

4th Sunday of Advent
December 21st, 2025



Divine Service 9am

St. James Lutheran Church
1213 US Hwy 22
Phillipsburg, NJ

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Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

Welcome to St. James!

Founded in 1750, the year 2025 marks our 275th anniversary of being God's church. We're so glad you're here! We pray you feel warmly welcomed as we gather to celebrate God's unconditional love in Jesus Christ. He who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever!

Introduction to the Season of Advent: The color of Advent is blue, which symbolizes hope in our coming King. Lutherans emphasize three advents of Christ-- 1) in the past, the baby born of the virgin Mary, who was crucified, died and buried, and on the third day risen from the dead; 2) in the future, Christ will come in glory and unite earth and heaven; 3) in the present, through the word preached and the sacraments administered. Advent is not our own preparation but what God does for us. The Advent wreath signifies Christ's arrival among us.

If you are visiting today: Thank you for joining us today! If you have any questions, please ask! Pastor Levi and the members of our church-community would be glad to help you out. Please sign the guest book or complete a hospitality card located in the pew racks.

To the parents of our younger children please:

Sit towards the front so the little ones can see and hear all that is going on and quietly explain parts of the service and what pastor, ushers, etc. are doing. Don't sweat the small stuff-God gave your littles the wiggle, noise and energy they have and we don't want to suppress that in God's house! Children are always welcome here! If you feel as if you need to step out of the service with your child, feel free but please come back. As Jesus said, "Let the children come to me."

To the members of our church please:

Welcome children and their parents-their presence is a sign our congregation is growing and a gift to us all.

Following along in the bulletin: *indicates the congregation stands. In our liturgical worship, **bold words** are spoken by the congregation. LBW refers to content found in the green hymnbook *Lutheran Book of Worship*. WOV refers to content found in the blue hymnbook *With One Voice*.

Presiding Minister
Assisting Minister
Musician

The Rev. Levi Q. Powers
Polly Newbold
Dave Miller

I. GATHERING

*CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

The sign of the cross † may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

In the name of the Father and of the †Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires are 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. **Amen.**

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

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you 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; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.

Amen.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained servant of the church of Christ, and by Christ's authority alone, I entirely forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the †Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Blessed are you, God of Jacob, for you promise to transform weapons of war into implements of planting and harvest and to teach us your way of peace; you promise that our night of sin is far gone and that your day of salvation is dawning.

As we light the candles on this wreath, wake us from our sleep, wrap us in your light, empower us to live honorably, and guide us along your path of peace.

O house of Jacob, come,

let us walk in the light of the Lord. Amen.

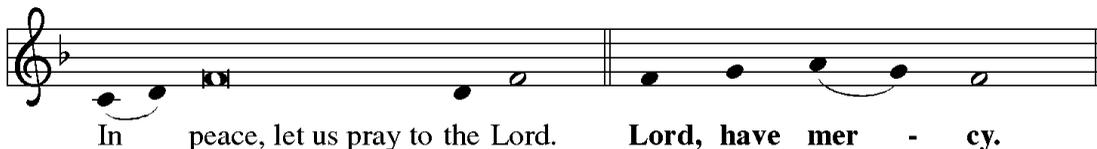
***GATHERING HYMN: LBW 34 – Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel**

Verses 1-5

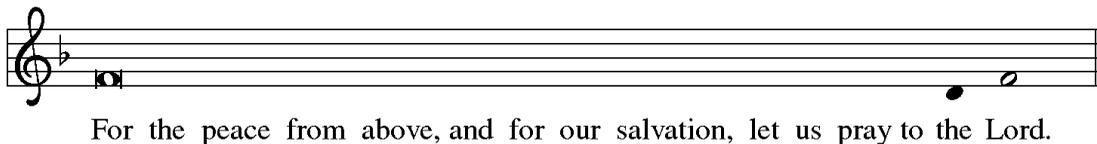
***GREETING**

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

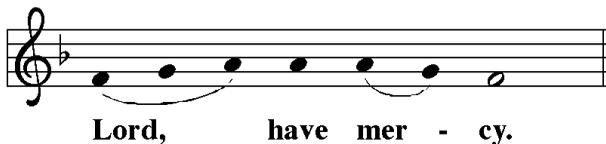
KYRIE



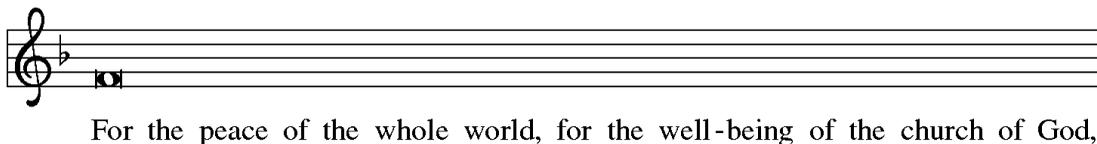
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.



