

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

PH# (979) 732-2423 Fax (979) 733-0489

E-mail: admin@splctx.org www.splctx.com **Pastor:** pastor.akethan@gmail.com

December 2 & 3, 2023

First 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	
Organist		Elena Holub	

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

Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything

we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

PRELUDE

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

HYMN ELW - #240 "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah" (stanza 1)

1. **Light one candle to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness. He shall bring salvation to Israel, God fulfills the promise.**

Text: Wayne L. Wold, b. 1954 Music: Yiddish folk tune Text © 1984 Fortress Press

* CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who opens the heavens and draws near to us with salvation.

C Amen.

P God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance. Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin first privately then together publicly.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P Everlasting God,

C you love justice and you hate wrongdoing. We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness. We choose comfort over courage. We are careless with creation's bounty. Look upon us with mercy. Turn our hearts again to you. Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways for the sake of our waiting world. Amen.

P Hear these words of assurance: God clothes you with garments of salvation and covers you with robes of righteousness. In the tender compassion of ☩ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. God's covenant is eternal, and God's blessing rests upon us all.

C Amen.

*** HYMN ELW - #244 "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers"**

1. **Rejoice, rejoice, believers, and let your lights appear; the evening is advancing, and darker night is near. The bridegroom is arising and soon is drawing nigh. Up, pray and watch and wrestle; at midnight comes the cry.**

2.

**The watchers on the mountain proclaim the bridegroom near;
go forth as he approaches with alleluias clear.
The marriage feast is waiting; the gates wide open stand.
Arise, O heirs of glory; the bridegroom is at hand.**
3.

**The saints, who here in patience their cross and suff'rings bore,
shall live and reign forever when sorrow is no more.
Around the throne of glory the Lamb they shall behold;
in triumph cast before him their diadems of gold.**
4.

**Our hope and expectation, O Jesus, now appear;
arise, O Sun so longed for, o'er this benighted sphere.
With hearts and hands uplifted, we plead, O Lord, to see
the day of earth's redemption that sets your people free!**

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, 1660-1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823-1907 Music: Swedish folk tune
- *

GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C And also with you.
- *

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 64:1-9

A Our first reading is from Isaiah, chapter 64, verses 1-9.
This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account — to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

The reading begins:

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence — ²as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil — to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. ⁴From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. ⁵You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. ⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind,

take us away. ⁷There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. ⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

A The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

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

A The Psalm today is from Psalm 80, verses 1-7 and 17-19. We will read the Psalm responsively. The congregation will please respond by reading the words in bold print.

¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

²In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up your strength and come to help us.

³Restore us, O God; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

⁴O LORD God of hosts, how long will your anger fume when your people pray?

⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

⁶You have made us the derision of our neighbors, and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

⁷Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

¹⁷Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one you have made so strong for yourself.

¹⁸And so will we never turn away from you; give us life, that we may call upon your name.

¹⁹Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A Our second reading is from 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 3-9.
As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.

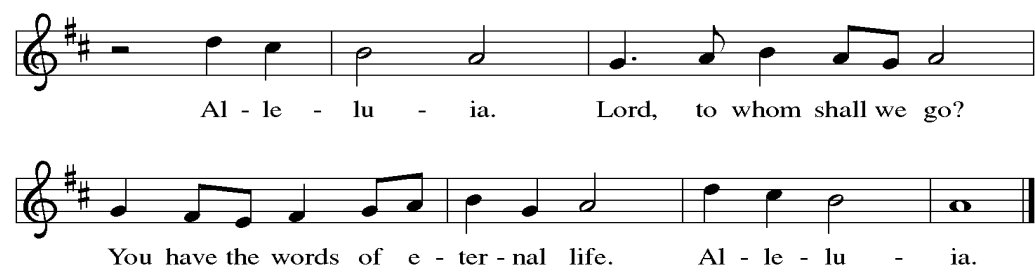
The reading begins:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind — ⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you — ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

A The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

A Please stand as you are comfortable for the gospel.

