

## ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Sunday, December 24, 2023 4:00 PM & 7:00 PM

Nativity of Our Lord

\*\*\*\*\*  
Senior Pastor Alan Kethan Home: (979)-942-9060 Cell: (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 Joan Hunsicker  
\*\*\*\*\*

**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

*In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.*

## 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.)***

- \* **CALL TO WORSHIP** *(Please stand if you are comfortable.)*
- P Oh come, God the Father; oh, come, God the Son; oh, come, Holy Spirit, most blest three-in-one.
- C **We call on your name. Please be near us, we pray, and bless with your presence your children this day.**
- P Oh, come, all ye faithful. Oh, Come, all the earth. Oh, come, all creation, in gladness and mirth.
- C **Come, all ye faithful, worship your God with thanksgiving and praise, for the blessings this season, and all of our days.**
- P We prepare our hearts by remembering the birth of Christ.
- C **These are the reminders of God's promises come true.**
- P His birth was a miracle; his birth was a gift from God.
- C **God's gift, that keeps on giving.**
- P He promises to give us all things through Him.
- C **Because of this gift, we have life now and eternally forever. Amen**

### \* CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

- P Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, the Word made flesh, our life and our salvation.
- C **Amen.**
- P Trusting the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior, let us confess our sin privately.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

- P Hear the good news: We are children of God and heirs of God's promises through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In ☩ Jesus we are forgiven and redeemed. Sing with joy, for all the ends of the earth shall know the salvation of God.
- C **Amen.**

### \* HYMN ELW - #283 "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

1. **O Come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant! O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem; come and behold him, born the king of angels:**

### REFRAIN:

***O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!***

2. **The highest, most holy, light of light eternal, born of a virgin, a mortal he comes; Son of the Father now in flesh appearing! REFRAIN**

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God in the highest:

**REFRAIN:**  
*O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: **REFRAIN**  
CCLI Song #31054 Words: John Francis Wade; translated by C. Frederick Oakeley Music: John Francis Wade  
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\* **THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**  
P We celebrate his birth and anticipate his return.  
C **We await the Light that shines in the darkness. Our moment to say “YES” to the joy of Christ among us is at hand.**  
P Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.  
C **Fill our hearts with joy, O Lord, and be with us in our worship.**

*(The Christ candle is lit.)*

P A girl full of Grace bears a Child who is Grace.  
C **We praise and bless the Lord!**  
P Our God calls us to himself, with the voice of a Child.  
C **He calls us to believe, and not to be afraid.**  
P As Mary answered the angel, so we too respond,  
C **“I am the Lord’s Servant. May it be to me as you have said.”**

\* **PRAYER OF THE DAY**  
P Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus’ presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
C **Amen.**

**FIRST READING:** Isaiah 9:2-7  
A Our first reading is from Isaiah, chapter 9, verses 2-7.  
*This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah’s king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God’s passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!*

The reading begins:  
<sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. <sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.  
<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup>For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.  
A The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM:** Psalm 96  
A The Psalm today is Psalm 96. We will read the Psalm responsively. The congregation will please respond by reading the words in bold print.

<sup>1</sup>Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
<sup>2</sup>**Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD; proclaim God’s salvation from day to day.**  
<sup>3</sup>Declare God’s glory among the nations and God’s wonders among all peoples.  
<sup>4</sup>**For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised, more to be feared than all gods.**  
<sup>5</sup>As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.  
<sup>6</sup>**Majesty and magnificence are in your presence; power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**  
<sup>7</sup>Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD honor and power.  
<sup>8</sup>**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name; bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.**  
<sup>9</sup>Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; tremble before the LORD, all the earth.  
<sup>10</sup>**Tell it out among the nations: “The LORD is king! The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity.”**  
<sup>11</sup>Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.  
<sup>12</sup>**Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD, for you come to judge the earth.**  
<sup>13</sup>You will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with your truth.

**SECOND READING:** Titus 2:11-14  
A Our second reading is from Titus, chapter 2, verses 11-14.  
*The appearance of God’s grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior’s final appearance.*

The reading begins:

<sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

P O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray;

C **Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.**

P We hear the Christmas Angels.

