

## Stewardship 2026 Join the Journey

*"Trust in God from the bottom of your heart;  
don't try to figure out everything on your own.  
Listen for God's voice in everything you do,  
everywhere you go." Proverbs 3:4-6*



### WELCOME TO WORSHIP

8:00 a.m. Traditional Service

3rd Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025

**Pastor:** Paula Geister-Jones **Lay Ministry Administrator:** Jenny Hoffman

**Organist/Pianist:** Linda Kunz

**Lector:** Kris Adams

**Acolytes:** Beckett Nelson & Sadie Soderling

**Ushers:** Jim Lunde, Dan Matson, Myron Sime & Gary Gullickson

**Technical Support:** Thomas Lehr, Roger Slack

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP: "Cradle Song" by Kirkpatrick arr by Rowland-Raybold**

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

**P:** Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose home is heaven and earth,  
whose salvation is sure.

**C: Amen**

**P:** Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

**P:** Long-expected God,

**C:** We confess that we look to ourselves for the peace and security only you can provide. We reach for swords and spears, reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war. We become impatient while waiting and weary of keeping awake. Free us from self-reliance, and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors. Increase our trust in God's timing, and awaken us to your advent among us, that we may abound in the hope you have promised. Amen.

**P:** God judges us not as we deserve, but according to God's own righteousness. ✠ You are freed and forgiven, saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior.

**C: Amen.**

### **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

*As the First, Second and Third candle of the Advent Wreath is lit, verse 2 of "Oh Come, Oh Come, Emanuel" is played softly.*

**P:** Praise to you, O God, our salvation who is near.

**C: You hold us in our waiting and keep us awake to the world.**

**P:** You show up in our lives at unexpected times.

**C: Bless us as we light this candle to keep vigil for your arrival.**

**P:** We trust that even though we do not know the day or the hour, you hurry to gather all people to your peace.

**C: Amen.**

**Vs. 2: O come, O Wisdom from on high,  
embracing all things far and nigh:  
in strength and beauty come and stay;  
teach us your will and guide our way.**

**Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.**

*Stand*

**HYMN: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" ELW #254**

**Vs. 1: Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.**

**Vs. 2: Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king;  
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.**

### **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.**

### **LITANY**

**P:** In the beginning was the Word,

**C: and the Word was with God and the Word was God.**

**P:** In the Word was life,

**C: and the life was the light of all people.**

**P:** The word became flesh and lived among us,

**C: and we have seen his glory, full of grace and truth.**

### **HYMN OF PRAISE: "Rejoice, Rejoice Believers" ELW #244 Vss. 1 & 2**

**Vs. 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.**

**Vs. 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.**

### **SALUTATION**

**P:** The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**P:** Let us pray.

**C: Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your**

**way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

*Sit*

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10**

<sup>1-2</sup> Wilderness and desert will sing joyously, the badlands will celebrate and flower—Like the crocus in spring, bursting into blossom, a symphony of song and color. Mountain glories of Lebanon—a gift. Awesome Carmel, stunning Sharon—gifts. God’s resplendent glory, fully on display. God awesome, God majestic. <sup>3-4</sup> Energize the limp hands, strengthen the rubbery knees. Tell fearful souls, “Courage! Take heart! God is here, right here, on his way to put things right and redress all wrongs. He’s on his way! He’ll save you!” <sup>5-7</sup> Blind eyes will be opened, deaf ears unstopped, Lame men and women will leap like deer, the voiceless break into song. Springs of water will burst out in the wilderness, streams flow in the desert. Hot sands will become a cool oasis, thirsty ground a splashing fountain. Even lowly jackals will have water to drink, and barren grasslands flourish richly. <sup>8-10</sup> There will be a highway called the Holy Road. No one rude or rebellious is permitted on this road. It’s for God’s people exclusively— impossible to get lost on this road. Not even fools can get lost on it. No lions on this road, no dangerous wild animals— Nothing and no one dangerous or threatening. Only the redeemed will walk on it. The people God has ransomed will come back on this road. They’ll sing as they make their way home to Zion, unfading halos of joy encircling their heads, Welcomed home with gifts of joy and gladness as all sorrows and sighs scurry into the night.

