



## St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA

*"A Legacy of Worship and Outreach in San Antonio since 1857"*

502 East Nueva, San Antonio, Texas 78205

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Phone 210-223-2611

**December 15, 2019**  
**Third Sunday of Advent**



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### GATHERING

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God*

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**Prelude**

**Improvisation on "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"**

**Bells**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Advent Litany**

Our season of preparation continues,  
and we now light a third candle upon our wreath.  
It is sometimes pink in color, reminding us  
that there is so much about which we should rejoice.

**In the midst of all the hustle and bustle of these days,  
let us seek true joy in the ways of the One  
who soon arrives among us.**

**As the nights continue to lengthen,  
we sense the coming of a greater light.**

**We rejoice in the coming of our Christ.**

**Let us, with him, bring good news to the oppressed,  
bind up the broken-hearted,  
proclaim liberty to the captive,  
and announce to all the nearness of God's goodness.**

God has replaced our mourning with the oil of gladness.  
Let our lives, then, reflect the light and gift of Joy.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

**Gathering Hymn      "Awake, Awake, and Greet the New Morn"**

**ELW #242**

**Greeting**

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

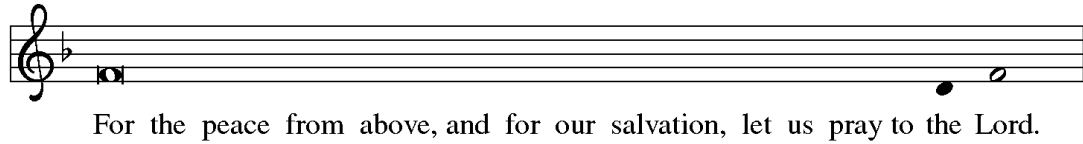
**And also with you.**

# Kyrie

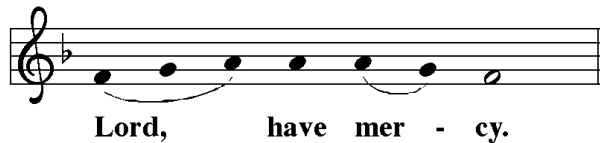
# Setting 3



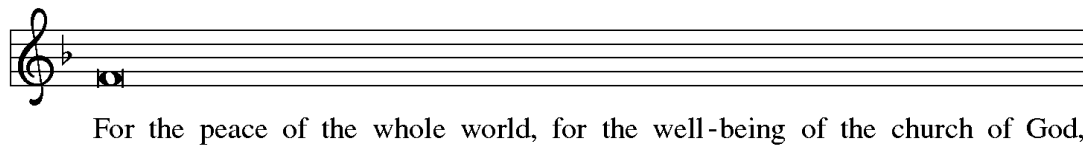
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.



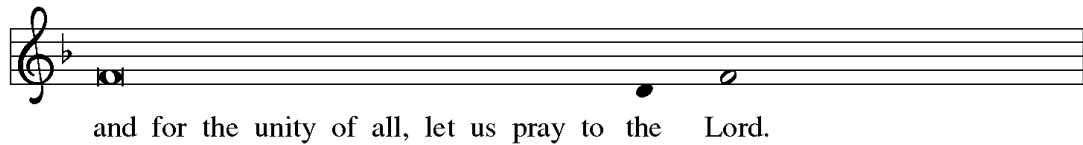
For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



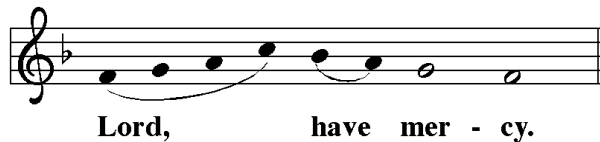
Lord, have mer - cy.



