ASSISTING IN WORSHIP

Lector/Intercessor: Barbara Albright **Communion Assistant:** Christine Ruff **Acolyte:** Langdon and Calen MacFarlane **Ushers:** Chip Popovici, Jimmy Harris, Jeff Jones, Jeff Gilbert, Phil Tesh **Building Supervisor:** Jeff Gilbert & Kenny Propst

PRAYER LIST

Cecil Berry (friend of Gretchen Walker); Family of Michael Black (nephew of Patsy Black); Patsy Black; Caroline Bost; Patrick Bryn (son of Kirby & Sondra Bryn); Angie Buchanan; Mike & Debbie Cagle (friends of Robert & Debbie Davis); Noah Clifton; Bruce Coffey (friend of Mark Murphy); Karey Conrad (friend of Dee Pieschel); Jennifer Cook (friend of Fonda Shumate); Catherine Durst (daughter of Anne & Dee Hodges); Nadine Filipak (friend of Al & Dee Pieschel); Ed Frost (friend of the Marlow's); Tom Grady; Harriett Huss Hodge; Maureen Hollmeyer; Mary Frances Johnson (cousin of Francie Davis); Karen Johnston (friend of Judy Benz); Ruth Lawler (friend of Dee & Al Pieschel); John Ledford (brother of Deb Black); Barbara Merrell; Deb & Roger Myers (friends of Deb Black); Stan Parnell (friend of Rob & Debbie Davis); Becky Phillips; Al Pieschel; Lori Pittard; Tom Ridenhour: Nathan White.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Today's flowers are given to the Glory of God in memory of The Rev. Dr. Hollis Miller and Sandy Barnhardt and in honor of Ralph Barnhardt, Susan Miller, Hollis and Rebecca Miller and Avery and Alex Reed. Given by Jon and LeeAnn Miller.

> To assist in your offering Secure Online Giving



Open Camera - Scan QR Code Thank you for supporting St. James!

The Third Sunday in Advent December 14, 2025

The Holy Communion 10:00am



St. James Lutheran Church 104 Union Street South **PO Box 684** Concord, North Carolina 28026 704-786-0166 www.sjnc.net

Rev. William C. Ridenhour, Pastor

Welcome to St. James Lutheran Church

Maybe you need forgiveness, or maybe you need to forgive ... Maybe you're tired and you need a little space to breathe ... Maybe you're trying church for the first time, or maybe you're trying church for the last time... Maybe you've spent your whole life wondering if God really loves you... Maybe you're lonely... Maybe you're sick... Maybe you came here looking for a miracle... Maybe you came here looking for another church but got disoriented and came here instead, and now it's too late to get up and walk out... Maybe, with God, there are no accidents... Maybe, with God, there is hope and healing and miraculous companionship... Maybe, with God, there is space to breathe and forgiveness on top of forgiveness... Maybe, with God, there is love... Maybe, with God here in our midst, we will hear those words that still split open the heavens, "You are my son! You are my daughter! You are my beloved. You. In you I am well pleased!" Maybe this is why we gather together, week after week after week, here at St. James.

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in this place - not just by the Saints at St. James, but by the God who revealed himself in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, our brother, and our friend.

Welcome to St. James.

If you are comfortable doing so, please introduce yourself to Pastor Bill. If you have visited with us a number of times and think you might want to "make it official," please speak to Pastor Bill. If you have any questions, please feel free to speak to the person next to you or to an usher.

Restrooms are located on the first and second floor of the Education Building. A *nursery* is available for children up to and including five years of age on the first floor of the education building. An usher will be happy to help you find them.

If you're visiting or if you have been here for 99 years (and are willing to do so), please sign a pew pad.

Let us know you visited!



