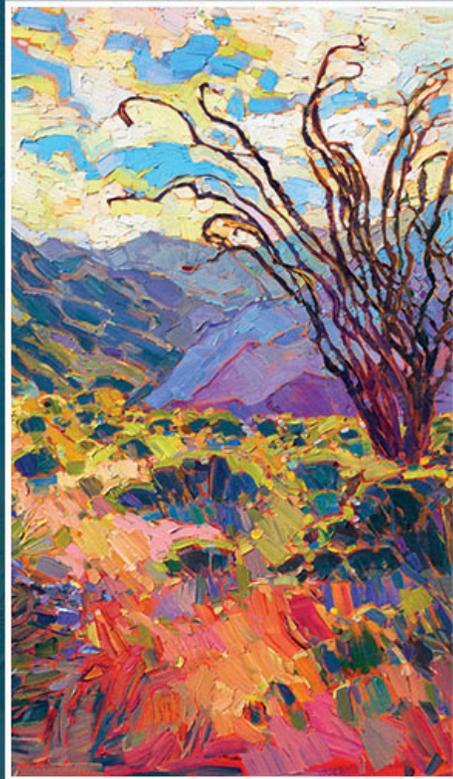


**St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**SUNDAY December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

The  
desert shall  
**rejoice**  
and  
**blossom**

ISAIAH 35:1



***WELCOME***

**To our Church Family**

*We're Glad You're Here.*



## St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

We are so glad that you chose to worship with us today. If you are visiting with us for the first time, please visit our Welcome Center in the North Narthex. As our way of saying thank you, you will receive a St. Paul's Welcome Bag with a coffee cup and information about our church. You may also want to download our new St Paul's App and visit our website. Information on both is in the Welcome Bag.

For our young worshipers we have children's packets to play and color with during the service. These are on the white stand near the east entrance to our sanctuary.

### ***You are Welcome at the table!***

If you have been baptized and believe Christ is present in the Eucharist (Holy Communion), you are welcome to join us at the table. Please come forward at the direction of the ushers and return to your seats using the side aisles. If you do not wish to partake in the Sacrament but would like to receive a blessing, please just cross your hands over your chest when you come forward.

Grape juice and Gluten-free wafers are available on request. Grape Juice is in the colored glasses in the center of the communion tray. If you are not able to come forward and would like to receive communion, please inform an usher and the pastor will bring communion to you.

### **Flowers**

**Altar Flowers** were given today by Sue Reid in memory of brothers Bobby & Jim Mullen.

**Throne Flowers** were given by Amy Burkett honor of granddaughter Jo's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Today's Worship Focus**

A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.

### **Readings and Psalms**

#### **Isaiah 35:1-10**

*The desert blooms as God's people return from exile*

#### **Luke 1:46b-55** (alternate)

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. (*Lk. 1:47*)

#### **James 5:7-10**

*Patience until the coming of the Lord*

#### **Matthew 11:2-11**

*The forerunner of Christ*

Today's Hymns from the Tower  
The Westminster Strike  
Announcements

Church Carillon

Prelude: I Wonder as I Wander  
Richard Evert, clarinet

arr. Celeste Avery

### Third Week of Advent Prayer - Joy

#### Scripture

"Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.  
- Philippians 4:4-7

#### Wreath Prayer:

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to joy. Lift up our heads from the dust and adorn us with your righteousness, that we may rejoice and testify that our Lord has come; for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Heavenly Father, this third week of Advent, let us remember that the good news of Jesus' birth has the power to bring us great joy this Christmas season. Our joy isn't dependent on what is going on in our life, in our world, or the people that we are with. It doesn't depend on the gifts we give or the gifts we find under the tree. No earthly thing can ever give us complete joy. Our joy comes from you. That joy that flooded the hearts of the shepherds, the angels, the wise men, the hosts of heaven, and Mary and Joseph is the joy that still has the power to overwhelm our hearts with rejoicing.

