



# FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...

*God dwells with us*

First Sunday after Christmas • Sunday, January 1, 2023 • 9:30 am • St. John's

## INTRODUCTION

*“And the Word became flesh and lived among us...” (John 1:14a). Unlike the other gospels, John’s gospel offers us a cosmic glimpse of Christ’s birth. Christ’s beginning was with God, therefore, Christ has been with us since life began. On this Christmas Sunday, we celebrate the many ways God dwells with us from generation to generation, since the beginning of time. Like Mary pondering the angels’ message in her heart, we invite you to dwell in your worship, perhaps embracing stillness, contemplative practices, creativity, and prayer. In the fullness of this season, come dwell with God—in silence or in song, in prayer or in stillness.*

## PRELUDE

“In Dulci Jubilo”

Marcel Dupré

## + Gathering +

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## RINGING OF THE BELL

## CALL TO CONFESSION

On a day like today we may want to skip the prayer of confession because today is a day for joy. Why should we pause to think and talk about the ways we as humans mess things up? I get that argument. However, I also believe that the joy of this day is even more joyful when we are honest about who we are. We humans tend to be messy, scattered, and full of doubt at times. Knowing that Jesus was born in a manger for us, and that Jesus loves and forgives us, is even better news. So let us confess together to God, knowing that the honest truth of our lives only makes this good news better.

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us pray.

Holy God, too often we feel as if change is hopeless. The problems of this world feel too big, the path forward is unclear, and we are not confident that we can truly make a difference. We give up hope.

*The candle of hope is snuffed out.*

Together we pray: **Forgive us for extinguishing hope.**

Holy God, too often we believe that peace is a thing of fairy tales. Our spirits are anxious. Our bodies are weary. Our world is fractured. Instead of praying for peace—both in ourselves and in our society—we assume that peace is no longer on the table. We give it up.

*The candle of peace is snuffed out.*

Together we pray: **Forgive us for extinguishing peace.**

Holy God, too often we paint joy as naive—a luxury reserved for children and pets. We forget that you ate with friends, that you went to weddings, that you laughed and rested and hiked mountains. We forget that you knew joy, and that you want joy for us in this fractured world. Forgive us for turning away from your light.

*The candle of joy is snuffed out.*

Together we pray: **Forgive us for extinguishing joy.**

Holy God, too often we treat love like a vending machine. We put some coins in and assume that we'll get something back. However, in our wiser moments, we know that love is not meant for keeping score. Love is meant to overflow, to spill out to our neighbors, to transform our world. Forgive us for holding love so tightly.

*The candle of love is snuffed out.*

Together we pray: **Forgive us for extinguishing love.**

## WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

Family of faith, sin separates us from things like hope, peace, and joy. Sin wiggles its way between us and love, both love of neighbor and love of self.

Fortunately for us, God had something else in mind. God sent God's only child to this world so that we could see another way. So friends, hear and believe the good news of the gospel: no matter how many times we turn our back on hope, or extinguish peace, or snuff out joy—no matter how many times we let love burn out—God continues to light our way.

*The candles of hope, peace, joy, and love are relit from the light of the Christ candle.*

We are forgiven. We are seen. We are loved. The good news of this day—the hope, the peace, the joy, and the love of this day—exists for you.

**Thanks be to God!**

GATHERING HYMN

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming (ELW 272)



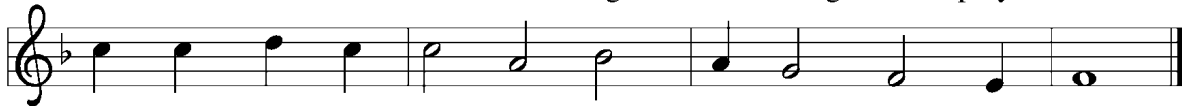
1 Lo, how a rose e'er bloom - ing from ten - der stem hath  
 2 I - sai - ah had fore - told it, the rose I have in  
 3 This flow'r, whose fra - grance ten - der with sweet-ness fills the  
 4 O Sav - ior, child of Mar - y, who felt our hu - man



sprung! Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing as  
 mind; with Mar - y we be - hold it, the  
 air, dis - pels with glo - rious splen - dor the  
 woe; O Sav - ior, king of glo - ry, who



seers of old have sung, it came, a flow'r so bright, a -  
 vir - gin moth - er kind. To show God's love a - right, she  
 dark-ness ev - 'ry - where. True man, yet ver - y God, from  
 dost our weak - ness know: bring us at length, we pray, to



mid the cold of win - ter, when half - spent was the night.  
 bore to us a Sav - ior, when half - spent was the night.  
 sin and death he saves us and light - ens ev - 'ry load.  
 the bright courts of heav - en and in - to end - less day.