C **Glory to the new born King;**

P Oh come to us; abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!

\* ***HYMN ELW - #270 “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”***

1. **Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king;  
peace on earth, and mercy mild, god and sinners reconciled.”  
Joyful, all you nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies;  
with angelic hosts proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”**

**REFRAIN:**

***Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king!”***

CCLI Song #27738 Words: Charles Wesley Music: Felix Mendelssohn, arr. William H. Cummings  
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\* **GOSPEL:** Luke 2:1-20

*God’s greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the “good news of great joy” and proclaim God’s blessing of peace.*

P The holy gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 2, verses 1-20.

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

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

<sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. <sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And

suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

P The gospel of the Lord.

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

\* ***HYMN ELW - #282 “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”***

1. **It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:  
“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav’n’s all-gracious king.”  
The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.**

CCLI Song #31078 Words: Edmund Hamilton Sears Music: Richard Storrs Willis  
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**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE**

**Pastor Alan Kethan**

\* **HYMN ELW - #300 “The First Noel”**

1. **The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,  
on a cold winter’s night that was so deep.**

**REFRAIN:**

***Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.***

2. **They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;  
and to the earth it gave great light,  
and so it continued both day and night. *REFRAIN***
3. **And by the light of that same star three wise men came from country far;  
to seek for a king was their intent,  
and to follow the star wherever it went. *REFRAIN***
4. **This star drew near to the northwest, o’er Bethlehem it took its rest;  
and there it did both stop and stay  
right over the place where Jesus lay. *REFRAIN***
5. **Then entered in those wise men three, full rev’rently upon their knee,  
and offered there in his presence  
their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. *REFRAIN***

\* **NICENE CREED**

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

**C We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.**

**Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary,  
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.**

**With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.**

**He has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

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

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

A Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves,  
our neighbors, and the world God loves.

*A brief silence.*

A Glory to you, God, for the song of the angels, proclaiming to the world Christ's holy birth.  
Give your church a joyful song to sing, that we bring the good news of peace and salvation  
to all people. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A Glory to you, God, for the stars that shine in the depth of the night. Provoke awe in our  
hearts at the expansive mystery of the cosmos. Open us to find beauty in the clear darkness  
of night and in the first glimmers of dawn. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A Glory to you, God, for the child born to us who establishes a kingdom of justice and  
righteousness. Break bonds of oppression, bring reconciliation to warring lands, especially in  
Ukraine, Sudan, Niger and Israel and establish peace from this time onward and  
forevermore. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A We pray for the family and friends of Carl Conley who passed away this past week. Be with  
them and comfort them during this difficult time. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A We pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you  
including:  
Becca Hajdik; Ronnie Huebel; Beatrice Jasek; Shirley Trahan; Ricky Elly; Carolyn Kneller;  
those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you (*Pause*). Hear  
us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A We pray for those battling cancer, all expectant mothers, those who reside in care facilities  
and the homebound, all law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, healthcare  
workers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and active duty military personnel. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.** {See all those we pray for on pages 13 & 14.}

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. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A Glory to you, God, for the multitude of the heavenly host. We rejoice in the zeal of all your  
saints who have witnessed the appearing of your grace, and who reveal to us your salvation  
for all. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

P Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

**C Amen.**

\* **SHARING THE PEACE**

P At the birth of Christ the angels sang a song of peace and goodwill. May the peace of the 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. 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 of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

C **Amen.**

\* **GREAT THANKSGIVING** (Responses Spoken)

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P Lift up your hearts.

C **We lift them to the Lord.**

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C **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 Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace.

