



St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA

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

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December 22, 2019
Fourth Sunday of Advent



GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

Prelude

Improvisation on "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Bells

Welcome and Announcements

Advent Litany

As we come to this last Sunday of Advent,
we recall the many times we have been here before,
with still so much to do, and with so much love still left unexpressed.
Yet, Love's promise is often kept in unexpected ways.

**So we continue to prepare for the greatest expression of that love,
sensing its close arrival.**

Through the birth of a Child,

God transforms our world.

Through the gift of love,

born again and again,

God's promises are kept.

**We anticipate the nearness of that gift,
and will soon, behold its light in our deepest night.**

A fourth candle now shines upon our wreath,
in eager longing for God's greatest promise fulfilled.
What else can it be named but Love?

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Gathering Hymn

"Blessed Be the God of Israel"

ELW #250

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.

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.**

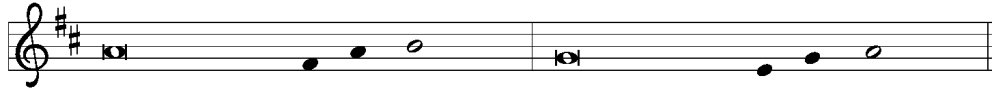
Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.



Psalm 80:7
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- ⁷Restore us, O | God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.
- ¹⁷**Let your hand be upon the one at | your right hand,
the one you have made so strong | for yourself.**
- ¹⁸And so will we never turn a- | way from you;
give us life, that we may call up- | on your name.
- ¹⁹**Restore us, O LORD | God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved. R**

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.

¹Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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. The virgin shall conceive and | bear a son, and they shall name | him Emmanuel. Alleluia. (Matt. 1:23)*

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

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

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

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

"All Earth Is Hopeful"

ELW #266

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: "Lord, in your mercy," The congregation responds: "**Hear our prayer.**"*

We hold in prayer: Bob Cauble, Frances Bara, Chris Gates, Danny Myers, Jet Smith, Ralph Detwiler, Elisa Hueda Feliciano, Jane Campa Alvarez, Joan Arnet, Frances Franz.

*For prayer requests and updates, please contact the church office
(210) 223-2611 or 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.")



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*

Offering

"O Come, O Come Immanuel"

Rutter

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.

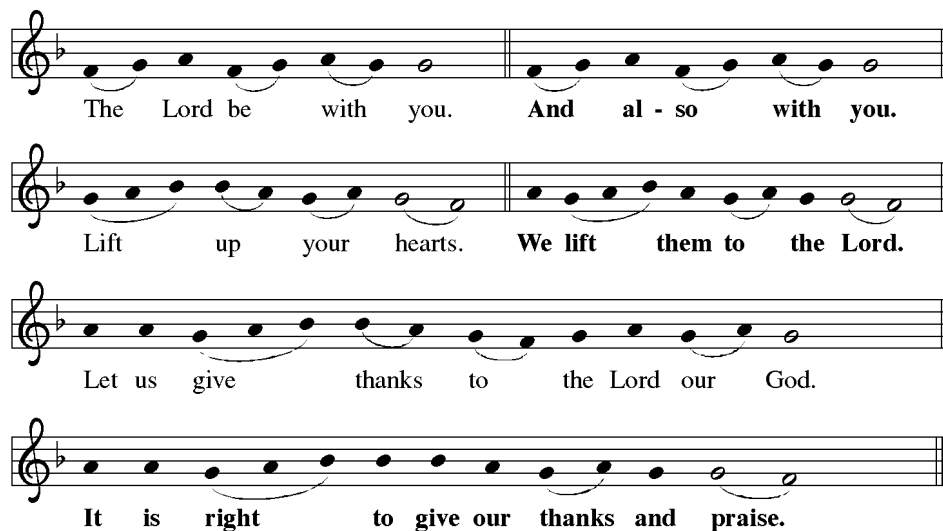
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Offertory Prayer