Text: German carol, 15th cent.; tr. Theodore Baker, 1851–1934, sts. 1–2; Harriet R. Krauth, 1845–1925, st. 3; John C. Mattes, 1876–1948, st. 4  
 Music: ES IST EIN ROS, *Alte catholische geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Köln, 1599

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Let us pray together.

**God of manger straw and swaddle cloth, God of silent nights and joyfully-chaotic mornings, we long to know you. The hustle and bustle of this time of year can be more than distracting, so for a moment, we pray, still our busy hearts. Quiet our minds. Help us to sink deeply into this day. Help us to pause here, to linger here as we hear your good news spoken over us.**

**God, we long to know you, so speak to us now. With grateful hearts, we pray. With grateful hearts, we listen.**

**Amen.**

## + Word +

### CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

#### READING

Let us listen for God speaking to us through the ancient poetry of John, chapter 1, verses 1-5, with contemporary poetic additions by The Rev. Sarah Speed.

*Voice A:* In the beginning was the Word,

*Voice B:* way back, a long, long time ago,  
before the stars,  
before the day,  
before the rivers were carved out of clay.

*Voice A:* In the beginning,

*Voice B:* way back in that beginning,

*Voice A:* was the Word.  
And the Word was with God,  
And the Word was God.  
He, Jesus, was in the beginning with God.

*Voice B:* In other words, we cannot say  
that love was born in a stable that day,  
for love was born when the horizon was drawn.  
It was born in the dark, long before dawn.  
Love was born with the very first sea  
and when God breathed life into you and me.  
Long before Magi  
or shepherds or dreams,  
long before sheep or angels that sing,  
love was here—  
building a way,  
then and now,  
and on Christmas day.

*Voice A:* For all things came into being through him,  
and without him, not one thing came into being.  
And what has come into being in him was life,  
and the life was the light of all people.

*Voice B:* And so Jesus shined.  
Like a light in the dark,  
or a star in the sky,  
Jesus walked into this world  
and opened our eyes,  
shining a light on social divides

and loving the scars we try to hide.  
He lit up this world like it's never seen,  
the light of all people,  
Emmanuel, King.

*Voice A:* The light shines in the darkness,  
And the darkness did not overcome it.

*Voice B:* Hatred did not overcome it.  
Fear did not overcome it.  
Greed did not overcome it.

*Voice A:* A light shines in the darkness.

*Voice B:* Envy did not overcome it.  
Doubt did not overcome it.  
Scarcity did not overcome it.

*Voice A:* A light shines in the darkness.

*Voice B:* Death did not overcome it.  
Sickness did not overcome it.  
Grief did not overcome it.

*Voice A:* For he was in the beginning with God,

*Voice B:* way back, a long, long time ago,  
before the stars,  
before the day,  
before the rivers were carved out of clay.

*Voice A:* And what has come into being in him was life.

*Voice B:* So we cannot begin with Magis and sheep,  
for this story begins at the brink—

*Voice A:* of creation and light,

*Voice B:* of you and me,

*Voice A:* of beloved and love,

*Voice B:* of being set free.

*Voice A:* For in the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

*Voice B:* He was in the beginning with God,  
and that light shines in the darkness.  
It always has, and it always will.

*Voice A:* That is where our story begins—  
with love for creation,  
from beginning to end.

**Amen.**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



## GOSPEL

John 1:6-18

The holy gospel according to John.  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>6</sup> Then came one named John, sent as an envoy from God, <sup>7</sup> who came as a witness to testify about the Light, so that through his testimony everyone might believe.<sup>8</sup> He himself wasn't the Light; he only came to testify about the Light—the true Light that illumines all humankind. <sup>9</sup> The Word was coming into the world—<sup>10</sup> was in the world—and though the world was made through the Word, the world didn't recognize it.

<sup>11</sup> Though the Word came to its own realm, the Word's own people didn't accept it. <sup>12</sup> Yet any who did accept the Word, who believed in that Name, were empowered to become children of God—<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor urge of flesh nor human will—but born of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and stayed for a little while among us; we saw the Word's glory—the favor and position a parent gives an only child—filled with grace, filled with truth. <sup>15</sup> John testified by proclaiming, “This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘The one who comes after me ranks ahead of me, for this One existed before I did.’ ” <sup>16</sup> Of this One's fullness we've all had a share—gift on top of gift. <sup>17</sup> For while the Law was given through Moses, the Gift—and the Truth—came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; it is the Only Begotten, ever at Abba's side, who has revealed God to us.