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.}

***Special Music during Distribution:***

- “You're Here” performed by Paisley Stancik (4:00 PM only)
- Piano selection performed by Carol Lighthill (4:00 PM & 7:00 PM)

**\* 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 God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**C Amen.**

**\* A CELEBRATION OF LIGHT**

*The pastor takes the light from the center candle on the Advent wreath, which symbolizes Jesus Christ, the light of the World. The pastor then gives the light to the acolytes. They pass the light to the ushers who pass it to the worshipers throughout the pews. Please note: Always hold the lighted candle upright and tilt only the unlit candle. After all of the candles are lit, the dialog is said.*

P The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.  
**C We have seen his glory.**  
P Glory as the only Son from the Father  
**C Full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)**  
P In Him was light,  
**C And the light was the light of all people. (John 1:3-4)**

**\* HYMN ELW - #281 “Silent Night, Holy Night!”**

1. Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

2. Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!  
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

3. Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from your holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

CCLI Song #27862 Words: John Freeman Young/Joseph Mohr Music: Franz Xaver Gruber  
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**\* CLOSING PRAYER**

P As we extinguish our candles, may the light of Christ continue to burn in our hearts and actions.  
**C Amen.**

***Candles are extinguished. Please continue to keep your candles upright until the wax has cooled, and return them to the ushers as you depart.***

**\* BLESSING AND SENDING**

P God bless you and keep you, ☩ Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever.  
**C Amen.**

**\* CLOSING HYMN: ELW - #289 “Angels We Have Heard on High”**

1. Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

***REFRAIN:***

***Glo – ria in excelsis Deo; glo – ria in excelsis Deo.***

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song? **REFRAIN**

3. Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king. **REFRAIN**

Words: French carol; tr. Henri Frederick Hemy, *The Crown of Jesus Music*, 1864  
Music: French carol; arr. Edward S. Barnes

**\* DISMISSAL**

P Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.  
**C Thanks be to God, and we will.**

**POSTLUDE**



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**USHERS: 4:00 PM:** Brent Gorman Family (Brent, Patty, Abel & Brent Allen)  
**7:00 PM:** Kevin & Wendy Page; Ryan Thomas  
**LAY READERS: 4:00 PM:** Walter Guthmann, Jr. **7:00 PM:** Debbie Kethan  
**ACOLTYES: 4:00 PM:** Ericka Pesak **7:00 PM:** Elliot Polasek; Micah Polasek  
**STREAMING: 4:00 PM:** Brian Lighthill  
**SOUND:** Sydney Eaton and Todd Jacobs  
**ALTAR GUILD:** JoAnn Venghaus, Belle Dungen and Emily Brod

**WELCOME:** “Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright” (Joseph Mohr). Silent and calm, until a newborn cries and angels illumine the fields! Holy indeed. Merry Christmas, and welcome to worship!

**THANK YOU** to the following people who provided special music for the service this evening: Organist – Joan Hunsicker; Vocalist – Paisley Stancik; Pianist – Carol Lighthill; Flute – Elena Holub; and Trumpet – John Holub and Clayton Holub. We appreciate you sharing your special talents with us! ☺

**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., Dec. 13, 2023 – 266 **Contributions:** Wed., Dec. 13 – \$270.00  
(Youth Christmas Program)

**Attendance:** Dec. 16 & 17, 2023 – 171 **Contributions:** Dec. 16 & 17 – \$7,032.01  
**Power of One:** Dec. 16 & 17, 2023 – \$36.00 **Building Fund:** Dec. 16 & 17 – \$836.44

*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.*

**KEEP IN OUR PRAYERS: Those Battling Cancer:** 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; Bob Loy.

**Expectant Mothers:** Kyndall Beettner; Jamee Albert; Kristen O’Leary Bridges; Abegail Gatzke; Chelsea Gilstrap; Calli Guthmann; Dhara Comans; Nelma Grace Weathers; Rosalinda Rosales.

**Those in Care Facilities and Homebound:** 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.. **Homebound:** Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Donna Dehmer; Cherie Moore; Lauren Lamb; Lydia Rojas.

**Those Law Enforcement Officers:** Charles Jobb; Joseph Smith; Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Donnie Templeton; Jason Templeton; Johnny Kovar; Abbigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Zane Weido; Josh Jones. **Fire Fighters, First Responders, Healthcare Workers and 9-1-1 Dispatchers:** Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Donnie Templeton; Jason Templeton; 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 Neuendorff. **Active Duty Military:** Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Dalton Kapel; Kevin Gonzalez; Evelyn Rojas; Nelson Beettner.

