

ASSISTING IN WORSHIP

Lector/Intercessor: Christine Ruff

Communion Assistant: Christine Ruff

Acolyte: Samantha Hillegass

Ushers: Mike Downs, Al Brown Jr., Sid Hughes,

Bill Hardister, Hunter Huss

Videographer: Laurie Miller

Greeter: Esther Circle

Building Supervisor: Wendell Overby

PRAYER LIST

Brad Baker; Joyce Beaty (friend of the Marlow's); Angie Buchanan; Mike & Debbie Cagle (friends of Robert & Debbie Davis); Noah Clifton; Bruce Coffey (friend of Mark Murphy); Karey Conrad (friend of Dee Pieschel); Emma DePaulis; Anne Fridlund; Ed Frost (friend of the Marlow's); Tim Gibson (friend of Deb Black); Tom Grady; Linda Jones (family of Barbara & Dale Merrell); Annaleah, Michael, & Preston Morrow (friends of Shannon Nesbit); Jan Phillips (family of Brownie Brown); Tom Ridenhour; Kristin Rinker, Jeanie Martin & the Martin Family; Geoff & Pam Seige (friends of Robert & Debbie Davis).

ALTAR FLOWERS

Today's altar flowers are given by Fuller and Jean Beasley to the Glory of God and in memory of Ann Porter Ridenhour.

2025

SUNDAY MINISTRY SIGN-UPS

Sign up to be a Communion Assistant, Lector, Videographer, or Acolyte in 2025! All Sundays in the new year are now posted. Sign up by scanning the code or visiting the website.



**The First Sunday after Christmas
December 29, 2024**

The Holy Communion

Lessons and Carols

10am



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 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.

BIRTHDAYS THIS WEEK

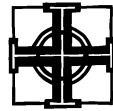
Dec. 29 – Bobby Clary, Barbara Merrell, Joshua Monk
Dec. 30 – Nell Hoekstra
Dec. 31 – Catherine Nivens
Jan. 4 – Susie Kartheiser

CHURCH CALENDAR THIS WEEK

Sunday, Dec. 29	9:00 am	Adult Sunday School
	9:00 am	Parish Choir
	9:30am	Children's Sunday School
	10:00am	Worship
Monday, Dec. 30	10:30 am	Quilting
Wednesday, Jan. 1	<i>Church Office Closed</i>	
Sunday, Jan. 5	9:00am	Adult Sunday School
	9:00am	Parish Choir
	9:30am	Children's Sunday School
	10:00am	Worship

SALVATION ARMY MEAL WEEK

St. James is committed to covering dinners **Sunday 1/19 – Saturday, 1/25** at the Salvation Army Night Shelter. If you can provide a meal, please sign up at the link: <https://sjnc.net/special-event-sign-ups>



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

THE HOLY COMMUNION

*A Service of Four Lessons and Carols
with
Reflections from Martin Luther*

Please stand to sing the carols.

For this one Sunday, but for the Opening Carol,
please sing from the green LBW in the pew rack.

Prelude Infant Holy, Infant Lowly Young

Please stand.

THE INVOCATION

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

C Amen.

THE OPENING CAROL: Once in Royal David's City - *SEE NEXT PAGE.*

THE APOSTOLIC GREETING

P 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 PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Almighty God, you wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of human nature. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of Jesus

Christ who came to share our humanity, and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**



1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,
2 He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and Lord of all,
3 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re - deem - ing love;
4 Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the ox - en stand - ing by,



where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for his bed:
and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his cra - dle was a stall;
for that child so dear and gen - tle is our Lord in heav'n a - bove;
we shall see him; but in heav - en, set at God's right hand on high;



Mar - y was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.
with the poor and meek and low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.
and he leads his chil - dren on to the place where he is gone.
there his chil - dren gath - er round, bright like stars, with glo - ry crowned.



THE FIRST READING: Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luther's reflections on the birth of Jesus

Behold Christ lying in the lap of his young mother. . . . What can be sweeter than the Babe, what more lovely than the mother! . . . Look at the Child, knowing nothing. Yet all that is belongs to him, that your conscience should not fear but take comfort in him. Doubt nothing. Watch him springing in the lap of the maiden. Laugh with him. Look upon this Lord of Peace and your spirit will be at peace. . . . You will see how great is the divine goodness, which seeks above all else that you should not despair. Trust him! Trust him! Here is the Child in whom is salvation. To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of his most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to judge this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come, not to judge you, but to save. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, p. 33)

Carol: #44 Infant holy, infant lowly

THE SECOND READING: Luke 2:8-16

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!' ¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

Luther's reflections on the shepherds and angels

Look at the shepherds. They were watching their flocks by night, and an angel came and made them apostles, prophets, and children of God. . . . This is a great miracle that the shepherds should have believed this message. They might easily have thought to themselves, "Are we two shepherds worthy that the whole host of heaven should be marshaled for us and all the kings on the earth and the dwellers in Jerusalem be passed by?" I know I would have appealed to common sense and I would have said: "Who am I compared to God and angels and kings? It is an apparition." But the Holy Spirit, who preached through the angels, caused the shepherds to believe. They were so strong in the faith that they were worthy to be spoken to by angels and to hear every angel in heaven singing a cantata just for them. This is a pure wonder that enters not into the heart of man. Our God begins with angels and ends with shepherds. Why does he do such preposterous things? He puts a Babe in a crib. Our common sense revolts and says, "Could not God have saved the world some other way?" (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 36, 40)