Our joy doesn't come from our jobs, our family, our relationships, our finances, or our success. Our joy doesn't come from what we have on earth or who we are with. Our joy is a gift. It is the gift that you gave us that first Christmas in Jesus Christ. Our joy is encompassed in our Savior, King Jesus. Flood our heart with joy this Advent season as we reflect on the good news of Jesus' birth. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.

#### GATHERING SONG

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

ELW 311

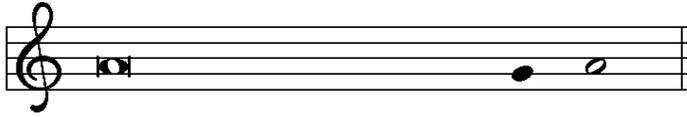
#### GREETING

*During this time, the presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.*

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.**

# KYRIE



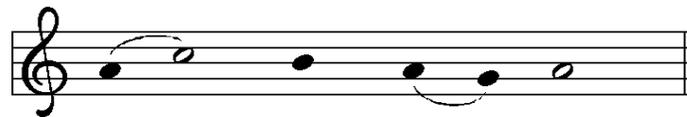
In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



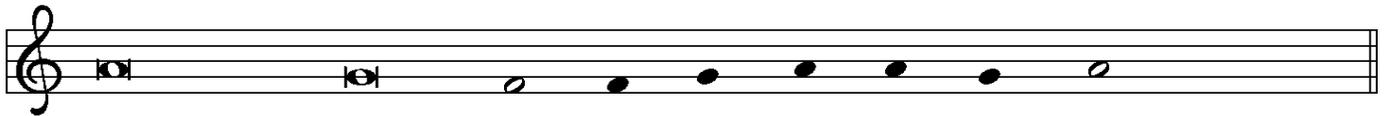
For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



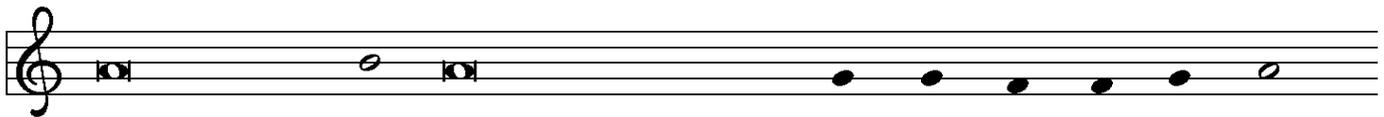
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



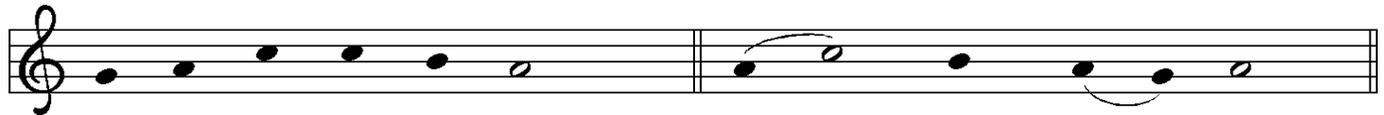
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.

Lord have mer - cy.



and streams in the desert;  
<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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 traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Anthem**

I Wonder as I Wander

John Jacob Niles (1892-1980)

Jessica Gray, soloist,

to honor Don Gray & Paula Morgan

**Second Reading: James 5:7-10**

<sup>7</sup> Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, 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. <sup>8</sup> You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup> As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?



You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

## Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

**The holy gospel according to Matthew, the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter  
Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>2</sup> When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

<sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup> What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. <sup>9</sup> What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> 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.’

<sup>11</sup> “Truly 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.”

The gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## SERMON

*Rev. Mark Kreemer*

**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**

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

*After each petition the following response is given:*

God of grace,  
**hear our prayer.**

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.  
**Amen.**

# PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**Offertory:**      Offertory: Prepare the Way of the Lord      Penny Rodriguez  
*Chancel Choir*

*Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. The mountains made low, the rugged places plain.*



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -



nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your



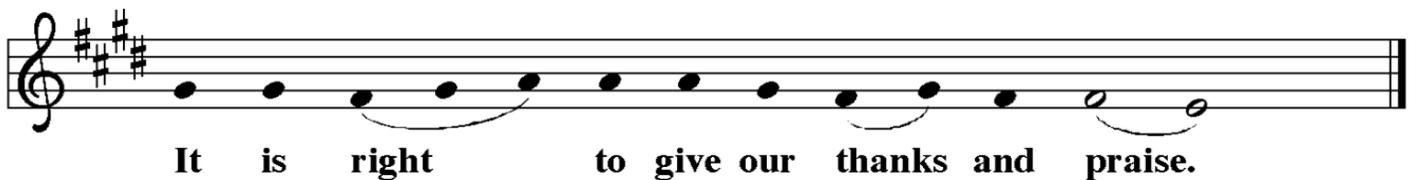
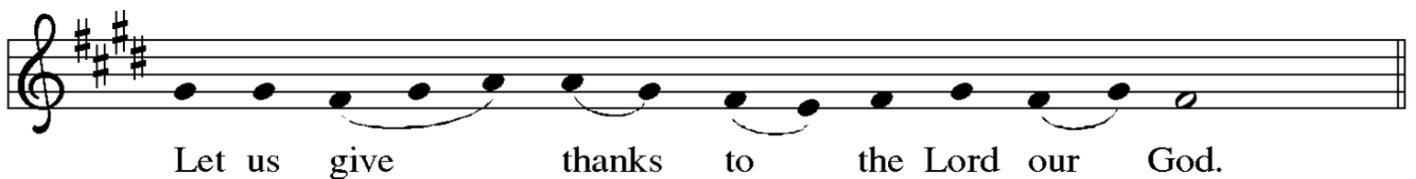
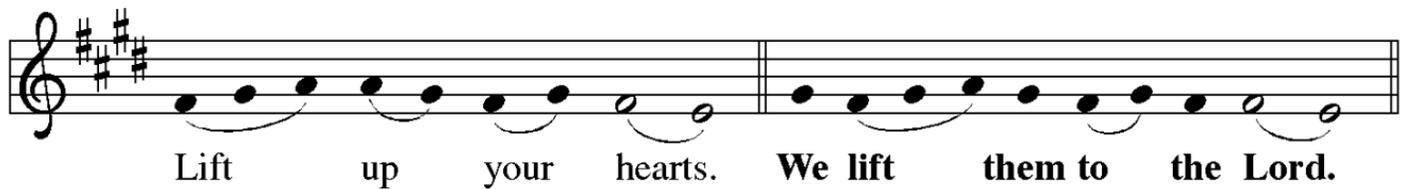
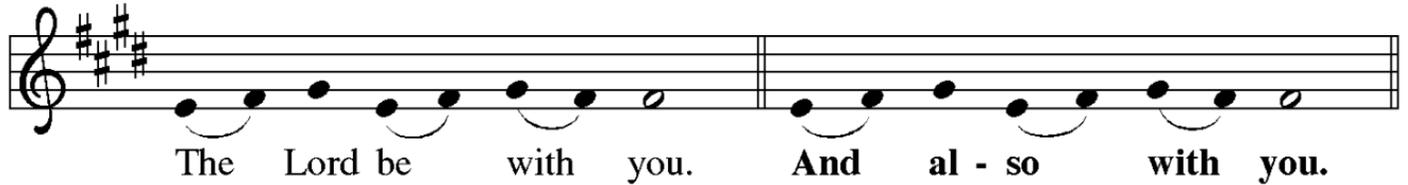
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