Scan to connect

BIRTHDAYS THIS WEEK

Dec. 15 – Kelley Carpenter

Dec. 16 - Don Fowler, William Irvin, Justin Urso

Dec. 18 – Judy McAnulty

Dec. 19 – Jakob Craver, Heather Hughes

Dec. 20 - Rory Kartheiser

<u>CHURCH CALENDAR THIS WEEK</u>						
Sunday, Dec. 14	9:00am	Adult Sunday School				
	9:00am	Choir				
	9:30am	Children's Sunday School				
	10:00am	Worship				
	11:00am	Social Ministry Meeting (Parlor)				
Monday, Dec. 15	10:30am	Quilting				
	6:30pm	Bible Study – Fellowship Hall				
Thursday, Dec. 18	6:30pm	Choir				
Sunday, Dec. 21	9:00am	Adult Sunday School				
•	9:ooam	Choir				
	9:30am	Children's Sunday School				
	10:00am	Worship				
	11:00am	Cocoa, Coffee, & Cookies with the Children				
		of St. James.				

2026 Offering Envelopes Available

Offering envelopes for 2026 are ready for pick-up on the table behind the sacristy (office hallway). If you did not receive a box and would like one, contact Jill Irving.

SONSHINE BACKPACKS – DECEMBER DRIVE **S**

We're continuing our quarterly partnership with Sonshine Backpacks to provide weekend food for local children in need.

Requested items: shelf-stable milk, cereal/oatmeal, mac & cheese, canned pasta/soup/veggies/fruit, granola bars, juice, popcorn, pudding. Please place donations on the back kitchen counter by **Sunday**, **Dec. 28**.

Questions? Contact Sylvia Corl or Gretchen Walker.



St James Lutheran Church: Growing in Christ through Worship, Learning, Fellowship and Service.

THE HOLY COMMUNION



Welcome

Prelude Swiss Noël with Variations Daquin

Please stand.

THE INVOCATION

- P In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- C Amen.

THE CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

- P Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- C Amen
- P If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Please sit or kneel, as able. Silence for reflection and self-examination.

- P Most merciful God,
- We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault 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, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.
- C Have mercy on us, Lord.
- P Our indifference toward your coming,
- we confess to you, Lord.
- P Our desire to control time and seasons,
- C we confess to you, Lord.
- P Our failure to be alert to signs of your presence in our midst,
- C we confess to you, Lord.
- P Our lack of concern for those who come after us,
- C we confess to you, Lord.
- P Our injustices toward people you came to save,
- C we confess to you, Lord.
- In the mercy of almighty God, I declare to you the forgiveness of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- C Amen

THE ENTRANCE HYMN: #35 Hark, the Glad Sound



THE APOSTOLIC GREETING

- 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.

THE KYRIE



PRAYER AT THE ADVENT WREATH

- P Let us pray. We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord's coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.
- C Amen.

The Advent Wreath is lit.

Today, the congregation sings the first three stanzas.



THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

- The Lord be with you
- C And also with you.

P Almighty God, you once called John the Baptist to give witness to the coming of your Son and to prepare his way. Grant us, your people, the wisdom to see your purpose today and the openness to hear your will, that we may witness to Christ's coming and so prepare his way; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever

C Amen.



Please sit.

THE FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10
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 singing.
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.'

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

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 traveller, 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.

A The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

THE SECOND READING: James 5:7-10

Be patient, therefore, beloved, 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 Beloved, 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, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

A The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Please stand.
THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



THE HOLY GOSPEL

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 11th chapter.



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, the lepers 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 offence 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."

¹¹Truly 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.



Please sit.

THE SERMON

Pastor Bill Ridenhour

Please stand.

THE HYMN OF THE DAY: #26 Prepare the Royal Highway

When not printed, hymn harmonies may be found in the green LBW hymnal.



- 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:



THE NICENE CREED

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

Please kneel or sit as able.

THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

A With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

From all sin, from all error, from all evil; from the cunning assaults of the devil; from an unprepared and evil death: **Good Lord, deliver us.**

From war, bloodshed, and violence; from corrupt and unjust government; from sedition and treason:

Good Lord, deliver us.