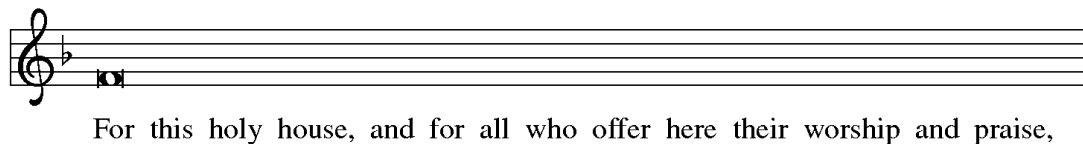
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



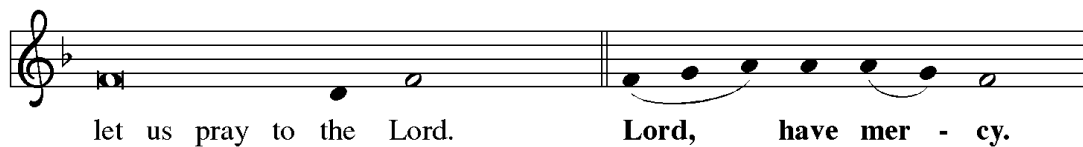
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



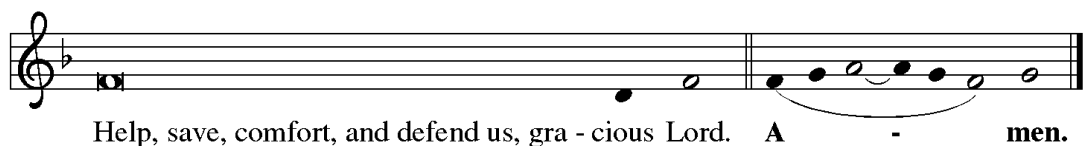
Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.

## Prayer of the Day

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.

## WORD

God speaks to us in scripture and preaching; we respond in profession of faith and prayer

### First Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

<sup>1</sup>The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus  
<sup>2</sup>it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. <sup>3</sup>Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. <sup>4</sup>Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." <sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; <sup>6</sup>then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; <sup>7</sup>the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. <sup>8</sup>A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. <sup>9</sup>No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. <sup>10</sup>And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Word of God, word of Life.

**Thanks be to God.**

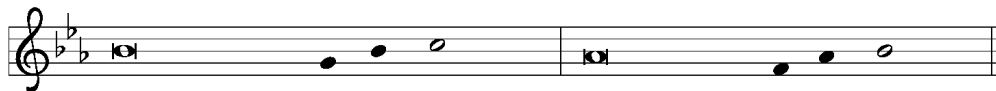
### Psalm 146:5-10



The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down.

Psalm 146:8

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<sup>5</sup>Happy are they who have the God of Jacob | for their help,  
whose hope is in the | LORD their God;

<sup>6</sup>**who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that | is in them;**  
**who keeps promis- | es forever;**

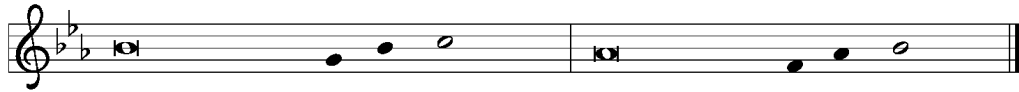
<sup>7</sup>who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to | those who hunger.  
The LORD sets the | captive free.



The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down.

Psalm 146:8

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**<sup>8</sup>The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who | are bowed down;**

**the LORD | loves the righteous. R**

<sup>9</sup>The LORD cares | for the stranger;

the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way | of the wicked.

<sup>10</sup>**The LORD shall | reign forever,**

**your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. | Hallelujah! R**

## Second Reading: James 5:7-10

*In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.*

<sup>7</sup>Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. <sup>8</sup>You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup>Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup>As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel Acclamation

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the  
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

*Cantor: Alleluia. I am sending my messenger before you,\* who will prepare your way before you. Alleluia. (Matt. 11:10)*

## The Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

*John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.*

The good news of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St. Matthew:

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>2</sup>When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup>and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. <sup>6</sup>And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." <sup>7</sup>As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? <sup>8</sup>What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. <sup>9</sup>What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' <sup>11</sup>Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Children are invited to go to their Sunday lesson and activity. They will return at Holy Communion. Parents are welcome to accompany them.*

**Sermon**

**Pastor James Dew**

**Hymn of the Day**

**"Comfort, Comfort Now My People"**

**ELW #256**

## **Apostles' Creed**

With the whole Church in heaven and on earth, we confess our faith...

