

## ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

P. O. Box 267, 201 Veterans Dr., Columbus, TX 78934

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E-mail: [admin@splctx.org](mailto:admin@splctx.org) [www.splctx.com](http://www.splctx.com) **Pastor:** [pastor.akethan@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.akethan@gmail.com)

December 10, 2023 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Second Sunday of Advent

\*\*\*\*\*

Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Youth & Family Specialist		Stephanie Polasek	
Congregational Chair		Donna Maas	
St. Paul Christian Learning Academy Director		Briana Bedford	
Secretary		Elena Holub	
Custodian		Tomasa Rosales	
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator		DyAnn Lauzon	

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**MISSION STATEMENT:** Love God, Love Neighbor (*Luke 10:27*)

**VISION STATEMENT:** We will work to strengthen and grow closer in relationship to God and to one another.

- *As we enter into a sacred time and space, a friendly reminder to please set your cell phone to vibrate.*
- ***We want to welcome all of our guests today and thank you for worshiping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.***
- Hearing Assist devices are available for those who need assistance in hearing worship service better. Please see a person in the Sound Room (Usher Room) to request the use of a device during worship.

\* This symbol indicates that the congregation is invited to stand physically or in spirit.

## INTRODUCTION

*John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.*

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE PADS

***(Ushers will be handing out Attendance Pads during the announcements. Please be sure to sign your name and contact information.)***

### LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

#### \* CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

- P As we gather for worship, we are first given the opportunity to confess our sins, receive the proclamation and promise of forgiveness and worship with clean hearts. As we prepare for Jesus' return, there is work for us to continue to do by Jesus' instruction. We have at times not made the road smooth or straight for others to feel welcome or encouraged to meet the Jesus they need. We have even allowed the drama of others and the imperfect church to be a reason we use to neglect the worship and participation of a believer in Jesus. As we privately confess our sins, let us humble ourselves for the help we need to walk and represent the light of Christ in us for the world.

*(Silence for private confession.)*

- P If you are truly sorry and asking God for help, here is the promise he commanded the leaders in his church to proclaim, "You are forgiven." May this forgiveness free you and help you to live; to live in Jesus' name.

**C Amen.**

### GOSPEL SONG: HOSANNA

All you sleepers awake from the grave again.

All you dreamers be brave, come and dream again.

All you poets arise, let your story be told. Oh...

All you singers sing out, let your anthem roll... your anthem roll.

### CHORUS:

***For we know the curse is broken. Hope is rising up!***

***Oh.. the streets are singin' "Hosanna! The King has come!"***

***Oh... the curse is broken. Hope is rising up!***

***Oh.. the streets are singin' "Hosanna! The King has come!"***

### GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8

*The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.*

- A The holy gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 1, verses 1-8.

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; <sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’” <sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

**GOSPEL SONG:    HOSANNA**  
**All who mourn and weep, come and find your peace.**  
**All who hunger and thirst, come and have your feast.**  
**All you prodigals, find your way back home.    Oh...**  
**Let’s fill the streets with dancing and the skies with song...**  
**Come on, lift your song!**

**CHORUS:**  
***For we know the curse is broken. Hope is rising up!***  
***Oh.. the streets are singin’ “Hosanna! The King has come!”***  
***Oh... the curse is broken. Hope is rising up!***  
***Oh.. the streets are singin’ “Hosanna! The King has come!”***

**BRIDGE:**  
**Prepare the way! Tell the world! Hosanna... The King has come!**  
**Prepare the way! Tell the world! Hosanna... The King has come!**  
**Hearts, unfold! Life, spring up! Hosanna... The King has come!**

**REPEAT CHORUS**  
CCLI Song#6354848 Words and Music by Eddie Kirkland ©Eddie Kirkland Music | Songs at North Point CCLI Lic#1729377

**CHILDREN'S SERMON**

**SERMON**

**\*    SERMON SONG:    THE WAY (NEW HORIZON)**  
**Through every battle, through every heartbreak.**  
**Through every circumstance, I believe**  
**That You are my fortress. Oh, You are my portion.**  
**You are my hiding place, oh, I believe You are**  
**The Way . . . the Truth . . . the Life; I believe You are**  
**The Way . . . the Truth . . . the Life; I believe.**