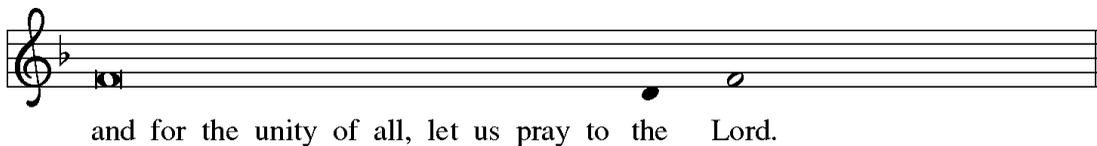
For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



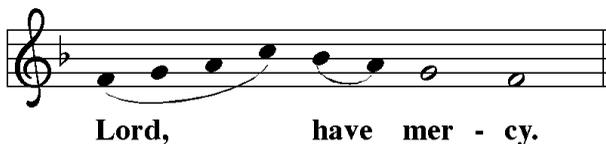
Lord, have mer - cy.



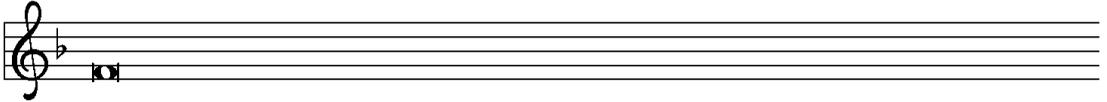
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



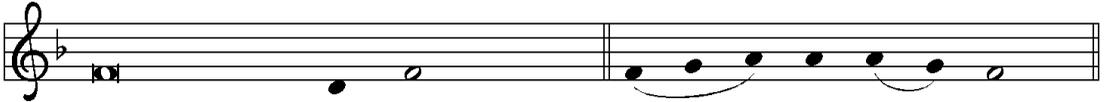
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

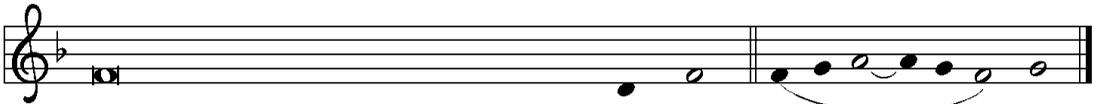


For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord.

A - men.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

Prayer concludes: **Amen.**

II. WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10-16

A reading from Isaiah.

¹⁰ Again 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 80:1-7,17-19

The Psalm is read responsively.

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth

² **before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.**

**Stir up your might,
and come to save us!**

³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

⁴ **O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?**

⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears
and given them tears to drink in full measure.

⁶ **You make us the scorn of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.**

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

¹⁷ **But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one whom you made strong for yourself.**

¹⁸ Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.

¹⁹ **Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

SECOND READING: Romans 1:1-7

A reading from 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,

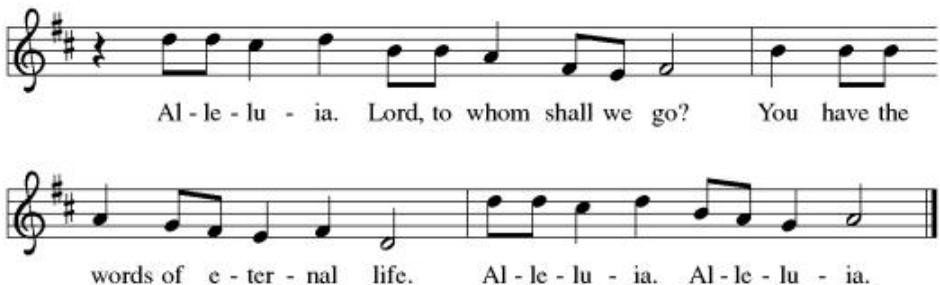
⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

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

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**



GOSPEL READING: Matthew 1:18-25

The holy gospel according to St. Matthew.

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.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

***HYMN OF THE DAY: LBW 23 – O Lord, How Shall I Meet You**

***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,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
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,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who 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.**

*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Each petition ends: "...God of grace, **receive our prayer.**"

Prayers conclude: "Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior." **Amen.**

*Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words.