## OFFERING PRAYER

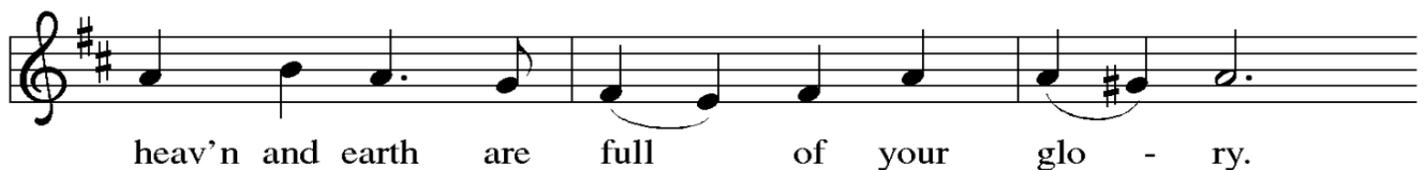
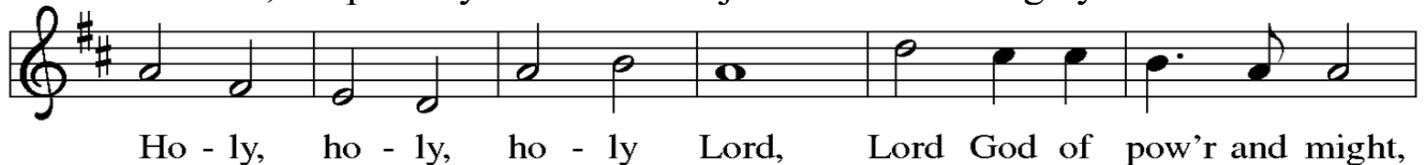
Let us pray.

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



It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places.... And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



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.

## **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

### **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**

Here is life. God is with us.

Come, receive what God has promised.

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, grant us peace.

**COMMUNION HYMN:** Christ Be Our Light

ELW 715

### TABLE BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

Amen

### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

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.**

### SENDING SONG

Blessed Be the God of Israel

ELW 250

### 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. Keep awake.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude:** Prepare the Royal Highway

Michael Costello (b. 1979)

## **In our prayers today we will remember**

*Jessie & Linda Shaffer, Nancy Lint, Steve Kress, Lenny Herd, Loren Veigel, Pastor Groenke, Eric Gerber, Cindy Lash, Judy Hall, Bonnie & Dave Dourm, Tom Fry, Carol Sargent, Kenneth & Jean Dexter, Anna Langenfeld, Arthur Barrett, Karen & Paul Daily, Susan Via, Richard Green.*

## **Music Notes:**

### **Coming in 2026! The St. Paul's Steelband!**

Through a generous donation of five instruments, Eleanor Manes will be starting a steelband for the congregation and greater Massillon community. No musical background necessary, and any and all ages/skills are welcome. For more information, please contact Ellie: 330-400-8543

## **Wednesday Advent Services 7:00 PM**

Each Wednesday we will explore someone from the Lineage of Jesus.

|             |                       |                   |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| December 3  | Christ Lutheran       | Rev. Mark Kreemer |
| December 10 | St. Jacob Lutheran    | Rev. Ash Welch    |
| December 17 | Holy Trinity Lutheran | Rev. Jeff Goggins |

## **Join the Fellowship Committee in these events!**

## **Assisted Hearing Devices Available**

Four assisted listening devices are available at the sound system table in the back of the sanctuary at the beginning of worship. Please see Jim Johnson or John Stanko if you need assistance with these devices.



You can also use your smartphone to access the system. Go to your app store and download the **WaveCAST** app. Then connect to the sanctuary Wi-Fi: **Network:** sound media **Password:** Sound127

# Adult Sunday School

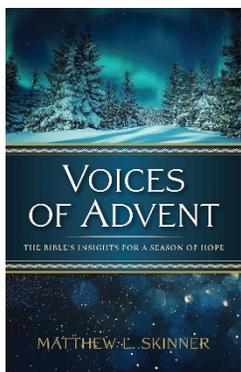
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the Parish Hall

The True Spirit of Christmas

“...The Holy Spirit will come upon you...” (Luke 1:35)

The Holy Spirit played an integral role in the birth of Jesus Christ. Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zechariah, and Simeon, among others, all knew the Spirit’s power and leading as each played a part in the coming of the Christ child. As a result, the Spirit fruit of love, joy, and peace was evident in their lives, as it can be for us.