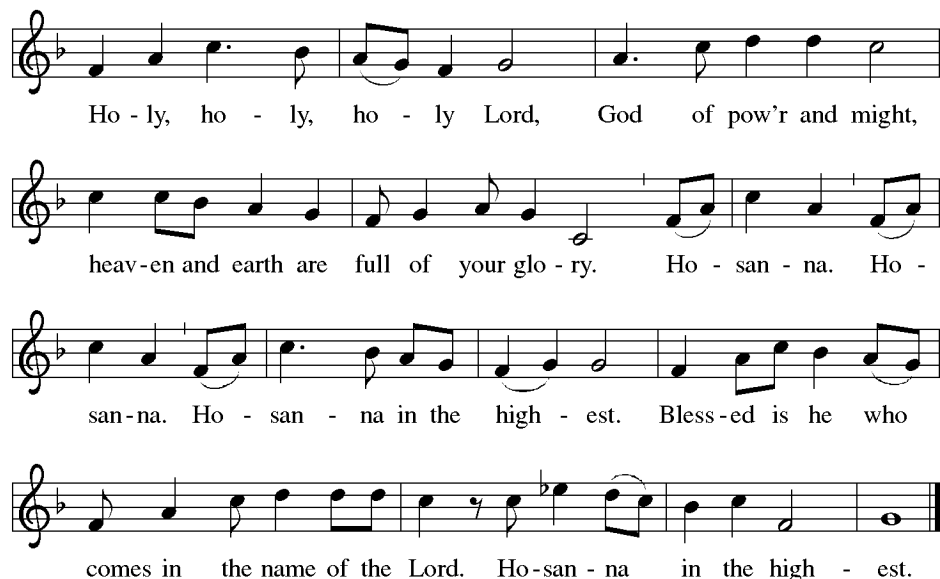
Giver of every good thing, we set before you the gifts that you have already given to sustain our lives and to share with others. Help us to be good stewards of the earth and all that is in it, and let our lives be a testimony to the abundant feast you prepare for all who hunger. **Amen.**

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.**

Come to the table where Christ himself meets you, and where all are welcomed.

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 #491 *Come, Let Us Eat
Breath of Heaven* by Amy Grant; Sung by Alisha Bade
ELW #465 *As the Grains of Wheat*

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.

SENDING

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

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

"People, Look East"

ELW #248

Dismissal

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

Postlude

**Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, (Savior of the Nations, Come)
J.S. Bach**

Worship Leaders

Presiding Minister + Pastor James Dew
Assisting Minister + Rosemary Petry
Lector + Dan Robison

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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

Tuesday - Wednesday 24th - 25th • Church office closed for Christmas
Tuesday 24th • Christmas Eve Candlelight Liturgy 5:30 PM and 10:00 PM
Thursday - Friday 26th - 27th • Eric out of office

*Please see our online calendar at 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.**

Let the Children Come

Smaller congregations struggle to get enough children together to rehearse a Christmas pageant, and by December 24, some families have already left town to visit relatives. If there is a Sunday morning in Advent that lends itself to a small pageant, it might be this one, with Luke's nativity story presented in a nutshell—a sneak peek at things to come. Keep it simple and contemplative. Use 10–15 minutes on the previous Sundays of Advent to teach children a few scripture verses and hymn stanzas, such as the two-stanza "Lo, how a rose e'er blooming" (ELW 272), which conveys the prophecy, mystery, and quiet joy of late Advent and has only two different melodic lines to learn. Following worship, children and others could be invited to stay to prepare the worship space for Christmas. Greens or poinsettias could be brought in and the white paraments made ready.

Theological Reflection

Matthew gives us two names for the one we await: Emmanuel, "God is with us" (1:23), and Jesus, "he will save his people from their sins" (1:21). The Bible offers many additional names by which Christ is known. Reflection on the multiple ways they help us recognize Jesus' coming could be a focus of this day or the whole Advent season. Many ideas exist online for an Advent activity based on the names of Jesus. For example, each day, people could add a paper chain link, hang a Christmas ornament, and/or meditate on a Bible verse with one of the names.

Liturgical Calendar Commemorations

Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

Thursday, December 26, 2019

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.

John, Apostle and Evangelist

Friday, December 27, 2019

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.

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

Saturday, December 28, 2019

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.

Celebrating Christmas and the Founding of St. John's

Pastor P.F. Zizelmann first visited San Antonio in 1852 as a missionary seeking to establish a Lutheran church in what was then a largely Catholic community. His efforts were cut short by illness, and after recovering, he settled in Fredericksburg where he founded Zion Lutheran Church. Zizelmann returned to San Antonio in the fall of 1856, committed to organizing a Lutheran congregation. He held the first services in October in a small adobe building on Commerce Street shared with other Protestant churches. The still unnamed congregation confirmed its first catechumens on Palm Sunday 1857, and the church was formally organized eight months later Saturday, December 26. On that day after Christmas, forty-four individuals signed the constitution. It read in part, "We the undersigned, hereby band ourselves together to form an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation." They named it St. John's. So as we celebrate Christ's birth, let us also remember the founding of our congregation 162 years ago.



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.