Carol: #54 It came upon the midnight clear

THE THIRD READING: Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' 9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Luther's reflections on Herod and the wise men

When the Wise Men received the divine revelation that the king of the Jews was born, they made straight for Jerusalem, for, of course, they expected to find him at the capital in a lordly castle and a golden chamber. Where else would common sense expect to find a king? But because they were so sure of themselves, the star left them. Then they were sorely tried, and had they relied solely on human wisdom, would surely have said: "Confound it! We have come all this way for nothing. The star has

deceived us. The devil has led us by an apparition. If a king had been born, would he not be in the capital and in a palace? But when we come, the star disappears and we find no one who knows anything about him. Can it be that we foreigners should be the first to have news of him in the royal city? Everyone is so cold and unfriendly that no one offers to go with us and show us the child. They do not believe themselves that to them a king is born, and shall we come and find him? How desolate for the birth of a king! If a puppy were born there would be some little stir, and here a king is supposed to be born and everything is so still. . . . Should not the people be singing, capering, lighting lamps and torches, bedecking the streets with roses and mayflowers? What a miserable king we are seeking! What fools we have been to let ourselves start on this quest!" Nature wants to feel and be certain before believing, but grace will believe before she feels. Faith steps gaily into the darkness, trusting simply in the Word.

But having come, they decided to inquire of the king before returning. At their report, Herod the king "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Why was Herod terrified and all Jerusalem with him? *He* had good reason to be afraid because he had tyrannized over the Jews for thirty years. . . . Now Herod had a crafty plan. "The Jews," thought he, "will hide the truth from me, but I will find out the town where this king is to be born and also the time, and then if they hide him, I will catch him anyway. I will kill so many babies that he cannot escape." So he called the scribes to him and said, "Where is Christ to be born?" Then perhaps through fear, the scribes answered him that in the Prophet Micah it is written that He should be born in Bethlehem. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 50-52)

Carol: #56 TheFirst Noel

THE FOURTH READING: John 1:1-5, 14-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Luther's reflections on the Word made flesh

Let us, then, meditate upon the Nativity just as we see it happening in our own babies. I would not have you contemplate the deity of Christ, the majesty of Christ, but rather his flesh. Look upon the baby Jesus. Divinity may terrify man. Inexpressible majesty will crush him. That is why Christ took on our humanity, save for sin, that he should not terrify us but rather that with love and favor he should console and confirm. This is the word of the prophet: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). This is for us the hardest point, not so much to believe that He is the son of the Virgin and God himself, as to believe that this Son of God is ours. That is where we wilt. . . . Truly it is marvelous in our eyes that God should place a little child in the lap of a virgin and that all our blessedness should lie in him. And this Child belongs to all mankind. God feeds the whole world through a Babe nursing at Mary's breast. This must be our daily exercise: to be transformed into Christ, being nourished by this food. Then will the heart be suffused with all joy and will be strong and confident against every assault. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 33, 16)

Carol: #42 Of the Father's love begotten

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 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.**

THE PRAYERS

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.

A Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;

C **That we all may be one.**

A Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;

C **That your Name may be glorified by all people.**

A We pray for all bishops, pastors, and deacons;

C **That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.**

A We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;

C **That there may be justice and peace on the earth.**

A Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;

C **That our works may find favor in your sight.**

A Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;

C **That they may be delivered from their distress.**

A Give to the departed eternal rest.

C **Let light perpetual shine upon them.**

C **May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.**

A Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

A brief silence for reflection.

P Into your hands, O Lord, we commend 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.

C **And also with you.**

THE ANTHEM

Gesu Bambino

Yon

Shannon Nesbit, *soprano*

Wes Watts, *tenor*

*When blossoms flowered 'mid the snows
Upon a winter night
Was born the child, the Christmas Rose,
The King of love and light.*

*The angels sang, the shepherds sang,
The grateful earth rejoiced,
And at his blessed birth the stars
Their exultation voiced.*

*O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

*Again the heart with rapture glows
To greet the holy night
That gave the world its Christmas Rose,
Its King of love and light
Let every voice acclaim His name,
The grateful chorus swell,
From paradise to earth He came
That we with Him might dwell.*

THE OFFERING

Please stand.
THE DOXOLOGY

The Offertory is the Doxology set to the familiar Christmas carol tune, The First Noel.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all
creatures here below. Praise God above, ye
heaven-ly host. Praise Fa-ther, Son, and Ho-ly Ghost.
No-el, No-el, No-el, No-el,
born is the King of Is-ra-el.

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, through Christ our Lord.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh
you have opened the eyes of faith
to a new and radiant vision of your glory;
that, beholding the God made visible,
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.

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

C **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might:
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

P In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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. Please come by way of the center aisle and return by the side aisle. If you need help figuring out where to and when to go, an usher or fellow worshiper will help you. At one time we too were confused. For those unable to partake of wine, white grape juice is available. If you are unable to come to the altar, the pastor will bring communion to you at your seat. 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**

THE BENEDICTION

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

THE CAROL: #53 Cold, December Flies Away

THE DISMISSAL:

P Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.
C **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

Fanfare

Nealson

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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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