We gather at 11:30 on Sunday morning in the Parish Hall, top floor. An elevator is available for easy access. Note - the class will not meet on Sunday, December 28.



## Thursday Morning Bible Study

Beginning December 11th

Voices of Advent

by Matthew Skinner

In *Voices of Advent*, Matthew L. Skinner leads readers through biblical texts and explores how they shape our lives and Christmas celebrations. We listen as Jesus promises to return to us in the future, to John the Baptist as he prepares the way for the Messiah, to the faithful people and poets who anticipate the magnificence of Jesus’s birth, and to the angels and visionaries who praise God when Christmas dawns. Listen carefully to the Bible’s various perspectives that shape our preparations for Christmas; you’ll hear hope in all of them. *Voices of Advent* helps readers experience Advent not only as the start of the Christian Church Year, but also as the powerful overture that sets the tone for the incredible story of Jesus

## Game Night – Sunday, January 18

Join us in the lounge at 5:00 pm to play games. We will play bingo with prizes, or you can bring a favorite board game or card game. Also bring an appetizer to share. This will be a fun chance to mix with our church family! Come and have fun!!

## Capital Campaign Report

With joy and gratitude, we celebrate the completion of our new entrance and bathrooms—made possible by your faithful generosity. What a gift it is to see these improvements already serving our community!

Yet our work of caring for God’s house is not finished. Three pressing needs lie ahead: a \$125,000 replacement of the Parish Hall heating and cooling system, repairs to the Parish Hall window wells, and fixing a boiler leak in the Education Building. Through your continued giving, we can preserve this sacred space as a place of safety, welcome, and comfort for all who come through our doors. Together, we are ensuring that our church remains a living witness to God’s grace for generations to come.

## Download the St. Paul’s Phone APP

Go to your Google or Apple app store on your smart phone and download the “My Church” by Pushpay. It is a free download.

Open the app and search for St Paul’s by typing STPLC APP.  
Then click on the St Paul’s logo—that’s it.



## Community Social Media Pages

Facebook & Instagram, Search “*Massillon Lutheran Churches*”

Facebook

“*St Paul’s Lutheran Church in Massillon*”  
or “*Cathedral Concerts at St Paul’s*”

## **Thank you to those serving today:**

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Presiding Minister</b>   | <b>Rev. Mark Kreemer</b>                                      |
| <b>Director of Music</b>    | <b>Dr. Abigail Haake</b>                                      |
| <b>Assisting Minister</b>   | <b>Veronica Kreemer</b>                                       |
| <b>Lector</b>               | <b>Sydney Johnson</b>   |
| <b>Greeters</b>             | <b>Dick &amp; Robin Cordes</b>                                |
| <b>Communion Assistants</b> | <b>Brady Rupp &amp; Sue Reid</b>                              |
| <b>Sacristan</b>            | <b>Kathryn Myers</b>  |
| <b>Ushers</b>               | <b>Jeff Akey, Gary Collard,<br/>Richard Evert, Dan Farrar</b> |
| <b>Soundboard</b>           | <b>Jim Johnson</b>  |
| <b>Video/Live-Stream</b>    | <b>John Stanko</b>  |

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**GATHERING SONG**      Hail to the Lord's Anointed      ELW 311  
Public Doamin