**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**

*Each petition concludes: "Hear us, O God." The congregation responds: **"Your mercy is great."***

*We hold in prayer: Bob Cauble, Frances Bara, Chris Gates, Danny Myers, Rev. Louise Shaw, Jet Smith, Ralph Detwiler, Augustin Fuentes, Elisa Hueda Feliciano, Jane Campa Alvarez.*

*For prayer request updates, please contact the church office by phone or email at (210) 223-2611 or [info@StJohnsSA.org](mailto:info@StJohnsSA.org)*

## **Peace**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*(Please share with those nearest you these or similar words: "Peace be with you.")*



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## MEAL

*We bring our "first fruit" offerings to the Table of the Lord  
where we are strengthened and nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ*

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**Offering**

**"Prepare the Way of the Lord"**

**Michael Larkin**

**Offertory Hymn**

**"Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful"**

**ELW #182**

### Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful *Offering Song*

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

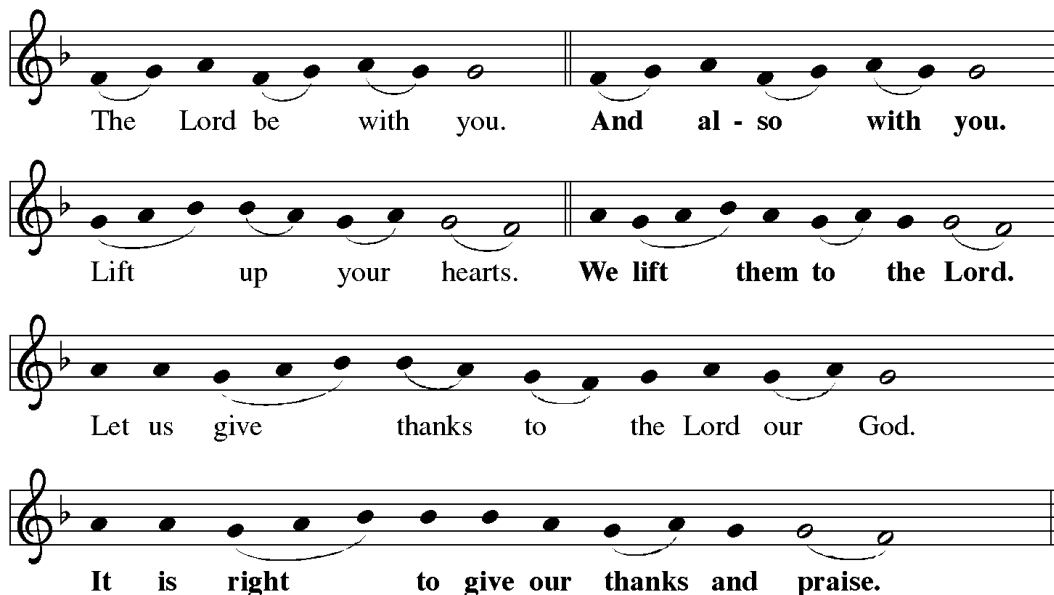
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### Offertory Prayer

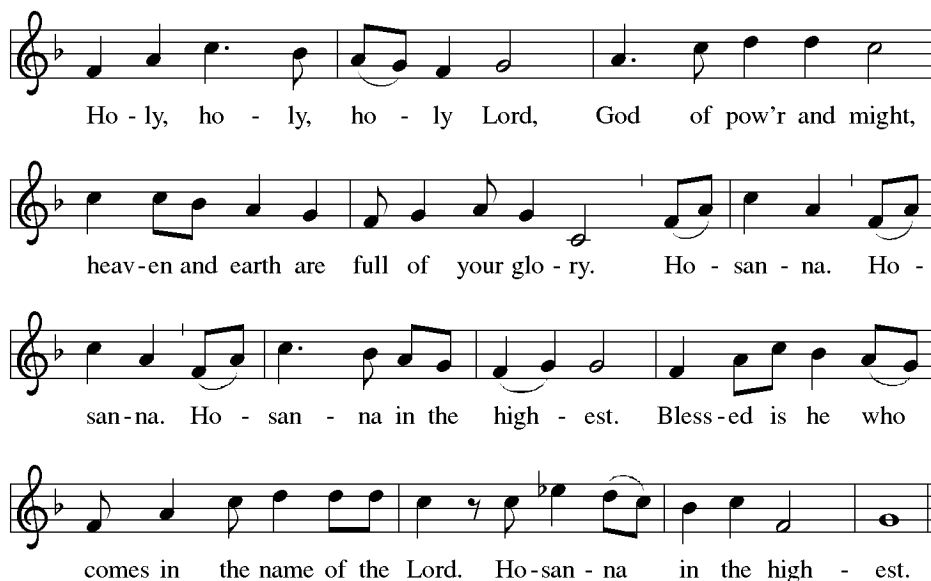
Giver of every good thing, we set before you the gifts that you have already given to sustain our lives and to share with others. Help us to be good stewards of the earth and all that is in it, and let our lives be a testimony to the abundant feast you prepare for all who hunger. **Amen**