* **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:** (Sung)



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

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

* **GOSPEL:** Mark 13:24-37
Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

P The holy gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 13, verses 24-37.
C **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:] ²⁴“In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. ²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake — for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

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

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

* **HYMN** ELW - #246 “Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding!”

1. Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding! “Christ is near,” we hear it say.
“Cast away the works of darkness, all you children of the day!”
2. Wakened by the solemn warning, from earth's bondage let us rise;
Christ, our sun, all sloth dispelling, shines upon the morning skies.
3. See the Lamb, so long expected, come with pardon down from heav'n.
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow, one and all, to be forgiv'n;
4. So, when next he comes in glory and the world is wrapped in fear,
he will shield us with his mercy and with words of love draw near.
5. Honor, glory, might, and blessing to the Father and the Son
with the everlasting Spirit while unending ages run!

CCLI Song #1436177 Words: Latin hymn, 1632; tr. Edward Caswall Music: William Henry Monk
©Words: Public Domain Music: Public Domain CCLI License #1729377

* **APOSTLES' CREED**

- A With the whole church, let us confess our faith.
- C **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.

(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

- 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 Call your church into holy fellowship as we await the restoration of all things. Reenergize your faithful people to live with hope and compassion, especially those who serve as missionaries near and far, and especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza. Center us on your promise to come among us and make all things new. Merciful God,
- C **receive our prayer.**

A Let the nations tremble at your holy presence, that justice and liberation prevail in all corners of the earth. Restore peace to nations in conflict, teach righteousness to corrupt leaders and systems, and bring stability to areas facing uncertain futures, especially in Ukraine, Sudan, Niger and Israel. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

A Be with those who keep awake at night: nurses working overnight shifts, caregivers of newborns and aging adults, stargazers, those who are anxious, or those who are traveling. Reveal to all that the dark can be a place of calm and comfort filled with your presence. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

A We pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including: Clemons Venghaus; Oscar Roth; Brooke Paden-Dean; Gary Braun; Lydia Rojas; Deborah Flesher; Angela Skow; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you (*Pause*). Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

A We pray for all those battling cancer that they may know comfort and strength. (*Pause for those we are praying for.*) Merciful God, Kristen Downing; Ashley Roberts; Traci Edman; Michael Yancey; Amanda Aramijo; Zachary Schulke; Herbie Kollatschny; Darrell Pagel; 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.
C receive our prayer.

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; and Nelma Grace Weathers that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

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.*) Merciful God, Clemons Venghaus; Joyce Dehmer; 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; Donna Dehmer; Cherie Moore; Lauren Lamb; and Lydia Rojas.
C receive our prayer.

A We pray for all law enforcement officers and especially for 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 that they are protected and kept safe. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

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, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

