

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

*Gathering at St. John's Episcopal Church
1676 S. Belcher Rd., Clearwater, FL 33764*

**Sunday, December 21, 2025
Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A**



Introduction

Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

Welcome

Prelude: "A Joyous Noel" - Paxton

Gathering Hymn: Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn ELW 242

Verse 1-3 are sung



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 - joice, re - joice, 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.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen

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Lighting of the Advent Candle - Third Sunday of Advent

Greeting

All may make the sign of the cross as the presiding minister begins.

Pastor:

In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Reader:

Praise to you, O God, who lives with us, sharing our flesh and bones.

As Mary waited and Joseph dreamed, so we wait and dream for you.

Bless us and let your face shine upon us, more radiant than these candles,
and more precious than all else we seek.

Restore us when we fail to refuse the evil
and choose the good, and banish all our fears.

We pray in the name of Emmanuel, your promised child and our Savior.

Amen.

Verse 4 of Awake, Awake...is sung

Confession and Forgiveness

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

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.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-16

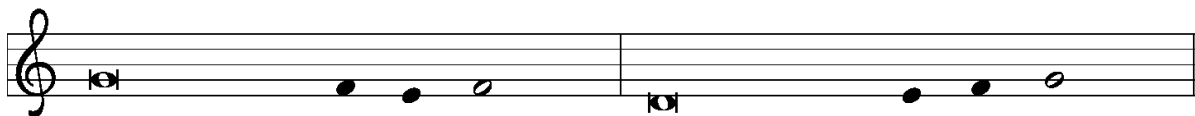
A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

Word of God, Word of Life.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19



Psalm tone reproduced from *Psalter for Worship Year C* © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.
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Cantor: Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph | like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- | on the cherubim.

ALL: In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, | and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and | come to help us.

Cantor: Restore | us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.

ALL: O LORD | God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your | people pray?

Cantor: You have fed them with the ¹ **bread** of tears;
you have given them bowls of ¹ **tears** to drink.

ALL: You have made us the derision ¹ **of** our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh ¹ **us** to scorn.

Cantor: Restore us, O ¹ **God** of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ **shall** be saved.

ALL: Let your hand be upon the one at ¹ **your** right hand,
the one you have made so strong ¹ **for** yourself.

Cantor: And so will we never turn a- ¹ **way** from you;
give us life, that we may call up- ¹ **on** your name.

ALL: Restore us, O LORD ¹ **God** of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ **shall** be saved.

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

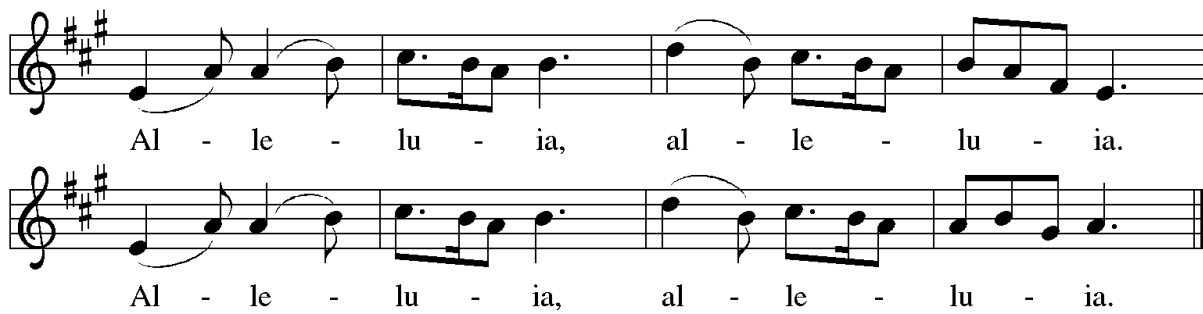
¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Word of God, Word of Life.

ALL: Thanks be to God.



Verses may be sung by a leader. Then the alleluia is repeated.

Music: Fintan O'Carroll and Christopher Walker
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Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

ALL: Glory to You, O Lord.