**Through every blessing, through every promise.**  
**Through every breath I take, I believe**  
**That You are provider, Oh, You are protector,**  
**You are the One I love, I believe You are**  
**The Way . . . the Truth . . . the Life; I believe You are**  
**The Way . . . the Truth . . . the Life; I believe You are**

**It's a new horizon, and I'm set on You.**  
**And You meet me here today with mercies that are new.**  
**All my fears and doubts, they can all come, too,**  
**Because they can't stay long when I'm here with You**

**It's a new horizon, and I'm set on You.**  
**And You meet me here today with mercies that are new.**  
**All my fears and doubts, they can all come, too,**  
**Because they can't stay long when I believe You are**  
**The Way . . . the Truth . . . the Life; I believe You are**  
**The Way . . . the Truth . . . the Life; I believe You are**

**It's a new horizon, and I'm set on You.**  
**And You meet me here today with mercies that are new.**  
**All my fears and doubts, they can all come, too,**  
**Because they can't stay long when I'm here with You are**  
**The Way . . . the Truth . . . the Life; I believe You are**  
**The Way . . . the Truth . . . the Life; I believe You are**

CCLI Song #7089024 Words and Music by Ben Smith, Daniel Bashta, and Pat Barrett ©Heritage Worship Publishing | Capitol CMG Genesis | Housefires Sounds | Go Forth Sounds | Bread & Wine Sounds CCLI License #1729377

**BAPTISM OF    Caroline Lynette Gundelach    See Insert**

*(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)*

**PRAYERS**

A With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God’s day of restoration.

*A brief silence.*

A Send forth your faithful people with words of promise and forgiveness. Teach your church to be bold in revealing your good news in word and in deed.

*A brief silence.*

A Comfort your people with tender words of love and healing. Surround all who are grieving, all who know depression or anxiety, or all who feel lonely or forgotten. Be a steadfast presence when all else feels uncertain.

*A brief silence.*

- A We pray for peace in all the world, especially in war-torn areas of Ukraine, Sudan, Niger and Israel. Bring an end to wars and the destruction of lives and your creation.

*A brief silence.*

- A We pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:  
Richanne Waddle; Carolyn Kneller; Oscar Roth; Brooke Paden-Dean; Gary Braun; Angela Skow; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

*A brief silence.*

- A We pray for all those battling cancer that they may know comfort and strength. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*  
Kristen Downing; Ashley Roberts; Traci Edman; Michael Yancey; Amanda Aramijo; Zachary Schulke; Herbie Kollatschny; Tom Russell, Jr.; Melda Coleman; Al Gene Canik; Larry Bookout; Mike Wostarek; Elizabeth Frisby; Kristina Acevedo; George Krenek; Anne Dimas; Carl Geisler; Laura Walla; Randy Wendt; Heather Deviney; Paul Casinger; Dr. Tom Hancher; Leonard Kahlden; and Bob Loy.
- A We pray for all expectant mothers and especially for:  
Nancy Gorman; Kyndall Beettner; Jamee Albert; Kristen O'Leary Bridges; Abegail Gatzke; Chelsea Gilstrap; Calli Guthmann; Dhara Comans; Nelma Grace Weathers; Cassandra Thompson Richardson; and Rosalinda Rosales that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace.

*A brief silence.*

- A We pray for all those who reside in care facilities and the homebound that they receive your caring and compassion. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*  
Clemons Venghaus; Joey Denby; Paul Minar, Sr.; Adrian Fritsch; Coy Dell Schindler; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Jane Booker; Pat Brasher; Walter Glaeser, Jr.; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Joyce Dehmer; Donna Dehmer; Cherie Moore; Lauren Lamb; and Lydia Rojas.
- A We pray for all law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and active duty military personnel that they are protected and kept safe. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*  
Law Enforcement Officers: Charles Jobb; Joseph Smith; Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Johnny Kovar; Abbigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Zane Weido; Josh Jones; as well as Donnie Templeton and Jason Templeton who are also fire fighters. For all fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers and 9-1-1 dispatchers, especially Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Travis Neuendorff; Nathan Bookout; Brenda Henkes; Jan Willette; and Terri Neunendorff, as well as those active duty

military members including Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Dalton Kapel; Kevin Gonzalez; Evelyn Rojas; and Nelson Beettner.