**\*\* Notice!!** The church office will be closed for the holidays the week of **December 25-31, 2023 as well as Monday, January 1, 2024.** *In case of a pastoral emergency, please contact Pastor John Hunsicker at 979-733-4519.* We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year! \*\*

**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 Sunday, January 28, 2024.

**\*\* 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@spletx.org](mailto:admin@spletx.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. \*\*

► **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.* ☺

► **God's Gals** will be **undecorating the church on Sunday, January 7, 2024 after the 11:05 AM service.** The guys are invited to come help us. We need lots of muscles! Thanks in advance your help! If you have questions, please contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127. ◀

🎵🎵 **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 as soon as possible 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. 🎵🎵

- 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 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:**

<b>Mon., Dec. 25 –</b>	<b>No worship service!</b>
<b>Dec. 25-Jan. 1 –</b>	<b>Office Closed! (Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!)</b>
<b>Dec. 27-31 –</b>	High School Youth Ski Trip, New Mexico
<b>Sat., Dec. 30 –</b>	7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship & Healing Service
<b>Next Sun., Dec. 31 –</b>	<b>10:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship &amp; Healing Service</b>
<b>Next Tues., Jan. 3 –</b>	<b>* Annual Reports due in Church Office!! *</b>

**UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS**

**Tuesday, December 26, 2023     Stephen, Deacon and Martyr**  
Stephen was a deacon and the first martyr of the church. He was one of those seven upon whom the apostles laid hands after they had been chosen to serve widows and others in need. Later, Stephen's preaching angered the temple authorities, and they ordered him to be put to death by stoning.

**Wednesday, December 27, 2023     John, Apostle and Evangelist**  
The son of Zebedee and brother of James, John was one of the twelve disciples and witness to the transfiguration. Tradition has named him also the writer of the Gospel of John, the three New Testament letters bearing his name, as well as Revelation.



Thursday, December 28, 2023      The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

This day commemorates the young children killed by Herod in Bethlehem in his jealous attempt to murder the baby Jesus, a sobering reminder of the evil that led Christ to be born for our salvation.

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SERVICE OVERVIEW: HOPE IS BORN INTO THE WORLD

Dress up. Decorate. TV specials, concerts, parties. Spend money. There is a sense that Christmas is the time to feel good, do good, and perhaps live a little better than the rest of the year. Even the most cynical get swept up in the idea that our lives and the world around us shine a little brighter - a sugar-coated holiday rush only to be met days later by an emotional crash. Yet these signs point to a deep-seated hope that is lodged in the hearts and minds of those moving into this season. There is a longing and fervent hope that God will enter in to lessen our worldly challenges. To this longing and fervent hope, we look to the One who claims and engages us in a central story of hope and promise.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

On Christmas Eve we celebrate God being born on earth as a poor Jewish child, whom we call Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. The darkness of the night recalls Calvary, and the candles we light anticipate the candles of Easter, for this infant was born to die and rise for us. Welcome to worship! Join the angels and sing, “Glory to God!” Wrapped in every breath and action is God’s direct connection with the earth and its people. This night contrasts with voices and theologies that view God as distant and unengaged with humanity and the world. From old, the promise of God drawing near has been uttered; in the gospel we witness the birth of God’s presence through a teenage girl; throughout we are invited to join the song of creation, hope, and salvation. Tonight we pulse with the exhilaration of Mary and the shepherds, and all who live at the margins, as we experience and proclaim that God dwells with us! While people may often talk of the “magic” of Christmas, it is our call to speak to the *incarnation* (embodied in flesh) of Christmas. As we gather together to hear the familiar story, our blessing and challenge is to witness again to God’s promise and promise-keeping with vitality and to join the chorus of joy in what God has done and continues to do in being made real among us.