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon: Pr. Anne Harman

Hymn of the Day: No Wind at the Window - ACS 906



1 No wind at the win - dow, no knock on the door;
 2 "O Mar - y, O Mar - y, don't hide from my face.
 3 This child must be born that the king - dom might come:
 4 No pay - ment was prom - ised, no prom - is - es made;



no light from the lamp - stand, no foot on the floor;
 Be glad that you're fa - vored and filled with God's grace.
 sal - va - tion for man - y, de - struc - tion for some;
 no wed - ding was dat - ed, no blue - print dis - played.



no dream born of tired - ness, no ghost raised by fear:
 The time for re - deem - ing the world has be - gun,
 both end and be - gin - ning, both mes - sage and sign;
 Yet Mar - y, con - sent - ing to what none could guess,



just an an - gel and a wom - an and a voice in her ear.
 and . . . you are re - quest - ed to . . . moth - er God's Son."
 both . . vic - tor and . . vic - tim, both . . yours and di - vine.
 re - plied with con - vic - tion, "Tell . . God I say yes."

Text: John L. Bell, b. 1949

Music: COLUMCILLE, Irish melody

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Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived
by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died,
and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day
he rose again;**

**he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand
of the Father,
and he will come to judge
the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Please respond to each invocation: God of grace, hear our prayer.

A Sign of Peace and Reconciliation

**The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.**

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Please be seated.

OFFERING

All that we have, physically and spiritually comes from God.
Our offering, of time, talent and treasure is a response to our awareness
that God is the creator of all things and that we are redeemed
through life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Your support of this ministry and the faith life of this community is appreciated.

Now the Heavens Start to Whisper



- 1 Now the heav - ens start to whis - per, as the veil is grow-ing thin.
2 Heav - y clouds that block the moon-light now be - gin to drift a - way.
3 Christ, e - ter - nal Sun of jus - tice, Christ, the rose of wis-dom's seed,



Earth from slum - ber wakes to lis - ten to the stir - ring, faint with-in:
Dia - mond bril-liance through the dark-ness shines the hope of com-ing day.
come to bless with fire and fra-grance hours of yearn-ing, hurt, and need.



seed of prom-ise, deep-ly plant-ed, child to spring from Jes - se's stem!
Christ, the morn-ing star of splen-dor, gleams with-in a world grown dim.
In the lone - ly, in the strang - er, in the out - cast, hid from view;



Like the soil be - neath the frost-line, hearts grow soft to wel-come him.
Heav-en's em - ber fans to full-ness; hearts grow warm to wel-come him.
Child who comes to grace the man-ger, teach our hearts to wel-come you.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953
Music: SUO GÂN, Welsh melody
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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

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.

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,

ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,

heav-en and earth are full, full of your glo - ry.

Ho - san - na in the high - est, 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, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Music: *Deutsche Messe*, Franz Schubert, 1797–1828; adapt. Richard Proulx, b. 1937
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Christ has died. Christ is ris'n. Christ will come a - gain.



Lord's Prayer

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.

Invitation to Communion

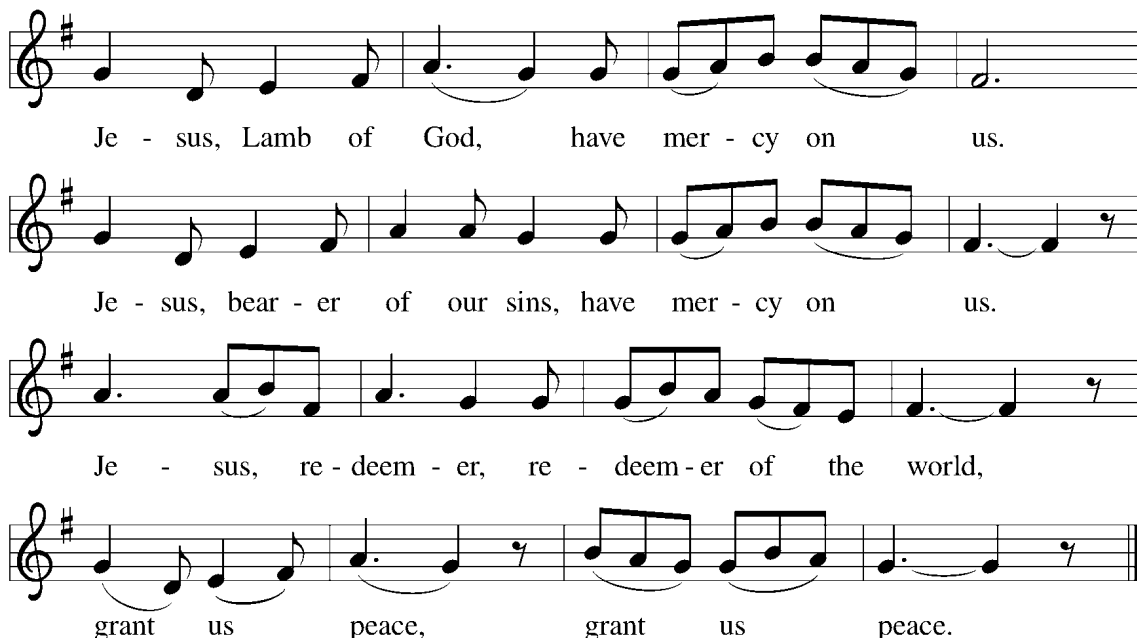
We believe that Holy communion is the body and blood of Jesus.