## Great Thanksgiving



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.  
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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, God of pow'r and might,  
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -  
san-na. 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.

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life: Blessed are you for the birth of creation. Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light. Blessed are you for your promise to your people. Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams. Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will. Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**



With this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection. We look with hope for his coming.

### **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Holy God, we long for your Spirit. Come among us. Bless this meal. May your Word take flesh in us. Awaken your people. Fill us with your light. Bring the gift of peace on earth.

### **Come, Holy Spirit.**

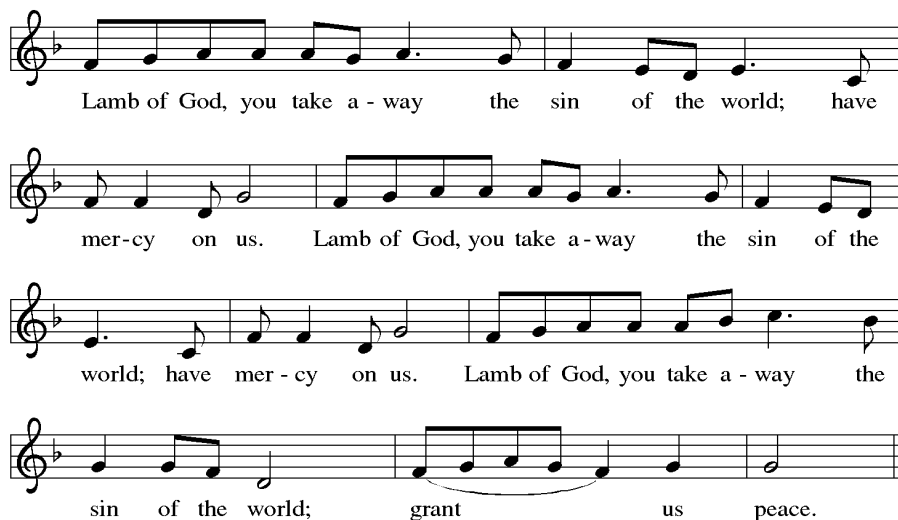
All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Remember us, Lord, in your kingdom, and help us to pray:

**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.**

All are welcome to this table. Come receive the gifts of God for the people of God.

## **Agnus Dei**



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have  
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; grant us peace.

## **Holy Communion**

*We believe that Christ is truly present in the consecrated bread and wine and we welcome all who wish to receive the Holy Sacrament. Please follow the direction of the ushers. A gluten free host is available upon request.*

## Communion Hymns

ELW #243 *Lost in the Night*  
ELW #461 *All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly*  
ELW #677 *This Little Light of Mine*

## Communion Blessing

## Communion Prayer

God of abundance,  
we give you thanks that in this holy meal  
you have invited us to feast with you and one another.  
May the taste of your love remain with us,  
and may our words and our work in your name  
invite others into your bountiful grace.  
Send us from your table to proclaim your presence,  
even as we await the glorious coming of Christ our Savior.  
**Amen.**

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## SENDING

*God blesses us and sends us out in mission to the world*

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## Benediction

May God, who gathers us in love,  
lead you in pathways of righteousness and justice.  
May God, who knows us more deeply than we know ourselves,  
lead you in pathways of forgiveness and freedom.  
May God, who fills us with good things,  
lead you in pathways of equity and abundance.  
The blessing of the holy Trinity, † one God,  
be upon you and remain with you forever.  
**Amen.**

## Sending Hymn

***"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"***

**ELW #249**

## Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you.  
**Thanks be to God!**