The assembly is seated.

III. THE LORD'S SUPPER

OFFERTORY



Scan the QR Code to give electronically.

An offering plate is in the back of the sanctuary if you wish to give check or cash. You are welcome to give to the ministry of St. James Lutheran Church freely and spontaneously. There is no guilt or shame. If you do give, give with a cheerful heart.

***OFFERING VERSE: ELW 188 – Create in Me a Clean Heart**

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your
pres - ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -
store un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

The image shows a musical score for the offering verse. It consists of five staves of music in a single system, all in the key of B-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. The melody is written on a treble clef. The lyrics are printed below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The music concludes with a double bar line.

***OFFERING PRAYER**

Prayer concludes: **Amen.**

***THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

Together with the bread and the cup we receive the body and the blood of Christ. We invite all baptized Christians to this sacrament. Children and adults who do not yet receive Holy Communion are invited to come forward with arms folded for a blessing. If you need communion brought to you, please let an usher know. We commune in tables of 10-15 people. The pastor will give you the bread, an assistant will give you a cup. Then two will come to pour into your cup-the first with grape juice, the second with wine. Whoever partakes receives orally the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

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.

The image shows a musical score for a hymn, consisting of four staves of music. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words in bold. The first staff has two measures: 'The Lord be with you.' and 'And al - so with you.'. The second staff also has two measures: 'Lift up your hearts.' and 'We lift them to the Lord.'. The third staff has one measure: 'Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.'. The fourth staff has one measure: 'It is right to give our thanks and praise.'. The notes are mostly quarter notes and half notes, with some beamed eighth notes. There are bar lines and repeat signs at the end of each staff.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise...**Here the minister continues with the preface for the day, concluding:** ...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



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



heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -



san-na. 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.

***THE WORDS OF GIFT**

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**

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**

COMMUNION

When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

and each person may respond

Amen.

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.

***POST COMMUNION SONG: ELW 313 – 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.

***POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

Prayer concludes: **Amen.**

IV. SENDING

***BLESSING**

Blessing concludes: **Amen.**

***SENDING SONG: WOV 626 – People Look East**

***DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Remember the poor.

Thanks be to God.

Worship Helpers: Joanne Willauer will be coordinating the monthly schedule. Please contact her at 610-393-6317 or jdwillauer@rcn.com with your available dates!

Social Ministry Donation Collections:

- Food Drive collection: Social Ministry supports 175 Families thru River of Life & St. Luke's Church in Phillipsburg.

Thank you to all who worked so hard on the the Live Nativity and Vendor Fair, your time was greatly appreciated even if Mother Nature had other ideas!

Collecting Donations for ELCA Good Gifts: Through Sunday, Jan 4, Select an Ornament from the tree in the Lobby. Make checks out to St. James, Memo: Good Gifts, and submit with your offering. All donations will be matched by St James.

Giving Envelopes: 2026 envelopes will be available by the first week of January for pickup in the Lobby. If you did not receive giving envelopes for 2025, and you do not already give electronically – please let Dan Gulick know to include in his planning for 2026 envelopes.

This week at St. James

- **Wednesday 12/24:** Christmas Eve service 8pm
- **Thursday 12/25:** Christmas Day service 10am
- **Thursday 12/25: NO** Proverbs Bible Study with Pastor Levi – Resumes 1/8

UPCOMING

- **Saturday 1/3:** Church Breakfast 7am-10am
- **Tuesday 1/6:** Epiphany service 7pm
- **Tuesday 1/13:** Social Ministry Committee 10am at church

THIS WEEK'S WORSHIP HELPERS

Usher/Greeter: Bob Agans

Lector: Sue Hazelton

Altar Guild: Barbara and Jim Sikra

Tellers: Carol and Lois Steible

NEXT SUNDAY'S WORSHIP

HELPERS(12/28)

Usher/Greeter: Harvey Walters

Lector: Joanne Willauer

Altar Guild: Steve Stocker

Tellers:Sandy Wismer & Don

Willauer

Let us remember in prayer: The Family & Friends of Rodger Crowell-Nugent, The Family & Friends of Kevin Detrick, Joy, Gordon, Justin, Ethan, Dawn, Carol, Debbie Esther, Suzanne, Keith, Sara, Bob, Patrick, John, Gary, Sharon and those unable to attend church service; Carol, Janet, Janice, Greg, Helen, Alayne and Elsie.