In this sacrament we are invited to have a personal experience of Christ's presence.

This is the Lord's table. All who desire to be in relationship with Christ are welcome to receive.

We currently receive communion with real bread and wine. If you need to receive a gluten free host, please ask the communion minister before worship begins. For those who prefer to receive grape juice rather than wine you will find white grape juice in the center of the trays as communion is given.

If you have a question, please ask the minister as you receive. The bread and wine should be consumed here in the church before you return to your seat. If for some reason, you are unable to consume either the bread or wine please bring what was not consumed to the ushers or the pastor as soon as the service is completed.



Communion Hymn: O Come, O Come Emmanuel ELW 257



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,



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.

Text: *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. John M. Neale, 1818–1866, alt.

Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.

TABLE BLESSING

Pastor: May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ
 heal you, strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

ALL: Amen.

O Lord, Now Let Your Servant



1 O Lord, now let your ser - vant de - part in heav'n-ly peace,
2 Then grant that I may fol - low your gleam, O glo - rious Light,



for I have seen the glo - ry of your re - deem - ing grace:
till earth-ly shad - ows scat - ter, and faith is changed to sight;



a light to lead the na - tions un - to your ho - ly hill,
till rap-tured saints shall gath - er up - on that shin-ing shore,



the glo - ry of your peo - ple, your cho - sen Is - ra - el.
where Christ, the bless-ed day - star, shall light them ev - er - more.

Text: Ernest E. Ryden, 1886–1981, alt., based on the Nunc dimittis

Music: KUORTANE, Finnish folk tune

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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.

Announcements:

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.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is near.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: Joy to the World – ELW 267



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the



ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -



room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
plains re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat the sound-ing
flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his



sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
found, far as, far as the curse is found.
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748

Music: ANTIOCH, English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792–1872

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Gathering at St. John's Episcopal 1676 S. Belcher Rd., Clearwater, FL

A Reconciling in Christ Congregation

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, a Reconciling in Christ congregation, embodies God's love, and promise of salvation through faith in Christ by extending inclusion and welcome to all.

We welcome the full, active participation of all who worship and minister with us. If you are interested in learning more about Jesus, God's life and action in the world and our lives, the Lutheran faith, or this congregation and how you can be more involved, please reach out to Pastor Anne.

Phone Number: 727- 446-7718

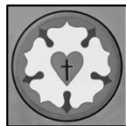
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To reach Pastor Anne
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St. Paul's Spirituality Center

an outreach ministry of St. Paul's Lutheran Church



Florida-Bahamas Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



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CHRISTMAS EVE ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN

Wednesday, December 24

5:30 PM - Dinner in the Hall

6:45 PM - Walk Through the Luminaries

7:00 PM - Candlelight Worship



To RSVP for dinner,
please sign up
on the bulletin board
outside of the church
or send an email to:

office@stpaulsclearwater.org

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Gathers at St. John's Episcopal Church - 1676 S. Belcher Rd., Clearwater