**L:** The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*Stand*

**GOSPEL CANTICLE: “Hark A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding”**

**ELW #246 Vss. 1 & 3**

**Vs. 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!"**

**Vs.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;**

*The Gospel is announced...*

**P:** The Holy Gospel according to Matthew the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter.

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

**GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11**

<sup>2-3</sup> John, meanwhile, had been locked up in prison. When he got wind of what Jesus was doing, he sent his own disciples to ask, “Are you the One we’ve been expecting, or are we still waiting?” <sup>4-6</sup> Jesus told them, “Go back and tell John what’s going on: The blind see, The lame walk, Lepers are cleansed, The deaf hear, The dead are raised, The wretched of the earth learn that God is on their side. “Is this what you were expecting? Then count yourselves most blessed!” <sup>7-10</sup> When John’s disciples left to report, Jesus started talking to the crowd about John. “What did you expect when you went out to see him in the wild? A weekend camper? Hardly. What then? A sheik in silk pajamas? Not in the wilderness, not by a long shot. What then? A prophet? That’s right, a prophet! Probably the best prophet you’ll ever hear. He is the prophet that Malachi announced when he wrote, ‘I’m sending my prophet ahead of you, to make the road smooth for you.’” <sup>11</sup> “Let me tell you what’s going on here: No one in history surpasses John the Baptizer; but in the kingdom he prepared you for, the lowliest person is ahead of him. For a long time now people have tried to force themselves into God’s kingdom.

**P:** The gospel of the Lord.

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

*Sit*

**SERMON**

*Stand*

**HYMN: “Blessed be the God of Israel” ELW #250**

**Vs. 1: Blessed be the God of Israel who comes to set us free  
and raises up new hope for us: a Branch from David’s tree.  
So have the prophets long declared that with a mighty arm  
God would turn back our enemies and all who wish us harm.**

**Vs. 2: With promised mercy will God still the covenant recall,  
the oath once sworn to Abraham, from foes to save us all;  
that we might worship without fear and offer lives of praise,  
in holiness and righteousness to serve God all our days.**

**Vs. 3: My child, as prophet of the Lord you will prepare the way,  
to tell God's people they are saved from sin's eternal sway.  
Then shall God's mercy from on high shine forth and never cease  
to drive away the gloom of death and lead us into peace.**

### **APOSTLE'S CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.\*  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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

*A brief silence.*

**P:** God of power and mercy, we praise you for Jesus and his acts of healing and liberation. Lead us to proclaim the good news from generation to generation, that all may place their hope in you. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

**P:** When lands are parched and dry, bring rain and snow; where wilderness is barren, sow seeds of life. Fill the lands with trees that grow, plants that

flower, and creatures that thrive, as nature proclaims the wonder of your works. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

**P:** When there is injustice or corruption among nations and leaders, root it out. Turn their attention to inequity and the cries of the poor. Instill a deeper sense of compassion and care in all who govern. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

**P:** When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. In uncertain times, remind us of the promise spoken to our ancestors in faith. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

**P:** When people are imprisoned or held captive, break the chains and offer release. Strengthen the work of the church in restorative justice, breaking cycles of poverty, and welcoming the immigrant. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

**P:** As we await your coming, we give thanks for the faithful who have lived and died in faith. May their boldness of faith inspire our witness and work. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

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

**C: Amen.**

## **THE SHARING OF THE PEACE**

**P:** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

*Sit*

**OFFERTORY “In the Bleak Midwinter” by Holtz arr by Oines**

## **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

**P:** Let us pray.

**C: Nourishing God, you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come. Amen.**

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Stand*

## **BLESSING**

**P:** May God who comes among us, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always.

**C: Amen.**

## **DISMISSAL**

**P:** Go in peace. Keep awake.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

## **SENDING HYMN: "People, Look East" ELW #248 Vss. 1 & 4**

**Vs. 1: People, look east. The time is near  
of the crowning of the year.**

**Make your house fair as you are able,  
trim the hearth and set the table.**

**People, look east, and sing today—  
Love, the Guest, is on the way.**

**Vs. 4: Angels announce with shouts of mirth**



him who brings new life to earth.  
Set ev'ry peak and valley humming  
with the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east, and sing today—  
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

**POSTLUDE “Go Tell It” arr by Wonacott**