

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

December 9 & 10, 2023

Second Sunday of Advent

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|  |             |                             |                             |
|--|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 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                                    |             | Tomas Rosales               |                             |
| Parish Nurse Program Coordinator             |             | DyAnn Lauzon                |                             |
| Organist                                     |             | Joan Hunsicker              |                             |

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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.*

### 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.)***

### HYMN ELW - #240 "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah" (stanza 2)

2. **Light two candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.  
He shall feed the flock like a shepherd, gently lead them homeward.**

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

### LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

#### \* 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 - #264 “Prepare the Royal Highway”**  
1. Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near!  
Let ev'ry hill and valley a level road appear!  
Then greet the King of glory, foretold in sacred story:

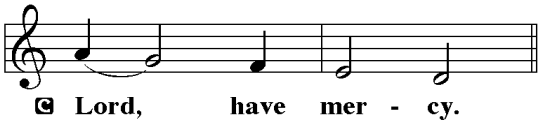
**REFRAIN:**  
*Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!*

2. God's people, see him coming: your own eternal king!  
Palm branches strew before him! Spread garments! Shout and sing!  
God's promise will not fail you! No more shall doubt assail you! **REFRAIN**
3. Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised king!  
Your king, yet ev'ry nation its tribute too may bring.  
All lands will bow before him; their voices join your singing: **REFRAIN**
4. His is no earthly kingdom; it comes from heav'n above.  
His rule is peace and freedom and justice, truth, and love.  
So let your praise be sounding for kindness so abounding: **REFRAIN**

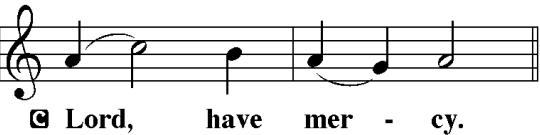
Text: Frans Mikael Franzén; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship* Music: Swedish folk tune, 17<sup>th</sup> cent.  
Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress

\* **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.**

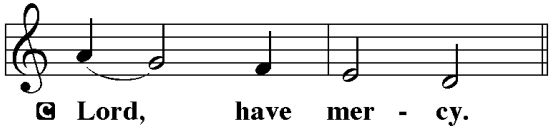
\* **KYRIE** *(Responses Sung)*  
P In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



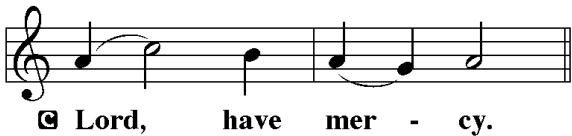
P For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



P 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.



P For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.



P Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.



\* **PRAYER OF THE DAY**  
P Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**C Amen.**

**FIRST READING:** Isaiah 40:1-11  
A Our first reading is from Isaiah, chapter 40, verses 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.

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

**PSALM:** Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

A The Psalm today is from Psalm 85, verses 1-2 and 8-13. We will read the Psalm responsively. The congregation will please respond by reading the words in bold print.

<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.**

**SECOND READING:** 2 Peter 3:8-15a

A Our second reading is from 2 Peter, chapter 3, verses 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:

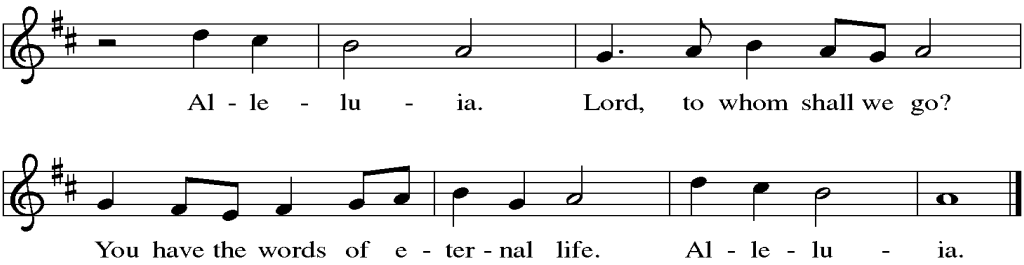
<sup>8</sup>Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. <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.

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

A Please stand as you are comfortable for the gospel.

\* **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:** (Sung)



\* **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.*

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

**C Glory to you, O Lord.**

<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.”

P The gospel of the Lord.

**C Praise to you, O Christ.**

**CHILDREN'S SERMON**

## SERMON

\* HYMN ELW - #249 "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"

1. On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh;  
awake and hearken, for he brings glad tidings of the King of Kings!
2. Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin; make straight the way for God within,  
and let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.
3. We hail you as our Savior, Lord, our refuge and our great reward;  
without your grace we waste away like flow'rs that wither and decay.
4. Stretch forth your hand, our health restore, and make us rise to fall no more;  
oh, let your face upon us shine and fill the world with love divine.
5. All praise to you, eternal Son, whose advent has our freedom won,  
whom with the Father we adore, and Holy Spirit, evermore.

Text: Charles Coffing; tr. Composite      Music: European tune, adapt. Michael Praetorius

**\* 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** 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. Merciful God,  
**C receive our prayer.**

- 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. Merciful God,
- C** **receive our prayer.**

- 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. 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:  
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 (*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; 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; Abigail 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. 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; 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.
- C **receive our prayer.**

- 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.)* Merciful God,

Law Enforcement Officers: Charles Jobb; Joseph Smith; Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Johnny Kovar; Abigail 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.

**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, 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. Merciful God,

**C receive our prayer.**

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. 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.**

**\* EUCHARISTIC 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, 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.}*

\* 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.

\* 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 - #631 "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

1. Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation, enter ev'ry trembling heart.

2. Breathe, oh, breathe thy loving Spirit into ev'ry troubled breast;  
let us all in thee inherit; let us find thy promised rest.  
Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be;  
end of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.

3. Come, Almighty, to deliver; let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never, nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.

4. Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee!  
Changed from glory into glory, till in heav'n we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise!

CCLI Song #742329 Words: Charles Wesley Music: Rowland Hugh Prichard  
©Words: Public Domain Music: Public Domain CCLI License #1729371

\* DISMISSAL

P Go in peace. Continue to prepare "The Way".

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

POSTLUDE

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USHERS: SAT: Harvey Poenitzsch; Bob Poenitzsch; Audrey Rester

SUN: Sonny & Tiffany Lauzon

LAY READERS: SAT: Rhanda Lattimore

SUN: Curtiss Schonenberg

ACOLYTES: SAT: Gracelyn Gorman

SUN: Easton Leopold

STREAMING:

SUN: Emily Brod

SOUND:

SUN: Sydney Eaton

ALTAR GUILD: JoAnn Venghaus, Belle Dungen and Emily Brod

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 Sunday, December 10, 2023 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      **Contributions:** Dec. 2 & 3 – \$11,457.01  
**Power of One:** December 2 & 3, 2023 – \$49.00      **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.

**SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:**

- Today (Dec. 10) –** 4:00 PM – Columbus Community Choir Concert (CHS Auditorium)  
6:00-8:0 PM – The Gathering
- Mon., Dec. 11 –** 9:00 AM – Staff Meeting  
6:00 PM – Women of JOY Bible Study (old choir room)

- Tues., Dec. 12 –** 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)
- Wed., Dec. 13 –** ***Newsletter Deadline!!***  
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)
- Thurs., Dec. 14 –** 10:00-11:30 AM – Manna for Moms (Lighthouse)  
5:00 PM – Worship Team (library)  
6:30 PM – Peru Team (library)
- Sat., Dec. 16 –** 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
- Next Sun., Dec. 17 –** 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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**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.*”