Into the lights and presents, the music and gatherings, even the wars, poverty, little empires, and tumult of the world, God meets and claims us in that spirit of hope. Christmas Eve worship becomes another occasion for us as the church to speak the truth of heartache and pain. The tinsel and the lights of the season cannot distract from the lamentations welling up in the world. Into real human suffering, God erupted the Bethlehem night with divine messengers as the shepherds witnessed the proclaimed promise of Christ’s birth.

Christ is born to release us from oppression, to interrupt abusive habits. The Prince of peace has come to train us in ways of being people of God for all the living beings with whom we share this planet. Christmas is a time to behold what has appeared and to anticipate the glory of God’s

fuller appearance that shines in all of creation. No matter how much destruction we witness, we wait and work with this vision of God’s grace made manifest. God calls us to dream and live into a new reality as we encounter this babe at Bethlehem and find this Christ-child born in our lives again. Christmas speaks to our greatest longing, and turns our desperation and sadness to carols of joy. Luke’s gospel account invites us to join the song of the angels and sing out the Savior’s birth.

KID STUDY:

We talk a lot about light and darkness at Christmastime. What are lights you regularly see? Flashlights and headlights of cars cast a bright light, but make it nearly impossible to see anything outside of their beam. The same is true for a phone or a tablet in a dark room. It is difficult to focus on anything outside of that screen. A night light or candle, though, casts a much dimmer light but brightens the entire space. God’s arrival as a baby in a stable is like this. The birth of Jesus was not bright or flashy, and happened alongside the darkness of the night which is equally important! The Bible tells us that “those who live in darkness have seen a great light.” Jesus is that light... the Light Of The World!

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

*It is no use saying that we are born two thousand years too late to give room to Christ. Christ is always with us, always asking for room in our hearts. But now it is with the voice of our contemporaries that he speaks, with the eyes of store clerks, factory workers, and children that he gazes; with the hand of office workers, slum dwellers, and suburban housewives that he gives. It is with the feet of soldiers and tramps that he walks, and with the heart of anyone in need that longs for shelter. It would be foolish to pretend that it is always easy to remember this. If everyone were holy and handsome, with “alter Christus” shining in neon lighting from them, it would be easy to see Christ in everyone. But that was not Christ’s way for himself, now when he is disguised under every type of humanity that treads the earth. It is not because these people remind us of Christ, but because they are Christ, asking us to find room for him, exactly as he did at the first Christmas. - Dorothy Day [Dorothy Day, By Little and By Little, ed. Robert Ellsberg (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 94, 96-97]*

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Next Week’s Theme (Dec. 30 & 31): Revelation to Simeon – Jesus is the Christ

Next Week’s Scriptures (Dec. 30 & 31):

**First Reading:** Isaiah 61:10--62:3

“Clothed in garments of salvation.”

**Psalm:** Psalm 148


“The splendor of the LORD is over earth and heaven.” (Ps. 148:13)

**Second Reading:** Galatians 4:4-7


“Children and heirs of God.”

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40  
“The presentation of the child.”  
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POINESETTIAS PLACED FOR CHRISTMAS SERVICES IN MEMORY OF:

 **Lee Roy Stancik and Edgar & Eva Roitsch by:** David & Janis Stancik  
**Ronnie, Max, Virginia & Roy Rogers and Alton, Bernice & Daniel Rodgers by:**  
Susan Rogers and Tracy Kennedy  
**Milroy & Lucille Venghaus and Mr. & Mrs. Edmund Venghaus by:** Kenny & JoAnn  
Venghaus  
**James Booker by:** Dyana Booker  
**Paul Steven Weido by:** Laura Weido Family  
**Our Parents by:** Eugene & Chris Schobel  
**Quinton Kahlden by:** Elsie Kahlden & family  
**Mahlon Lighthill by:** Carol Lighthill  
**Parents Telesforo & Josphina Hernandez and Clemens & Irene Noska by:** Eddie & Debbie  
Hernandez  
**Bobby & Larnette Guthmann and Bill & Linda Rodgers by:** James & Joyce Guthmann &  
family  
**Howard & Eula Besch, H.W. “Shorty” Besch, and Harold & Birdie Hohlt by:** Rickey &  
Rebecca Mayo and family  
\*\*\*\*\*

