

*Introduction to the day: At the heart of our Advent preparation stands John the Baptist, who calls us to repent and make a new beginning. As the darkness increases we turn toward the approaching light of Christ. For Christians he is the root of Jesse, the righteous judge who welcomes all, especially the poor and meek of the earth. We wait with hope for that day when the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and there will be no more hurt or destruction. From the Lord's table we are sent in the spirit of John the Baptist to proclaim that in Christ the kingdom of God has come near.*

## **GATHERING**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the diverse people of God.*

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### **OPENING SONG/PRELUDE**

*Come, Now is the Time to Worship*

*(sung by Wing & A Prayer only)*

## **WELCOME**

*The congregation is invited to stand as they are able and to face the baptismal font.*

## **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,  
who alone does wondrous things.

**Blessed be God's name forever.**

**Amen.**

Beloved, now is the time to wake from sleep.  
Let us confront our sins,  
and confess them to the one who is merciful and just.  
God of new beginnings,  
**we confess that we have not welcomed your holy reign.**  
**We have strayed from your paths.**  
**We prepare for war instead of peace.**  
**We dishonor one another and your creation.**  
**Purify us with your refining fire**  
**and set us again on your way of love,**  
**that we may bear fruit worthy of repentance,**  
**and welcome your coming among us.**  
**Amen.**

People of God,  
a new thing is growing in our midst,  
a tender branch,  
a living sign.  
By water and the Spirit you are joined to this wonder.  
You have put on ✝ Christ,  
and your sins have been washed away.  
Rejoice in the way of the Lord.

**Amen.**

*Please remain standing and turn to face the altar as you are able.*

**GATHERING SONG** *People, Look East* (ELW 248)

1. Peo - ple, look East. The time is near  
 2. Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare.  
 3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build,  
 4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim  
 5. An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth

Of the crown - ing of the year.  
 One more seed is plant - ed there:  
 Guard the nest that must be filled.  
 One more light the bowl shall brim,  
 Him who brings new life to earth.

Make your house fair as you are a - ble,  
 Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,  
 E - ven the hour when wings are fro - zen  
 Shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,  
 Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming

Trim the hearth and set the ta - ble.  
 That in course the flow'r may flour - ish.  
 He for fledg - ing time has cho - sen.  
 Bright as sun and moon to - geth - er.  
 With the word, the Lord is com - ing.

Peo - ple look East and sing to - day:

Love the Guest is on the way.  
 Love the Rose is on the way.  
 Love the Bird is on the way.  
 Love the Star is on the way.  
 Love the Lord is on the way.

**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.**

Leader

In peace, let us pray  
to the Lord

CONGREGATION

Lord have mer cy,  
Christ have mer - cy,  
Lord have mer - cy.

2

Leader

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

CONGREGATION

Lord have mer- cy,  
Christ have mer- cy,  
Lord have mer - cy.

Leader

For peace in the world,  
for the health of God's church,  
and for all unity, let us pray  
to the Lord

3

CONGREGATION

Lord have mer-cy,  
Christ have mer - cy,  
Lord have mer - cy.

Leader

For this holy house,  
and we who offer praise, let us pray  
to the Lord

CONGREGATION

Lord have mer cy,  
Christ have mer - cy,  
Lord have mer - cy.

Leader

Help, save, comfort and defend us,  
gracious Lord

CONGREGATION

Lord have mer- cy,  
Christ have mer - cy,  
A - - - - men

This is the feast of vic-tor-y  
 Feast of vic-tory for our God.  
 This is the feast of vic-tor-y  
 Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia  
 Wor- thy is the  
 Lamb who was slain  
 His blood to set us free  
 Peo-ple of God to serve the Lord  
 Serve the Lord for e-ver.  
 Po- wer, rich- es,  
 wis- dom, strength  
 Hon- or, bless- ing, glo- ry

All be-long to God on high.  
 Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia!  
 This is the feast of vic-tor-y  
 Feast of vic-tory for our God.

This is the feast of vic-tor-y  
 Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia  
 Sing with all God's  
 ho- ly peo- ple  
 Join the hy- mn of  
 all cre- a- tion  
 Bless- ing, hon- or,  
 glo- ry, mi- ght  
 Be to God and the  
 Lamb for- ev- er  
 A- men! A- men!

This is the feast of vic-tor-y  
 Feast of vic-tory for our God.  
 For the Lamb who once was slain  
 Has be-gun his reign forev- er.  
 A- - - - men!

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming nurture our growth as people of repentance and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Please be seated*

## WORD

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

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**FIRST READING:** Isaiah 11:1-10 (Linda Dunn)

*Isaiah describes the coming of a future, ideal ruler who will renew David's royal line (the stump of Jesse). Gifted by the spirit of God, this ruler will reign with perfect justice. Enmity and danger will be restored to harmony and peaceful coexistence.*

*A reading from Isaiah.*

<sup>1</sup>A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

<sup>2</sup>The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

<sup>3</sup>His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;

<sup>4</sup>but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

<sup>5</sup>Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

<sup>6</sup>The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

<sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

<sup>8</sup>The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

<sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

<sup>10</sup>On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM:** Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 (Linda Dunn)

- <sup>1</sup>Give the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to the king's son;  
<sup>2</sup>**that he may rule your people righteously  
and the <sup>1</sup> poor with justice;**  
<sup>3</sup>that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people,  
and the hills, in righteousness.  
<sup>4</sup>**Let him defend the needy among the people,  
rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor.**  
<sup>5</sup>May he live as long as the sun and moon endure,  
from one generation to another.  
<sup>6</sup>**Let him come down like rain upon the mown field,  
like showers that water the earth.**  
<sup>7</sup>In his time may the righteous flourish;  
and let there be an abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.  
<sup>18</sup>**Blessed are you, LORD God, the God of Israel;  
you alone do wondrous deeds!**  
<sup>19</sup>And blessed be your glorious name forever,  
and may all the earth be filled with your glory. Amen. Amen.