From epidemic, drought, and famine, from fire and flood, earthquake, lightning and storm; and from everlasting death:

Good Lord, deliver us.

By the mystery of your incarnation; by your holy birth: **Help us, good Lord.**

By your baptism, fasting, and temptation; by your agony and bloody sweat; by your cross and suffering; by your precious death and burial: **Help us, good Lord.**

By your glorious resurrection and ascension; by the gift of the Holy Spirit: **Help us, good Lord.**

In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death; and in the day of judgment: **Save us, good Lord.**Though unworthy, we implore you

to hear us. Lord our God.

astray:

To rule and govern your holy catholic Church; to guide all servants of your Church in the true knowledge and understanding of your Word and in holiness of life; to put an end to all schisms and causes of offense to those who would believe; and to bring into the way of truth all who have erred and gone

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To beat down Satan under our feet; to send faithful workers into your harvest; to accompany your Word with your Spirit and power; to raise up those who fall and to strengthen those who stand; and to comfort and help the fainthearted and the distressed: We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To give to all nations justice and peace; to preserve our country from discord and strife; to direct and guard those who have civil authority; and to bless and guide all our people:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To behold and help all who are in danger, need, or tribulation; to protect and guide all who travel; to preserve and provide for all women in childbirth; to watch over children and to guide the young; to heal the sick and to strengthen their families and friends; to bring reconciliation to families in discord; to provide for the unemployed and for all in need; to be merciful to all who are imprisoned; to support, comfort, and guide all orphans, widowers, and widows; to watch over our loved ones in need; and to have mercy on all your people: We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to reconcile us to them; to help us use wisely the fruits and treasures of the earth, the sea, and the air; and graciously to hear our prayers: We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

For the faithful who have gone before us and are at rest, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

- P Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- C Amen

THE PEACE

- P The peace of the Lord be with you always.
- And also with you.

Please sit.

THE ANTHEM

There Shall a Star Come out of Jacob (from *Christus*)

Felix Mendelssohn

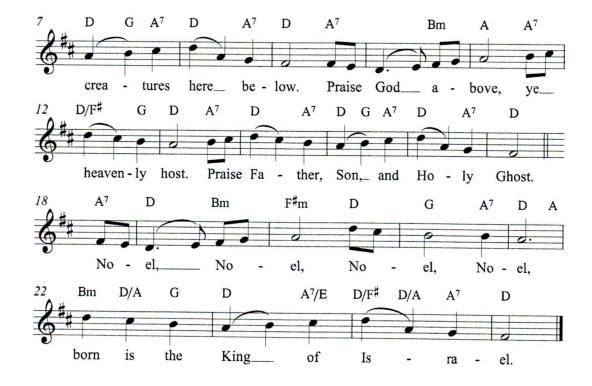
There shall a star come out of Jacob,
And a scepter shall rise out of Israel.
With might destroying princes and cities!
As bright the star of morning gleams,
So Jesus sheddeth glorious beams,
Of light and consolation.
Thy Word, O Lord, radiance darting,
Truth imparting gives salvation;
Thine be praise and adoration!
-Numbers 24:17

THE OFFERING

Please stand.
THE DOXOLOGY

Throughout the Season in Advent, the Doxology is sung to the familiar carol tune, The First Noel.





THE OFFERTORY PRAYER

- A Let us pray.
- A Merciful Father,
- C we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love.

 Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



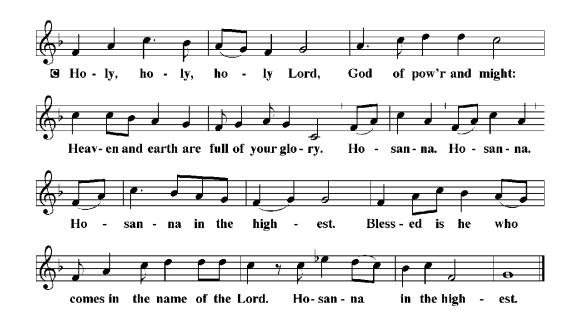
THE COMMUNION RITE

- P The Lord be with you.
- C And also with you.
- P Lift up your hearts.
- C We lift them to the Lord.