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

## SERMON

Pastor Allison Bengfort

## OPEN SPACE

*During this time of quiet reflection, you are invited to move about the space. There are five stations for you to explore at your own pace:*

### **Prayer & Candle Lighting Station** (chancel, baptismal font side)

Pray silently, light candles, or contribute prayers to be read during the Prayers of the People. You may kneel, sit, or stand.

### **Poetry & Journaling Station** (chancel, Advent wreath side)

Read poetry, respond to a journaling prompt, or compose your own poem. You may sit, kneel, or stand.

### **Drawing & Coloring Station** (back of sanctuary, pray-ground area)

Create art in response to a drawing prompt, color a coloring sheet, or sketch/doodle whatever you would like. You may sit around the table.

### **Visio Divina Station** (back wall, across from the pray-ground area)

Take in scripture-inspired artwork, practice Visio Divina (a guided meditation on art), reflect on what you see. You may sit or stand.

### **Centering Prayer Station** (at your seat)

Rest in God's presence using the method of Centering Prayer, which is drawn from the ancient practices of the Christian contemplative heritage. It involves four simple steps:

1. Choose a sacred word to serve as your point of focus for the prayer. This word represents your intention to consent to God's presence and action within you. Choose a word in prayer by the guidance of the Spirit. A word of one or two syllables is best, such as God, Jesus, love, peace, mercy, etc.
2. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Take the time to settle yourself. Silently, inwardly, introduce the sacred word.
3. Continue to sit quietly, resting in God's presence. When you notice other thoughts, sensations, or sounds around you, gently return your attention to the sacred word.
4. Conclude the time of prayer by slowly opening your eyes and gradually returning your attention to the space.

## REGATHERING VERSE



From gen-e-ra - tion to gen-e - ra - tion, we have shared the Christ-mas tale of a ba-by in a



man - ger, who was born in Beth-le-hem. Hope is ring - ing, peace now wing - ing, joy we're



sing - ing, love he's bring - ing, Shad-ows scatt-er in the light. We a - wait the world made right

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

I invite you to assume a posture of prayer. You may sit, stand, or kneel; fold your hands or turn your hands toward the sky; close your eyes or lift your eyes to the altar.

With wonder and thanksgiving for Christ's coming into the world, we pray for the church, the life of the earth, and the whole human family.

Merciful God, broaden the church's hospitality and welcome. Open our hearts to any in need of refuge and help, especially those who are persecuted. Prosper the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Life-giving God, restore the health of the soil, the seas, and the air. Increase the joy and praise of all living things. In the coming year strengthen local, national, and international efforts to prevent further harm to the environment. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Liberating God, deliver your people from cruel oppression. Increase justice in every nation and keep the dream of freedom alive. In this new year bring the blessing of peace and put an end to violent conflict throughout the world. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Uplifting God, raise all who are bowed down by trouble and need, especially individuals and families living in poverty. Protect and nurture all children. Sustain those who parent, teach, and care for the young.

God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Understanding God, receive these prayers from the hearts of those who worship today. *Prayers from the congregation are read.*

God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Abiding God, accompany this community in the coming year. Increase our love for one another and the neighbors we serve. Enrich our worship and deepen our faith. Sustain Pastor Allison and all who minister in your name. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, the holy innocents who perish in every generation are safe in your keeping. We give you thanks and praise for the all the faithful who have gone before us into everlasting life with you.

God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Pondering the mystery of eternal love made flesh in Christ Jesus, we commend all for whom we pray to the mercy of God.

**Amen.**

## THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*You are invited to share a sign of peace with those around you, honoring the personal boundaries of all.*



+ **Meal** +

CALL TO OFFERING

For generations and generations, it has been a Christian tradition to give gifts on Christmas. Children give homemade cards, parents and friends give presents wrapped in brightly-colored paper and bows. We do this in remembrance of the Magi who gave gifts when Jesus arrived. But we also do this because we love one another, and when you love someone, it feels good to give.

So just as we give gifts to one another on Christmas morning, let us also turn that same love toward God. Let us be generous with our time, talents, and treasures, because when we love someone, it feels good to give.