**SECOND READING:** Romans 15:4-13 (Linda Dunn)

*God's promise to include Gentiles within the circle of God's blessed people has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Christians live out their unity by welcoming and encouraging each other just as Christ has welcomed them into God's family.*

*A reading from Romans.*

<sup>4</sup>Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup>May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup>Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. <sup>8</sup>For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, <sup>9</sup>and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles,  
and sing praises to your name”;

<sup>10</sup>and again he says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;

<sup>11</sup>and again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him”;

<sup>12</sup>and again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse shall come,  
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

<sup>13</sup>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

## KIDS' MESSAGE

(Jeri Wartena)

*The congregation is invited to stand as they are able to welcome the Gospel*

### **GOSPEL: Matthew 3:1-12**

(Pr. Carolyn Brodt)

*Just before Jesus begins his public ministry, John the Baptist appears, calling people to mend their ways and speaking of a powerful one who is to come.*

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, <sup>2</sup>“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” <sup>3</sup>This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.’”

<sup>4</sup>Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, <sup>6</sup>and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

<sup>7</sup>But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Bear fruit worthy of repentance. <sup>9</sup>Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>10</sup>Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>11</sup>“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Please be seated*

## SERMON

(Pr. Carolyn Brodt)

*The congregation is invited to stand as they are able*

## **HYMN OF THE DAY** *Prepare the Royal Highway*

(ELW 264)

Music and Lyrics on following page



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:

*Refrain*



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

## CREED

Let us join with Christians throughout the world this Advent Season and confess our shared faith using the words of the 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.**

*Please be seated*



## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION** (Linda Dunn)

As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope. God, you renew the church in every age. We give thanks for hymn writers and theologians. Inspire teachers, writers, and musicians to delight and instruct your people. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

You give us a vision of creation in harmony, when hurting and destruction will be no more. Teach us to be stewards of the earth and companions to its creatures. Restore to balance and wholeness what human greed has harmed. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

You defend the cause of all who are poor and oppressed. Raise up leaders who will govern with equity and serve the common good. Guide judges, lawmakers, and public officials to protect the rights of those who cannot advocate for themselves. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

You deliver those in need from suffering and fear. Come to the aid of any who are exploited or abused, especially children, elders, and victims of human trafficking. Provide safety and help to our neighbors without shelter, refugees, and those fleeing violence. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

You urge your people to welcome one another as you have welcomed us. Nurture ministries of hospitality and care in this and every congregation. We pray for people who are homebound, hospitalized, or separated from loved ones. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

You embrace all who have died trusting in your promises, and we give thanks for their faithful witness. Sustain us in hope until we are united with them in the joy of your eternal presence. God, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

*(Prayer requests provided by congregation to be added here by Reader)*

God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray.  
**Amen.**

## **PEACE**

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

## **MEAL**

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

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## **OFFERING**

*We acknowledge that all we have is a gift from God and in gratefulness we return to God a portion of the time, finances, and gifts that God has given us.*

*Thank you so much for your continued support.*

## **OFFERING PRAYER**

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.**

## **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

Holy God, the Beginning and the End,  
our Salvation and our Hope,  
we praise you for creating a world of order and beauty.

When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair,  
you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.

At this end of the ages  
your Son Jesus came to bring us your love  
and to heal all the suffering world.

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.

Remembering, therefore,  
his life, death, and resurrection,  
we await his coming again  
in righteousness and peace.

Send your Spirit on us  
and on this bread and wine we share:  
strengthen our faith,  
increase our hope,  
and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,  
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,  
in your holy Church,  
both now and forever.

**Amen**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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**

Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God, who has come to save you.

*All are welcome to join in our communion celebration.  
Please follow the directions of Pastor Carolyn and the ushers.*

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

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.**

*The congregation is invited to stand as they are able.*

## **SENDING**

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

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## **BLESSING**

God the eternal Word,  
who dwells with us in Jesus,  
and who holds us in the grace of the Holy Spirit,  
✠ bless you now and forever.  
**Amen.**

## SENDING SONG *My Lord, What a Morning*

(ELW 438)

*Refrain*



My Lord, what a morn-ing; my Lord, what a morn - ing; oh,



my Lord, what a morn-ing, when the stars be - gin to fall.



- 1 You will hear the trum - pet sound,
- 2 You will hear the sin - ner cry, to wake the na-tions un - der - ground,
- 3 You will hear the Chris-tian shout,



look-ing to my God's right hand, when the stars be-gin to fall.

*Please be seated.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*After brief announcements related to the ministry of Bethel,  
the congregation is invited to stand and face the font.*

## DISMISSAL

Christ is near. Go in peace.

**Thanks be to God and we will.**