- A We pray for the church throughout the world. May we all proclaim the good news of your love effectively. We ask, especially, that you would bless the ministry of our sister congregations Cristo Rey and their Pastor Armando Capcha and Iglesia Cristiana Camino de Santidad and their leaders Pastors Gumer and Naomi Anton in Peru, all Missionaries, especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic.

*A brief silence.*

- A With you a thousand years is like a day. Bless the memory of the saints from ages past and the anticipation of saints yet to be born. Inspire us to live with faith as we await your new heaven and new earth.

*A brief silence.*

- A Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.

**C Amen.**

**\* PEACE**

- P As Jesus shared peace, let us also share His peace with one another. *(Share the “Peace of the Lord” with your neighbors.)*

***(We will be collecting offerings before and after worship each week. This includes Power of One dollars.)***

## **OFFERING and POWER OF ONE**

*“Power of One” is a ministry sponsored by your Stewardship Team. We are asking each and every one of our members to give \$1.00 above what your normal giving would be. We are asking each member to place this \$1.00 bill or change in the offering plate each week. The team is also inviting all children to participate to develop the habit of giving as part of their worship experience. Parents, a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar bill, any of these will do to help your children develop a habit of giving. These “Power of One” dollars will be used to support local ministries and ministries abroad. The purpose of this ministry is to demonstrate that something as small as one dollar can be used to make a difference in the lives of others.*

**\* OFFERING PRAYER**

- P God our provider, by your merciful hand abundance springs up from the earth. Receive and bless these gifts of your own bounty. Let them be a sign of your steadfast love and faithfulness for all people, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**C Amen.**

\* REMEMBERING JESUS' WORDS, PROMISES, AND COMMANDS

\* LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to sing.

C Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.

\* INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P In this meal, Christ Jesus is present, and the Holy Spirit prepares the way. Come, take your place at the table.

C Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION (Continuous with Individual Cups)  
{Distribution will be continuous. All are welcome for communion. Please come down the center aisle starting from the front. Follow directions of the ushers, coming up one side at a time. Pastor will hand you the bread. If you wish to have a gluten-free wafer, please tell Pastor “Gluten-free, please.” Afterward, you will choose either wine or white grape juice from the individual cups in the tray – white grape juice in the center with wine surrounding. Place the empty cups in the baskets located off to the side. Although communion is continuous, you are welcome to kneel at the rail in prayer after receiving communion. Please return to your seat by the side aisles.}

\* PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P Generous God, in bread and cup you have revealed your glory for all people to see together. Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim your good news of liberation and release, brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior.

C Amen.

\* BLESSING

P The God of peace bless you, the love of Christ sustain you in hope, and the anointing of the Spirit ✚ remain upon you now and forever.

C Amen.

\* CLOSING SONG: NEW CREATION

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh oh. . .  
Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh. . .

I thought I knew what I was talkin' about, when I testified of Your great love.  
Well I was a soul on fire, there was no doubt.  
Bible-believin', saved, and washed in the blood.  
But it wasn't 'til I stumbled, and made my mistakes  
That I could know in my soul how amazing is grace!

CHORUS:  
You brought me blessings out of a tragedy.  
You turned my old song into a symphony.  
And with Your spirit living inside of me,  
I'm a new creation! I'm a new creation!

And now I know what You were talkin' about.  
Went from my head into my heart.  
When I was broken at the bottom I found,  
You're my Healer and Redeemer, Jesus, that's who You are! CHORUS

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh oh. . .  
Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh. . .

Well it wasn't 'til I stumbled, and made my mistakes  
That I could know in my soul how amazing is grace!

LAST CHORUS:  
You brought me blessings out of a tragedy.  
You turned my old song into a symphony.  
And with Your spirit living inside of me,  
I'm a new creation! Oh, oh oh oh. . .

You brought me blessings out of a tragedy.  
You turned my old song into a symphony.  
And with Your spirit living inside of me,  
I'm a new creation! I'm a new creation!

Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh oh. . .  
Oh, oh oh. . . Oh, oh. . .

And with Your spirit living inside of me,  
I'm a new creation! I'm a new creation!

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\* **DISMISSAL**

**P** Go in peace. Continue to prepare “The Way”. **C** Thanks be to God, and we will.

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**USHERS:** Gary & Donna Schindler

**LAY READER:** Terri Brasher

**STREAMING:** Kay Wesson

**SOUND:** Sydney Eaton & Todd Jacobs

**ACOLYTE:** Hudson Muir

**POWER POINT:** Peggy Geisler

**ALTAR GUILD:** Bethany Guthmann

**WELCOME:** The prophet Isaiah and John the Baptist call through the ages: “Prepare the way of the Lord!” This second Sunday of Advent we gather to do just that. Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church.

**ALTAR WALL FLOWERS** are placed by Laura Weido Family in loving memory of Paul Steven Weido.

**ADDITIONAL FLOWERS** are placed by the family of Elsie Kahlden in honor of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 10.

**Congratulations** to Edward and Angela Gundelach on the baptism of their daughter Caroline Lynette Gundelach. Caroline is being baptized today at the 11:05 AM service. Sponsors for Caroline are Angelo Gonzales, Xico Diaz, and Brandin & Mary Duffy.

**COLLECTION OF OFFERING:** Offering for the worship services is collected before and after worship. Offering bowls are placed in the back entrance and inside the side sanctuary door for you to place your offering in. This includes “Power of One” dollars.

**Amount needed for average weekly budgeted expenses:** \$8,405.00

**Attendance:** December 2 & 3, 2023 – 172

**Power of One:** December 2 & 3, 2023 – \$49.00

**Contributions:** Dec. 2 & 3 – \$11,457.01

**Building Fund:** Dec. 2 & 3 – \$516.44

*Thank you to those who contributed to last week’s offerings. Loving God/Loving Neighbor.*

**ATTENTION:** Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.

► **Children's Activity Bags** are available for use by our young members and guests! You can find them on the coat hooks in the coat area of the narthex. After worship, **please**

**place the used activity bags and their contents in the receptacle in the narthex.**

Thank you! ☺

**\*\* Church Council Nominations:** If you are interested in serving on the Church Council, please **email a brief bio of yourself** to Elena Holub at [admin@splctx.org](mailto:admin@splctx.org) **as soon as you can**. Your bio should include, but not be limited to, how long you have been a member of St. Paul, ministry teams you have served on, the reason you want to serve and a brief background description. If you have any questions, please contact Judy Sirois (979-732-1920), Shelley Janik, Bradley Polasek, Lora Kuenstler, or Edna Bergfeld. \*\*

**++ FAMILY ADVENT READINGS:** Families are encouraged to sign up for the **Family Advent Litany Reading and Candle Lighting** that will take place at the beginning of services during Advent. A family will come forward to read the Litany and light the candle for that particular Sunday in Advent. If your family is interested, **please sign up on the sign-up sheet in the narthex**. A different family is needed for each service. **The dates and times are:** Sat., Dec. 16 at 7:00 PM; Sun., Dec. 17 at 9:00 AM; Sun., Dec. 17 at 11:05 AM; and Sun. Dec. 24 at 10:00 AM. A copy of the reading will be sent to you.

♪♪♪ The **Columbus Community Choir** will be presenting their **Christmas program** “Jesus! The Advent of the Messiah” **Sunday, December 10, 2023 at 4:00 PM** at the Columbus High School Auditorium. They will be recognizing and honoring all pastors and ministers who serve our communities. Share the joy of the season with our local performers!

► **Offering Envelopes:** 2024 Offering Envelopes are ready to be picked up in the narthex (foyer). They are in **alphabetical order**. If you want a box of offering envelopes and do not see your name, please notify the church office, and we will have a box for you next week. ◀

▲ **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY:** *To all that can help – skilled or unskilled:*

Something for everyone! Group efforts are invited. Contact Ruth Bedford at (281)-703-3124 for any additional information or contact information. Or, just show up! We can also use a hands-on Co-Leader to help Ruth on our Habitat for Humanity Outreach Team.