## Postlude

***Piece d'Orgue***

**J.S. Bach**

## **Worship Leaders**

Presiding Minister + Pastor James Dew

Assisting Minister + Karen Knudson

Lector + Julie Shadrock

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*Worship is central to who we are as a people of God. Every time we gather to hear and respond to the Word, to offer up our prayers for the needs of many, and to receive Christ's living presence in the consecrated bread and wine, we seek to "become what we receive", namely, the Body of Christ for the sake of the life of the world. As we are gathered, fed, and then sent back out in mission, God empowers us to be bearers of blessing and vessels of grace, commissioning us to intentionally live out the reign of God throughout the course of our weekly living.*

### **This week at St. John's**

Sun 15 • Children's Christmas Program 11:00 AM

Wed 18 • Mid-Week Word and Prayer 12:15 PM

Wed 18 • Campus Ministry Dinner 6:00 PM

Wed 18 • Choir Practice 7:00 PM

### **Christmas Eve Pot Luck Dinner**

**The choir and congregation are invited to a Pot Luck Dinner  
Christmas Eve, Memorial Hall, following the 5:30 PM worship.**

**Ham will be furnished. Please plan to bring a dish to share.**

**RSVP to the church office, 223-5667, by December 20.**

*Please see our online calendar at [stjohnssa.org](http://stjohnssa.org) (under the Home tab)  
for weekly recurring events and the current month's Tidings.*

**Financial Reports and Council Minutes are available in the Member Section  
of the church website, and in the church office by request.**

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**ELCA World Hunger Advent Calendars are available on the large  
First Floor table. ELCA Good Gifts Catalogs are also available.**

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## Let the Children Come

By the third grade, many children are able to read a Bible passage clearly and meaningfully. Today's poetic reading from Isaiah, with its short, straightforward lines, may be just right for a young person to proclaim to the assembly. The reading's many images will capture the attention of children: a desert in bloom, God's glory and majesty, strengthened hearts, sight and hearing restored, burning sand and thirsty ground becoming a pool of water, and more. In the midst of it all is a royal path to God's kingdom, almost like Dorothy's yellow brick road but without the fearsome ravenous beasts. Children need the same practice adults need before reading publicly. In addition, they might need a stool and a good microphone. Teach them how to introduce the reading and to allow silence for reflection following the reading. Instruct them to close with the phrase "The word of the Lord" so the assembly, including the children, can respond "Thanks be to God."

## Theological Reflection

For what do we hope in this Advent season and, more importantly, for whom? The question John asks from prison is common to generations of Jesus' followers: how do we discern the Savior's presence when Jesus' work can be so different from our expectations? In a sermon on Matthew 11 titled "The Gift of Disillusionment," Barbara Brown Taylor says, "Blessed are those who do not let the Messiah they are expecting blind them to the Messiah who is standing right in front of them" (*God in Pain: Teaching Sermons on Suffering* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998]).

## Liturgical Calendar Commemorations

### **Katharina von Bora Luther, renewer of the church, died 1552**

#### **Friday, December 20, 2019**

Born to an impoverished nobleman, Katie eventually took vows as a nun, but around age twenty-four she and several other nuns who were influenced by the writings of Martin Luther left the convent. Six children were born to Katie and Martin.

## The Artwork of the Week

The sanctuary window above the altar is a fine example of work by the Von Gerichten Art Glass Company of Columbus, Ohio. From its founding by Theodore and Ludwig Von Gerichten in 1891 until it closed in the 1930s, the company designed and fabricated stained glass windows for places of worship throughout the United States.

The sanctuary window represents the Holy Trinity. The left panel, dedicated to God the Father, includes a verse from Isaiah. "I the Lord, the first, and with the last, I am he." The medallion below the inscription includes the six pointed star symbolizing the days of creation. The risen Christ fills the center panel representing God's work of redemption through his son. Below the image of Christ is the phrase, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory." On the left panel, below the inscription, "For as many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," is a medallion of the descending dove representing God the Holy Spirit.

The window was a gift of Mrs. Henry Rilling in honor of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Stumberg. Designers originally proposed that the window depict the crucified Christ, but instead, Mrs. Rilling requested the image of the risen Christ. Together, the altar and sanctuary window provide a dramatic focal for worship at St. John's.



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.