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

*** PEACE**

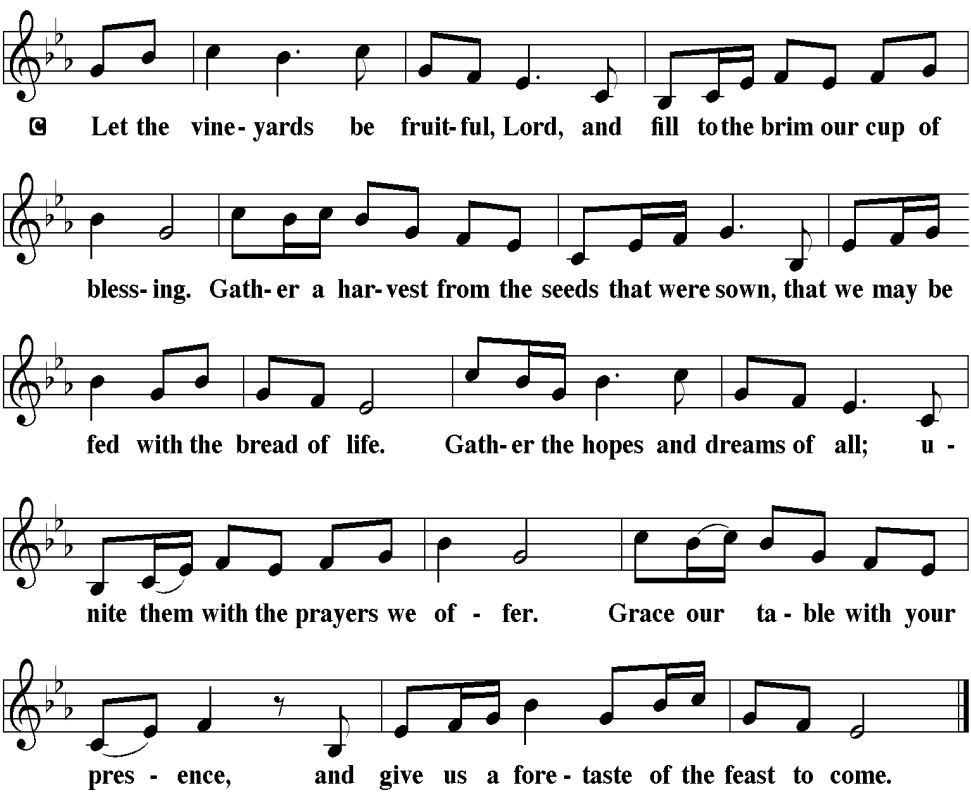
P The peace of the risen Lord be with you always.
C And also with you. (*Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.*)

(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.

* OFFERTORY (Sung)



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 dreams of all; u -
nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

* 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.

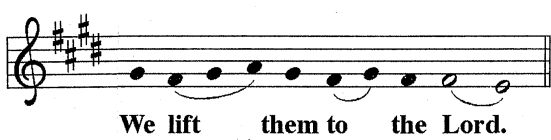
* GREAT THANKSGIVING (Responses Sung)

P The Lord be with you.



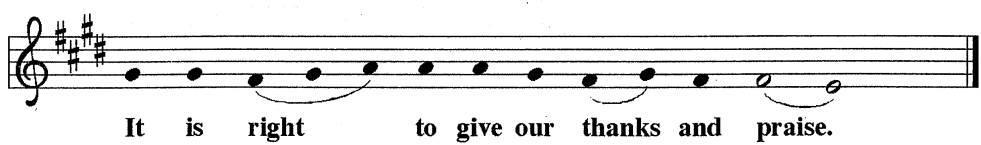
And al - so with you.

P Lift up your hearts.



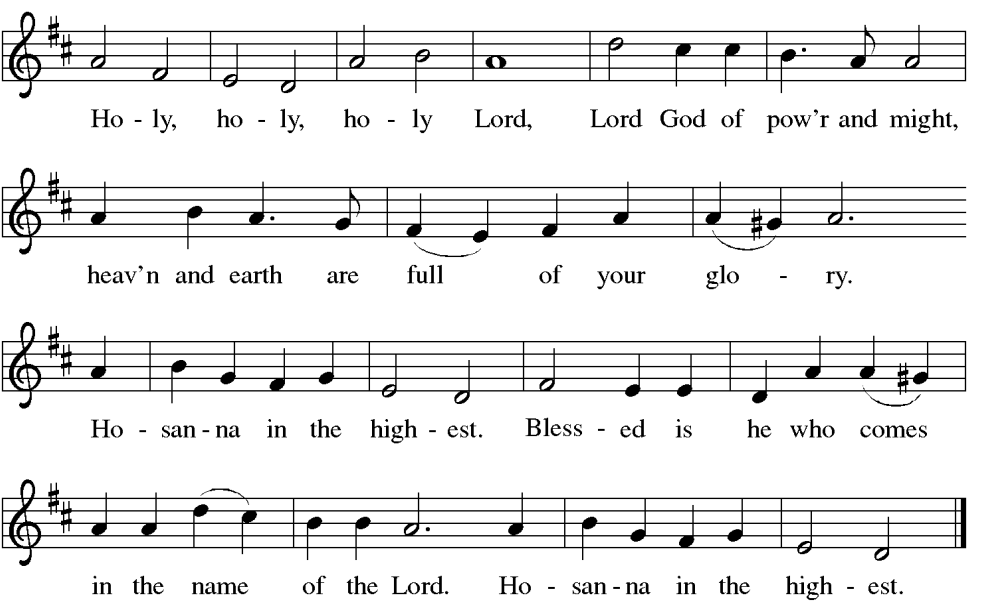
We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
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**