- P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
- C It is right to give him thanks and praise.
- P It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you,
 O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everliving God.

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 again to judge the world in righteousness.

And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



P Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father:
Endless is your mercy and eternal your reign.
You have filled all creation with light and life;
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Through Abraham you promised to bless all nations.
You rescued Israel, your chosen people.
Through the prophets you renewed your promise;
and, at this end of all the ages, you sent your Son,
who in words and deeds proclaimed your kingdom

and was obedient to your will, even to giving his life.

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:

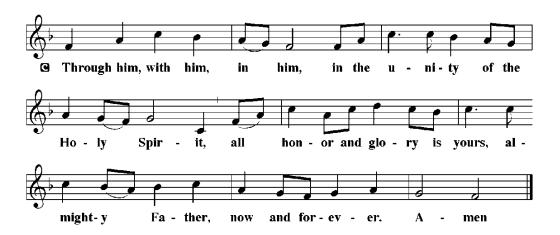
This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- C Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.
- P Therefore, gracious Father, with this bread and cup we remember the life our Lord offered for us.

 And, believing the witness of his resurrection, we await his coming in power to share with us the great and promised feast.
- C Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
- P Send now, we pray, your Holy Spirit, the spirit of our Lord and of his resurrection, that we who receive the Lord's body and blood may live to the praise of your glory and receive our inheritance with all your saints in light.
- C Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.
- P Join our prayers with those of your servants of every time and every place, and unite them with the ceaseless petitions of our great high priest until he comes as victorious Lord of all.

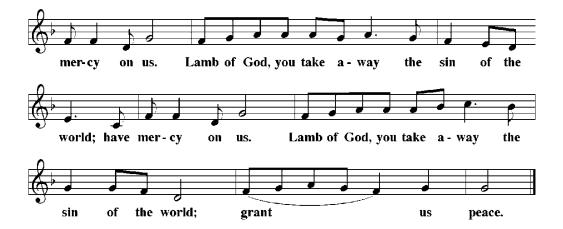


THE LORD'S PRAYER

- P Lord, remember us in your Kingdom and teach us to pray:
- C Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.





Please sit.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

- Q: What is the Sacrament of the Altar?
- A: Instituted by Christ himself, it is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, given to us Christians to eat and to drink.
- Q: What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?
- A: We are told in the words "for you" and "for the forgiveness of sins." By these words the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation.

-Luther's Small Catechism Part V

Jesus bids all the baptized to feast at his table. For those unable to partake of wine, white grape juice is available. If you wish for the pastor to bring communion to you. Please advise an usher.

Please stand.

THE POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

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

THE POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

A Let us pray,

- A O God, in this meal we have been given a foretaste of the feast that is to come. Help us always to be alert to your gifts in our midst; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- C Amen

Silence for reflection.



THE BENEDICTION

- P Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.
- C Amen

THE SENDING HYMN: #33 The King Shall Come



THE DISMISSAL

P Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

Lowry



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Doxology: Text and music adapted by Dean McIntyre, The United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, PO Box 340003, Nashville, TN 37203-0003. Telephone 615-340-7073. Website umcworship.org. Email: music@gbod.org. Text and tune are public domain.

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CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Family Service 5:30PM
Musical Prelude 9:30PM
Candlelight Service 10:00PM

COCOA, COFFEE, & COOKIES WITH ST. JAMES CHILDREN - DEC. 21

Join us after worship December 21 for cocoa, coffee and cookies in the Fellowship Hall as the children of St. James share the Christmas story.