*A message of request for help from the Colorado County Habitat Director, Charmaine:*

“We are starting construction on our 30<sup>th</sup> house Fridays and Saturdays from 8:00 AM till whenever you prefer – 12:00 PM or 2:00 PM. We need help December 15 & 16 and then January 5 & 6 and so on.” *Thank you Charmaine and Ruth for all you do for this very worthwhile endeavor of love.* ☺

♪♪♪ **THE 11<sup>TH</sup> NIGHT CONCERT:** This beautiful concert is one last chance to hear lovely Christmas and Advent music from the Lutheran churches and musicians in our area. The concert will be held at **St. Paul Lutheran Church**, 201 N. Rusk, **Fayetteville on Sunday, January 7, 2024 at 2:00 PM** and will be led by Pastor Ivy Schulz of Frelsburg/New Ulm. If any musicians are interested in participating in this concert, please select one or two of your favorite



Christmas or Advent songs that you would like to perform and notify Betty Guthmann by December 20, 2023 that you would like to participate. You can contact her with that information - or if you have any questions - by calling (979)-733-4513 or email [bettyguthmann@yahoo.com](mailto:bettyguthmann@yahoo.com). A freewill offering will be collected and used to support the Turtle Wing Foundation. Light refreshments will be provided after the concert. 🎵🎵🎵


 **If you will be purchasing your own poinsettia to place in church for Christmas, please bring it to the church Thursday, December 21, 2023.** We ask that you do not bring it any earlier since there will not be any place to store the poinsettia or keep it watered.

**\*\* ATTENTION!! ANNUAL REPORTS of various Ministry Teams and organizations are due in the church office by Wednesday, January 3, 2024!!** These need to be compiled for our regular congregational Annual Report for our annual meeting to be held January 28, 2024. **\*\***

- The Noon Bible Study group that meets on Tuesdays in the church library is taking a brief winter break. They will resume on Tuesday, January 9, 2024.  
Have a safe and happy holiday season! •

**ST. PAUL QUILTERS:** The St. Paul Quilters are taking a brief winter break as a group to relax and rejuvenate for next year. **They are taking off all of December and will resume quilting as a group Tuesday, January 9, 2024.** The quilters meet the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month in the Lighthouse. If anyone is interested in getting fabric to cut blocks at home or to sew quilt tops at home during that time, please contact Carol Lighthill at 832-371-3308. She will be happy to meet you and get you the fabric you need.

- ♦ The **Adult Bible Study group** that meets on Fridays in the church library will take a brief winter break and resume in January, 2024. Everyone is welcome! ♦

 **NOTICE!!** We are **looking for a person** to take over the business of the **rental of the Lighthouse**. That person will be responsible for checking what dates are available, handling the paper work and collecting fees & deposits, contacting the custodian, and contacting the person who would open and close the Lighthouse for an event, as well as training additional members to open and close. If you are interested, please contact the church office at (979)-732-2423.

- The **Mowing Team** is looking for more people to help mow the interior church lawn. Typically it takes an hour and a half, or less, to mow and edge. Please call John Brasher at 979-253-1448 if you are interested or if you have any questions.

🎵🎵🎵 **Musicians Wanted for Praise Band!!** The St. Paul Praise Band is in need of a keyboard player. They would also like to add at least one guitarist, a bass guitarist and singers. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact Tracy Baker at 713-516-8017. 🎵🎵🎵

- **Women of JOY Bible Study:** The Women of JOY Bible Study group meets on Mondays to cook and have interesting Bible study and discussions. The **first Monday** of the month we **meet in the Lighthouse to cook** for BLAST. The **2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays** of the month we meet in the **high school room (old choir room) for Bible Study**. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Gerri Hackfeld at 979-732-4711.