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

C **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**


P In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together. 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.}


(Sung)




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.

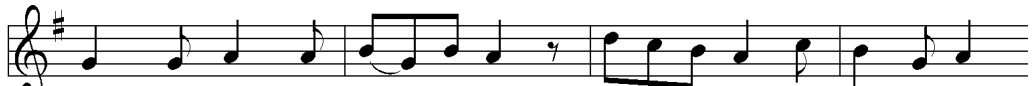
(Please be seated.)

* **BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION**


P Now may the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C Amen.


* **POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE** (Sung)




Thank the Lord and sing his praise; tell ev- 'ry-one what he has done.



Let ev- 'ry-one who seeks the Lord re- joice and proud- ly bear his name.



He re- calls his prom- is- es and leads his peo- ple forth in joy



with shouts of thanks - giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

* **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.

* **HYMN ELW - #715 "Christ, Be Our Light"**

- Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people, light for the world to see.

REFRAIN:
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us. Make us your living voice. **REFRAIN**

3. Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed. **REFRAIN**

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others, walls made of living stone. **REFRAIN**

5. Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another, signs of your kingdom come. **REFRAIN**
Text: Bernadette Farrell Music: Bernadette Farrell Text and Music © 1993 Bernadette Farrell, admin. OCP Publications

* **DISMISSAL**
P Go in peace. Keep awake. C Thanks be to God, and we will.

POSTLUDE
From sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.
Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS006327.
New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
Revised Common Lectionary, Copyright © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts, admin Augsburg Fortress.
Used by permission.

USHERS: SAT: Kenny & JoAnn Venghaus; Janeen Venghaus; Emily Frank
SUN: Curtiss Schonenberg; DyAnn Lauzon; Marilyn Yearwood
LAY READERS: SAT: JoAnn Venghaus **SUN:** David Johnson
ACOLYTE: **SUN:** Madison McRee
STREAMING: **SUN:** Tiffany Lauzon
SOUND: **SUN:** Sydney Eaton
ALTAR GUILD: JoAnn Venghaus, Belle Dungen and Emily Brod

WELCOME: Welcome to worship! “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:3).

ALTAR FLOWERS are placed by Arnie & Kathy Hageman in celebration of their 1st wedding anniversary on December 16.

ADDITIONAL FLOWERING PLANT is placed by Virginia Fritsch in honor of Adrian Fritsch for his 97th birthday on December 1.

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: Wed., Nov. 22, 2023 – 38 **Contributions:** Wed., Nov. 22 – \$545.00
Power of One: Wed., Nov. 22, 2023 – \$9.00

Attendance: November 25 & 26, 2023 – 172 **Contributions:** Nov. 25 & 26 – \$7,110.01
Power of One: November 25 & 26, 2023 – \$44.00 **Building Fund:** Nov. 25 & 26 – \$190.02

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

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Nov. 29 – **103 Total**
BLAST/Confirmation: 86 **Support Staff:** 17

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 **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. ******

♦ The **Adult Bible Study group** that **meets on Fridays** in the church library **will now meet at 11:00 AM.** With the upcoming holidays, they will only meet on December 1 and December 8, 2023. They will then take a brief winter break and resume in January, 2024.
Everyone is welcome! ♦

++ 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. 9 at 7:00 PM; Sun., Dec. 10 at 9:00 AM; Sun., Dec. 10 at 11:05 AM; 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.