OFFERTORY

*We give thanks for your ongoing support of the ministry of St. John's! Gifts may be placed in the offering plate, made in the Vanco Mobile app, or given online by scanning the QR code. Thank you for your generosity!*



OFFERTORY ANTHEM

“A Christmas Carol”

Arnold Bax

## OFFERTORY VERSE

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

(ELW 270, verse 1)



1 Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born king;  
2 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,  
3 Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righ - teous - ness!



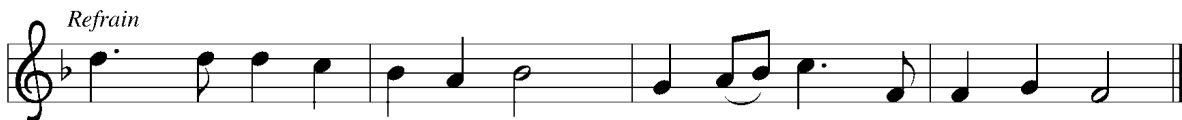
peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled."  
late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.  
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with heal - ing in his wings.



Joy - ful, all you na - tions, rise; join the tri - umph of the skies;  
Veiled in flesh the God - head see! Hail, in - car - nate de - i - ty!  
Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,



with an - gel - ic hosts pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"  
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!  
born to raise each child of earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.



Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king!"

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707–1788, alt.

Music: MENDELSSOHN, Felix Mendelssohn, 1809–1847; arr. William H. Cummings, 1831–1915

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

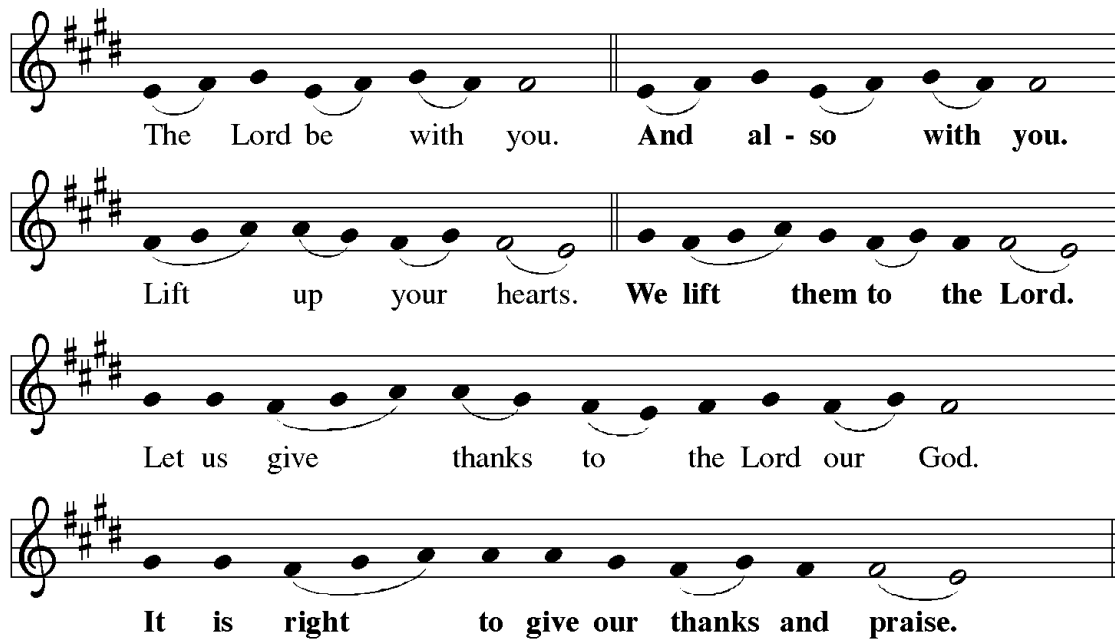
Let us pray together.