♥ **Grief Support Group:** The Grief Support Group is for anyone who has lost a loved one, either recently or a few years ago. We share and support each other. Come join us and get support from others walking this journey. We meet at **5:30 PM** in the youth room (formerly the choir room) the **third Thursday of the month**. **NOTE:** You do not have to share or talk until you are ready! If you have questions, please contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

<b>SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:</b>	
<b>Today (Dec. 10) –</b>	4:00 PM – Columbus Community Choir Concert (CHS Auditorium) 6:00-8:0 PM – The Gathering
<b>Mon., Dec. 11 –</b>	9:00 AM – Staff Meeting 6:00 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (old choir room)
<b>Tues., Dec. 12 –</b>	8:00-9:00 AM – Pastor Alan in zoom meeting 10:30 AM – Pastor Alan to TLC 3:00-5:00 PM – Garden Club Decorating (Lighthouse) 5:30 PM – Stewardship Team (library)
<b>Wed., Dec. 13 –</b>	<b>Newsletter Deadline!!</b> 9:00 AM – CLA Chapel 9:30 AM-2:00 PM – Garden Club Christmas Party (Lighthouse) 10:00 AM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor Alan to Columbus Oaks 2:00 PM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor Alan to The Oaks 6:00 PM – Youth Christmas Program (sanctuary)
<b>Thurs., Dec. 14 –</b>	10:00-11:30 AM – Manna for Moms (Lighthouse) 5:00 PM – Worship Team (library) 6:30 PM – Peru Team (library)
<b>Sat., Dec. 16 –</b>	7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
<b>Next Sun., Dec. 17 –</b>	9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

**UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS**  
**Lucy, martyr, died 304    Wednesday, December 13, 2023**  
Lucy was a young Christian of Sicily who was martyred during the persecutions under Emperor Diocletian. Her celebration became particularly important in Sweden and Norway, perhaps

because the feast of Lucia (whose name means "light") originally fell on the shortest day of the year.

**Thursday, December 14, 2023     John of the Cross, renewer of the church, died 1591**

John was a member of the Carmelite monastic order, and worked to reform it. His writings reflect a deep interest in mystical thought and meditation.

**Saturday, December 16, 2023     Las Posadas (LLC)**

This celebration, long popular in Mexico, takes its name from the "posadas," or lodgings, sought by Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Their search is reenacted in a neighborhood, unsuccessfully, until finally they are welcomed in, and a party commences.

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**OTHER READINGS:**     Isaiah 40:1-11

*In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God’s people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.*

The reading begins:

<sup>1</sup>Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins. <sup>3</sup>A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. <sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” <sup>6</sup>A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. <sup>9</sup>Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” <sup>10</sup>See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. <sup>11</sup>He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

**PSALM:**     Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

<sup>1</sup>You have been gracious to your land, O LORD; you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.

<sup>2</sup>You have forgiven the iniquity of your people and blotted out all their sins. <sup>8</sup>I will listen to what the LORD God is saying; for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you. <sup>9</sup>Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you, that your glory may dwell in our land. <sup>10</sup>Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. <sup>11</sup>Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth, and righteousness shall look

down from heaven. <sup>12</sup>The LORD will indeed grant prosperity, and our land will yield its increase. <sup>13</sup>Righteousness shall go before the LORD and shall prepare for God a pathway.

**OTHER READINGS:**     2 Peter 3:8-15a

*This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.*

The reading begins:

<sup>8</sup>Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. <sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15a</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

**SERVICE OVERVIEW: *PROPHECY, PATIENCE, AND PROMISE***

Advent is a season of expectation, the word itself means “coming.” Many of us spend these four weeks preparing and waiting for children to come home from college or family to come for Christmas dinner. For young children, these days of waiting can seem like a thousand years. Others are amazed at how quickly time is flying, as they sense the end of their own lives drawing near. Through each individual experience, we tell stories from the past again and again as a way of remembering the significance of these waiting days.

The arrival of which today’s scripture speaks is both more profound and more sublime. What is coming is the end of a way of being that has seemed like exile, like imprisonment. What we prepare for is salvation from all that has torn us and our world apart. Today we wait with patience alongside the readers of Mark’s gospel. We too hear voices from the past in the prophetic words of Isaiah, Malachi, and Exodus that prepare us to receive the one who is coming into the world: Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

**THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:**

It is the second week of Advent. We light two candles on the wreath as we hear John the Baptist, preaching, baptizing, and urging also us to prepare for the coming of Christ. Welcome to worship! Prepare for God in ways that may be quite different from your Christmas preparations.