Please donate blood at our last blood drive of 2023. During the holidays, the demand for blood increases. **St. Paul's blood drive is Sunday, December 3, 2023 from 8:00 AM-12:30 PM in the Lighthouse.** All donors get a free gift! Sign up with the QR code on the poster or go to https://www.commitforlife.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/353849. When signing up, please use **sponsor code P732**. You may also contact Melinda Zajicek at 979-820-8793, and she will get you signed up. *If you are interested in helping with this event, please let Melinda know.*



If you are interested in placing **Poinsettias** in church for Christmas or donating money for decorations, please fill out a form! Forms are available in the church office and the narthex (foyer) if you need one for yourself or someone you know. **Turn in your completed form to the church office by Wednesday, December 6, 2023!!** If you **purchase your own poinsettia, 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.

► **New Members/Informational Class:** Are you interested in joining St. Paul Lutheran Church or just getting more information about the ministries here? If so, come to the next New Members/Informational Class on **Saturday, December 9, 2023 from 9:00-11:30 AM.** We will meet in the church library. Please let the church office (979-732-2423) know that you are planning to attend and if you need babysitting services.

♪♪♪ 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!

**** 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 will be taking a brief fall & winter break as a group to relax and rejuvenate for next year. **They will be taking off all of November and December and 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.



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 electric guitarist and a bass guitarist. 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 **2nd and 4th Mondays** of the month we meet in the **high school room (old choir room) for Bible Study.** We are currently reading The Story. 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.

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Today (Dec. 3) – 8:00 AM-12:30 PM – Blood Drive (Lighthouse)

- Mon., Dec. 4 –

9:00 AM – Staff Meeting
1:00 PM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor Alan to TLC
5:30 PM – Youth & Education Team (old choir room)
6:00 PM – Evangelism Team (library)
6:00 PM – Wome of JOY Cook for BLAST (Lighthouse)
- Tues., Dec. 5 –

9:00 AM – Pastor Alan to Deanery
5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)
- Wed., Dec. 6 –

9:00 AM – CLA Chapel
10:00 AM-1:00 PM – Seniors Together (Lighthouse)
12:00 PM – Ministerial Alliance
1:30-3:00 PM – Continuing Education
1:30 PM – Neighbor-to-Neighbor Christmas Stockings (library)
5:00 PM – Meal
5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation and HS Youth
- Thurs., Dec. 7 –

Stephanie to Youth Ministry Network
10:30 AM – Pastor Alan to The Oaks
6:00 PM – Property Team (library)
- Fri., Dec. 8 –

11:00 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)
- Sat., Dec. 9 –

9:00-11:30 AM – New Member Class (library)
7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
- Next Sun., Dec. 10 –

9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship
4:00 PM – Columbus Community Choir Concert (CHS Auditorium)
6:00-8:00 PM – The Gathering

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Sunday, December 3, 2023 Francis Xavier, missionary to Asia, died 1552
A native of the Basque region of Spain, Xavier became a missionary to India, Southeast Asia, Japan, and the Philippines. He also helped to found the Society of Jesus (Jesuits).

Monday, December 4, 2023 John of Damascus, theologian and hymnwriter, died around 749
A monk in an abbey near Jerusalem, John wrote many hymns as well as theological works. One of his works, The Fount of Wisdom, remained influential for centuries.

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, died around 342
Little is known about Nicholas, except that he was a bishop in present-day Turkey. According to legend, he was famous for his giving to the poor, and so has become a symbol of anonymous gift-giving.