POINSETTIAS PLACED FOR CHRISTMAS SERVICES IN HONOR OF:


 **Bernice Stancik by:** David & Janis Stancik  
**L. E. & Imogene Kansteiner, Our Children & Our Grandchildren by:** Kenny &  
JoAnn Venghaus  
**Our Great-Grandchildren: Liam, Malachi, Eleanor, Nathaniel & Oliver Lattimore; Emlyn &  
Charlotte Lattimore; Judah & Felicity Kanz; and Adrianna & James Hamilton by:** Adrian &  
Virginia Fritsch  
**Our Children & Grandchildren by:** Eddie & Debbie Hernandez  
**Our grandchildren Jameson Howard Ripper and Emery Lou Mertz by:** Rickey & Rebecca  
Mayo  
+++++

MONETARY DONATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS GIVEN IN HONOR OF:

 **Karen Albert Flores by:** The Kevin & Wendy Page Family  
**Our grandchildren & great-grandchildren by:** Joe & Arlene Trojacek  
**Loved Ones by:** Gene & Deanie Chollett  
**Lou McCabe by:** Neal Zajicek Family  
**Kamden Dimas, Luke Wienken and Emersyn Johnson by:** Janet Wienken & Scott

**Linda Morrison and Paul Mikula by:** Charlene M. Morrison  
**Our Great-grandchildren Reese & Ryan Atkinson; Cash, Colbie & Case Henrichsen; and  
Scarlett & Emil Wells Henrichsen and Our Granddaughters Madison, Macey, Ava,  
Emory and Eliya Frers by:** Harvey & Shirley Frers  
+++++

MONETARY DONATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS GIVEN IN MEMORY OF:

 **Ronnie, Max, Virginia & Roy Rogers and Alton, Bernice & Daniel Rodgers by:**  
Susan Rogers and Tracy Kennedy  
**David Frank by:** Julie, Rob & Emily  
**Dorothy Leyendecker by:** The Luedecke Family  
**Foy & Nell Page and Wendell Albert by:** The Kevin & Wendy Page Family  
**Andy Schmitt by:** Phil & Darlene Schmitt  
**Richard McCabe and Bobby & Mae Dene Zajicek by:** Neal Zajicek Family  
**Thurman & Marjorie Brune and Johnnie & Ellen Holub by:** John, Elena & Clayton Holub  
**Erika O’rion Dittmar by:** Grandparents Verna Nell & Leon Dittmar, Jr.  
**Harvey Skow by:** Beverly Skow  
**Elmer Ray & Eunice Wienken by:** Janet Wienken & Scott  
**Curtis & Bobbie Berger by:** David & Barbara Blakenship  
**Emma & Arthur Helweg and Hazel & George Kopecky, Sr. by:** The Kopecky Family  
**C. J. Kuhn by:** Sharon A. Kuhn  
**Alvin & Hilda Horndt and Edmund & Alvina Otto by:** Melvin & Mary Otto  
**Marvin Brod by:** Punk, Kristien, Jordan, Christie, Dylan & Clayton Brod  
**Don H. Morrison by:** Charlene M. Morrison  
**Megan Bloecher by:** Sharon Bloecher-Reno  
**Bill Mitchell, Jr. by:** Carol Mitchell  
**My dad Jerry Winder by:** Laura Weido  
**Gerald Bloecher and Alma Bloecker by:** Karen & Steve Morris  
**Our parents by:** Eugene & Chris Schobel  
**Raymond & Lillie Krueger and Leo & Regina Jasek by:** Woodrow & Beatrice Jasek  
**Jane Magness Darby by:** Emily Magness and Caleb Magness  
**Our fathers Bernard Kenjura and Chris Thraen by:** Ed & Michelle Thraen  
**Family & Friends by:** Larry Uhlig  
**Lester & Olga Foster and William & Wilma Nelson by:** Lester Gene & Carolyn Foster  
\*\*\*\*\*