The beginning of Mark’s gospel begins to build a foundation for the dramatic narrative that will follow. We hear about Jesus the Son, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist, and

people in need of confession and forgiveness. John baptizing in the wilderness is a defining event - foreshadowing of the one who will bring about reconciliation and resurrection. As with any long period of waiting, we may struggle to understand why we ourselves, never mind the rest of creation, must wait any longer for the salvation and redemption God has promised. Our salvation is bound up together, with one another. Practice patience with God as we remain steadfast in hope and lead lives of holiness and godliness, worthy of the new era that is coming. That patience is salvation as God meets you in your unfolding story and adapts to your choices with love, grace, and mercy.

What is righteousness? We might define it simply as right relationship with God, driven by God’s work of justice and reconciliation. But what about righteousness being a characteristic of God that is outside of us – blossoming when we meet in places of peace? God’s righteousness is both the path and the destination of new life. Where is this gift of righteousness reflected in your relationships?

Let’s go back to Confirmation! We use Martin Luther’s Small Catechism to prepare for a life of faith, but it is also a tool for daily engagement with preparing the way of the Lord as we live out our baptism. Today’s gospel text has several easy ties to the catechism: baptism, confession, and the second and third articles of the creed. Other connections might be made as well. Much of Luther’s explanation of the Lord’s Prayer centers on the idea that God is already at work, but also that we pray so we might see that work ourselves. How is this reflected in John’s invitation to repentance? Luther’s explanations of the commandments often use the word instead to offer positive alternatives to the commandments’ restrictions. How might this movement through instead be reflective of repentance? Want a copy of the Small Catechism? Contact the church office.

Today we are asked to “*Prepare the way of the Lord!*” Preparation for things in our daily lives is a never-ending task. So much of our social and cultural preparation for Christmas is commercial in nature – so how do we prepare the way of the Lord ourselves? Decorations, events, and parties are fun, but how might you prepare your body, mind, and spirit?

**KID STUDY:**

When an asphalt road needs to be repaved, the first step is for a machine to remove the old roadway. Metal cutting teeth chew up the surface, which is then ground, crushed, and loaded into dump trucks to be recycled. A paving machine follows to create the new road surface. Dump trucks drop asphalt into a big container called a hopper. The asphalt is then pushed out and leveled. The process applies heat and pressure to smash the new material together to create a sturdy road base. In today’s readings from Isaiah and Mark, we are commanded to “prepare the way of the Lord.” But this preparation is not easy work! It may require old ways to be chewed up like the old pavement. New ways may require movement, heat, and pressure. Getting rid of old ways can be difficult – even scary! But don’t worry… the Holy Spirit is with you all the way.

**INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:**

*The way to freedom runs through the wilderness. Hence the first message is that the people must prepare a way, more accurately a street, straight through the wilderness. From Babylonian hymns and from archaeological evidence we know that the high street in Babylon was rather like the Champs Elysees in Paris, leading to the Arc de Triumph. Isaiah wants such a highway for the Lord, running through the wilderness and leading to the temple in Jerusalem, which was to be rebuilt. However, God’s glory is not revealed in splendid cavalcades on great streets or in processions with imposing effigies, but only in everyday history, and above all in the event of the liberation of his people from slavery, through the difficult journey through the wilderness, back to the freedom of Zion. That, Isaiah says, is the way in which God’s glory is made manifest and revealed to all. That is where God’s jealous honor is to be found: in the exaltation of the insignificant, the poor and the lowly, those who are oppressed. - Edward Schillebeeckx [Edward Schillebeeckx, in Homilies for the Christian People, ed. Gail Ramshaw (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 78-79.]*

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**Next Week's Theme (Dec. 16 & 17):** Make a straight path to the Lord for others

**Next Week's Scriptures (Dec. 16 & 17):**

**First Reading:** Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11  
“*Righteousness and praise flourish like a garden.*”

**Psalm:** Psalm 126  
“The LORD has done great things for us.” (Ps. 126:3)

**Second Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
“*Kept in faith until the coming of Christ.*”

**Gospel:** John 1:6-8, 19-28  
“*A witness to the light.*”