**Eternal God, you make the desert bloom and send springs of water to thirsty ground.**

**Receive these simple gifts of bread, wine, and money, and make us messengers of your mercy and love for all in need of your healing and justice. We ask this through Christ our Savior.**

**Amen.**

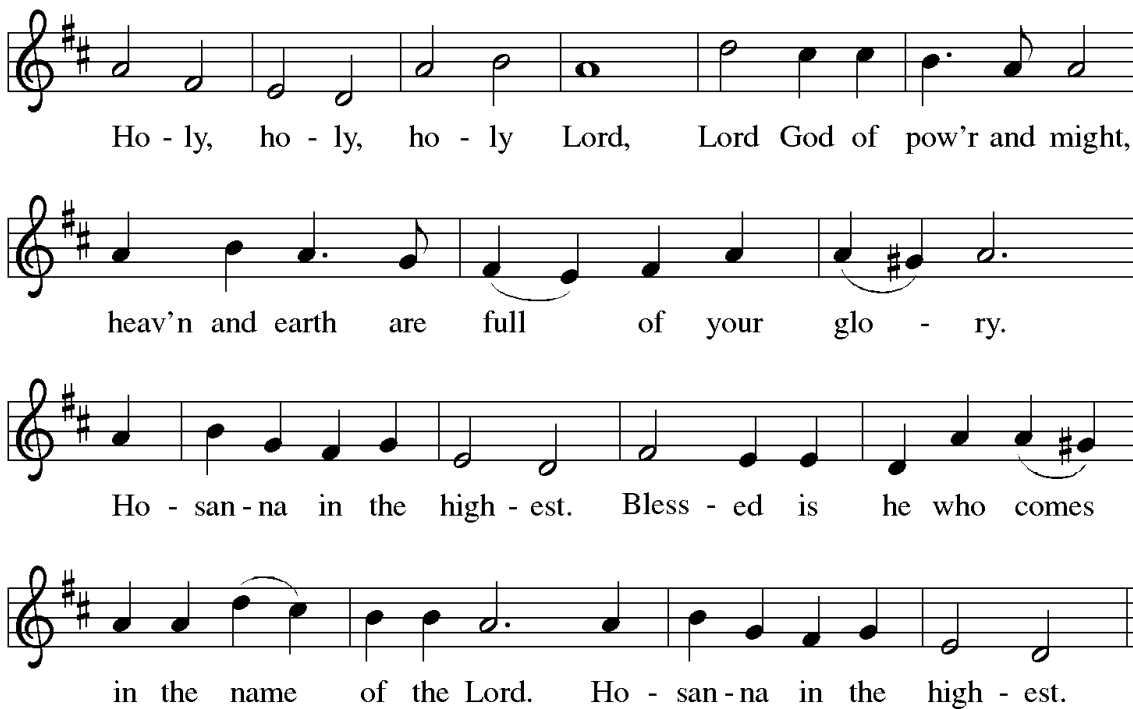
## DIALOGUE



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.

## PREFACE

### HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,  
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.  
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.

## THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

## LORD'S PRAYER

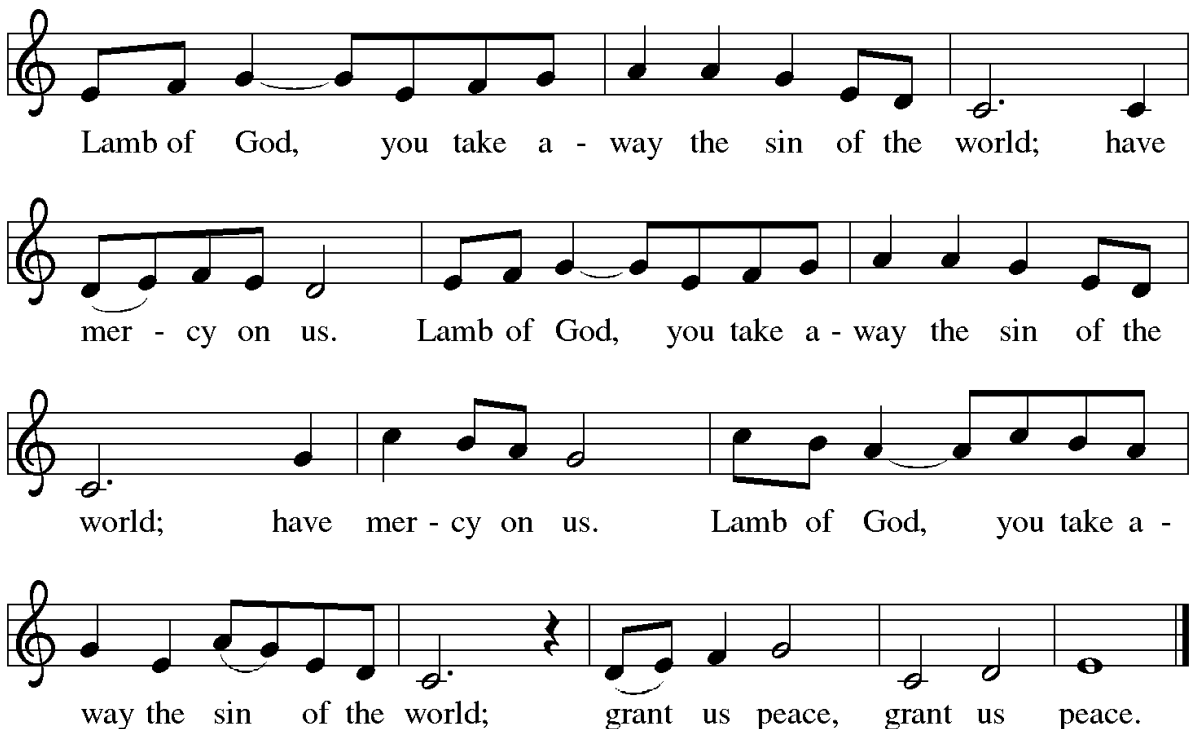
**God our Mother, God our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.  
Your kin-dom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kin-dom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

