, but God brings new beginnings where we have known only endings. New tendrils of life are emerging! Something new is coming! Let's share the good news as we wait and keep watch together.

HOLY NATIVITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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hnlc.secretary@hotmail.com

Pastor: Andy Gordon Music Director: Chris Robinson
5:00—Harriet Vico; 8:30—Lori Kershaw; 10:30—Vince Montana

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

April Montana—Council Person/President & Christian Education
Vince Montana—Council Person/Vice President/Property/Worship & Music
Joyce Bradbury—Council Person/Secretary
Donna DeFrank—Council Person/Stewardship & Finance
Lori Kershaw—Council Person/Social Ministry--Fellowship
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Karen Cusack—Council Person/Co-Treasurer
Brett Montana—Council Person/Youth Representative