Thursday, December 7, 2023 Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, died 397
While a governor of northern Italy, Ambrose was elected bishop of Milan on the same day he was baptized. He was a famous preacher, a writer of hymns we still sing today, and helped lead St. Augustine to faith.
From sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS006327.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: *OLD PROBLEMS AND NEW BEGINNINGS*
The promise of Advent is that God is always at work in the world, bringing new beginnings and a new creation to people and powers long bent on destruction. Yet, because we live in the generation that exists between the “already” of Christ’s resurrection and the “not yet” of God’s full restoration of the creation, we cannot know when that final day will arrive. Instead of becoming preoccupied with the end times, we are counseled to live our lives in a state of preparedness. Trust that your home is God’s home. Trust that God is coming once again to dwell within you. This trust is the strength that will sustain you as we all wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:
It is the first week the church year and the first week of Advent. As we light the first candle on the Advent wreath, we begin a year-long reading from the gospel of Mark. Welcome to worship! Christ is “advancing” towards us. In the past, God came to us in the life of Jesus. In the present, God comes especially in word and sacrament. In the future, even if there is disaster, God will come to gather us into life.

Jesus speaks of the coming of the Son of Man as something imminent, and illustrates his point via the image of a servant doorkeeper who is to keep watch and stay on the lookout as the household waits for the master’s return. How might we think of ourselves as the doorkeeper? There is a pause in our faith journeys as we await the full revealing of Jesus, and especially at this moment, we are given spiritual gifts for this time of anticipation. How are your gifts a grace not only for the church, but for the people to whom we carry our witness of death and resurrection?

We regularly see or experience the end result of other people’s work. We dine at a restaurant, but the boiling of water that cooked the noodles happens in a hidden kitchen. We purchase a piece of pottery, but do not see the artist at work in the studio. Today’s passage from Isaiah includes images of God as the fire that makes water boil and God as the potter. In both cases the suggestion is that the world experiences God indirectly. Do you see yourself and others as conduits of God’s grace? Think of how powerful it is - especially in times where we or others may feel God’s absence.

Being awake and alert to possibilities does not always remove the element of surprise. Indeed, God’s grace is surprising. If we were not surprised by it, we might be able to manage ourselves to grace or begin to expect it in ways that feel more entitled than free. Reflect on the surprising nature of grace where you may have experienced surprising new creation and transformation.

KID STUDY:

It is the season of Advent and we are waiting. Soon we will experience Christmas decorations, holiday parties, and winter break from school. The season of Advent is like the branch of a tree in winter. It is dormant. It may look dead, but life is resting in the twigs, awaiting spring. God always comes to us at Sunday worship, but God also is hidden in places that surprise us. As we wait for Jesus to be born, remember to take time to watch for Jesus. Prepare for Jesus by making room for him in your home, in your mind, and in your heart. Jesus will be here soon!

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

*Some people see the future Day of Judgment, whether by bomb or Bible, as a disastrous time. For them, that Day will be a time of weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. For most of us the Day of Judgment, the End of Time, the Second Coming of Christ, whatever you want to call it, is something without any real meaning. We don't look forward to it with dread, because we don't look forward to it at all. Yet Advent calls us to hope for the coming of Christ. This positive hope comes from knowing that we already belong to Christ and already live in communion with him and each other. Through grace we are made ready meet Christ, both in our daily lives and at the Day of Judgment. Advent reminds us to take time to watch, to make space for that waiting which is so important to our spiritual journey, and to look to tomorrow in positive hope, living expectantly for the coming of the Christ. - Linda L. Grenz [Linda L. Grenz, in *Homilies for the Christian People*, ed. Gail Ramshaw (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 181.]*

[illegible]

Next Week's Theme (Dec. 9 & 10): Prepare the way of the Lord – John the Baptist

Next Week's Scriptures (Dec. 9 & 10):

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11 *“Good news of God's coming to a people is exile.”*

Psalm: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 “Righteousness shall prepare a pathway for God.” (Ps. 85:13)

Second Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-15a *“Waiting for and hastening the day of God.”*

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8 *“John appears from the wilderness.”*