## INVITATION

## COMMUNION

*All are welcome to commune at Christ's table without exception! If you are online, serve yourself or those worshipping with you by saying, "The body of Christ, given for you," and, "The blood of Christ, shed for you." If you are communing in person, please proceed down the center aisle at the direction of an usher. You may receive bread or request a gluten-free wafer. A glass of wine (dark colored) will be placed on the table for you, or you may request grape juice (light colored). After drinking, please place your empty glass in the basket before returning to your seat via the side aisle. If you would prefer to receive only a blessing, you may cross your arms across your chest to indicate this preference. If you would like to receive communion in your seat, please inform an usher, and the sacrament will be brought to you.*

## LAMB OF GOD



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

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray together.

**Faithful God,**

**In this meal you have remembered your mercy, bringing heaven to earth in the body and blood of Christ. As we wait for the day when all your promises will be fulfilled, sustain us and strengthen us by this holy mystery. Guide us toward your promised future, coming to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

## + Sending +

## BENEDICTION

As you leave this place, may you go knowing that  
from generation to generation, we have been claimed and loved.  
From generation to generation, God has been by our side.  
From generation to generation, we are not alone.  
The God of yesterday and the God of tomorrow  
knows you by name, loves you, and calls you forth,  
in the name of the Creator, † the Christ, and the Holy Spirit,  
**Amen.**

## SENDING HYMN

Cold December Flies Away (ELW 299)



1 Cold De - cem - ber flies a - way at the rose - red splen - dor.  
2 In the hope - less time of sin shad - ows deep had fall - en.  
3 Now the bud has come to bloom, and the world a - wak - ens.



A - pril's crown - ing glo - ry breaks while the whole world won - ders  
All the world lay un - der death. Eyes were closed in sleep - ing.  
In the lil - y's pur - est flow'r dwells a won - drous fra - grance.



at the ho - ly un - seen pow'r of the tree which bears the  
But, when all seemed lost in night, came the sun whose gold - en  
And it spreads to all the earth from the mo - ment of its



flow'r. On the bless - ed tree blooms the red - dest flow'r. On the tree blooms the  
light brings un - end - ing joy, brings the end - less joy of our hope, high - est  
birth; and its beau - ty lives. In the flow'r it lives, in the flow'r, and it



rose here in love's own gar - den, full and strong in glo - ry.  
hope, of our hope's bright dawn - ing, Son be - lov'd of heav - en.  
spreads in its heav'n - ly bright - ness sweet per - fume de - light - ful.

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ has come!

**Thanks be to God!**

## POSTLUDE

Variations on "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

Alfred Fedak

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Bible Study Resumes This Week**

Tuesday Bible Study will resume this Tuesday, January 3, at 11 am in the Fellowship Hall. All are invited to join us for prayer, study, reflection, and connection.

### **“Have A Heart” Valentine Benefit Luncheon for Holy Family**

The Women of Trinity Lutheran Church cordially invite the Women of St. John's Lutheran Church to join them for a Holy Family Benefit Luncheon on Saturday, February 11 at 11:30 am at Trinity Lutheran Church, 3637 Golf Road, Evanston. Please make your reservation by Sunday, February 5 by signing up in the gathering area or contacting Cindi Rachowicz by phone at 224-307-3513 or email ([att41623@sbcglobal.net](mailto:att41623@sbcglobal.net)). Let's show our support with a table for 8. All proceeds will fund the annual tuition for a child at Holy Family School.