**HYMN OF THE DAY**      Prepare the Royal Highway      ELW 264  
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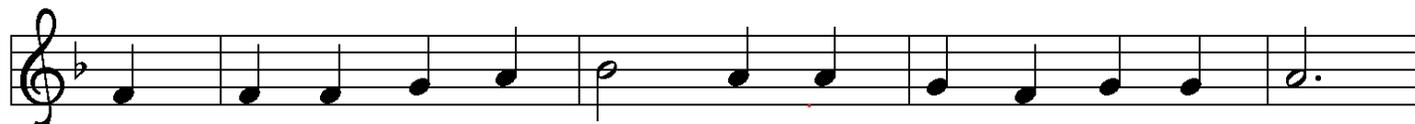
**COMMUNION HYMN:**      Christ Be Our Light      ELW 715  
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**SENDING SONG**      Blessed Be the God of Israel      ELW 250  
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# Hail to the Lord's Anointed



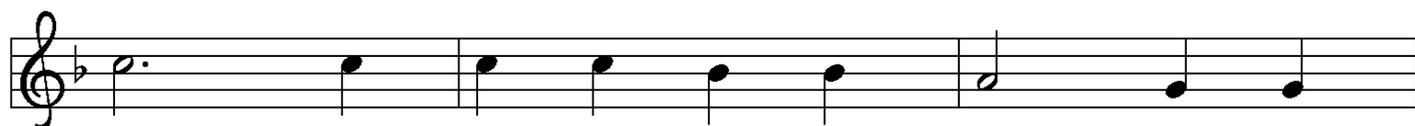
1 Hail to the Lord's a - noint - ed, great Da - vid's great - er Son!  
 2 You come with res - cue speed - y to those who suf - fer wrong,  
 3 You shall come down like show - ers up - on the fruit - ful earth;  
 4 Kings shall fall down be - fore you, and gold and in - cense bring;



Hail, in the time ap - point - ed, your reign on earth be - gun!  
 to help the poor and need - y, and bid the weak be strong;  
 love, joy, and hope, like flow - ers, spring in your path to birth.  
 all na - tions shall a - dore you, your praise all peo - ple sing.



You come to break op - pres - sion, to set the cap - tive  
 to give them songs for sigh - ing, their dark - ness turn to  
 Be - fore you on the moun - tains shall peace, the her - ald,  
 To you shall prayer un - ceas - ing and dai - ly vows as -



free, to take a - way trans - gres - sion and  
 light, whose souls, con - demned and dy - ing, are  
 go; and righ - teous - ness in foun - tains from  
 cend; your king - dom still in - creas - ing, a



rule in eq - ui - ty.  
 pre - cious in your sight.  
 hill to val - ley flow.  
 king - dom with out end.

# Prepare the Royal Highway



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!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*  
Music: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.  
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# Christ, Be Our Light



1 Long - ing for light, we wait in dark - ness. Long - ing for  
 2 Long - ing for peace, our world is trou - bled. Long - ing for  
 3 Long - ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long - ing for  
 4 Long - ing for shel - ter, man - y are home - less. Long - ing for  
 5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,  
 hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone  
 wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,  
 warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,  
 hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.  
 has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.  
 bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.  
 shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.  
 to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.



*Refrain*

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957

Music: CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT, Bernadette Farrell

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# Blessed Be the God of Israel



1 Blessed be the God of Is - ra - el who comes to set us free  
2 With prom - ised mer - cy will God still the cov - e - nant re - call,  
3 My child, as proph - et of the Lord you will pre - pare the way,



and rais - es up new hope for us: a Branch from Da - vid's tree.  
the oath once sworn to A - bra - ham, from foes to save us all;  
to tell God's peo - ple they are saved from sin's e - ter - nal sway.



So have the proph - ets long de - clared that with a might - y arm  
that we might wor - ship with - out fear and of - fer lives of praise,  
Then shall God's mer - cy from on high shine forth and nev - er cease



God would turn back our en - e - mies and all who wish us harm.  
in ho - li - ness and righ - teous - ness to serve God all our days.  
to drive a - way the gloom of death and lead us in - to peace.

Text: Carl P. Daw Jr., b. 1944, based on Luke 1:68-79

Music: FOREST GREEN, English folk tune

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