



He will  
baptize you with  
the Holy Spirit and fire

LUKE 3:16

# St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

[www.stpaulsyork.org](http://www.stpaulsyork.org)

Email: [st.paulsyork@comcast.net](mailto:st.paulsyork@comcast.net)

[www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com](http://www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com)

Facebook: *St. Paul's Lutheran Church York PA on Springettsbury & George*

**WELCOME** Thank you for being with us.

We are a Christian church within the Lutheran tradition (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) and we welcome people of all Christian traditions as well as people of other faiths and people of little or no faith. Christian worship has been offered to God in this congregation for 185 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition.

**Restrooms** are available in the Good Shepherd Room (Springettsbury lobby) and the narthex (George St). Baby changing stations are provided in these restrooms as well as in the nursery.

The Nursery, which is accessed from the double doors, front right, is available for any family needing a space away. We are currently gathering names of individuals willing to staff the Nursery.

**Our Communion** is "open" to all believers who trust that the Risen Christ is present for his people in the Holy Eucharist.

*The altar flowers are presented to the Glory of God in memory of our parents by Pat Rudicille and Gerry Briggs and in honor of the "Snitzel", Jaclyn Kinkella on her 14th birthday by the Kinkella Family.*



Flowers This Week

## Guidelines for Worship during the time of COVID-19

### Entering and Leaving the Church:

*Please wear a mask while in worship and take your service bulletin with you and dispose of it properly.*

### Offerings:

*Monetary offerings may be placed in the basins provided at the entrances to the nave prior to the service or immediately following the service. You may also donate via our website at [www.stpaulsyork.org](http://www.stpaulsyork.org)*

### While in the Nave:

*Please sit in designated pews only. You may sit together as a family. We ask that you practice social distancing from one family to the next within the pew. Occasionally an usher may seat a guest in the red zone.*

### Communion Procedure:

- *Ushers will direct you to the Chancel step alternating pulpit side (left) then font side (right).*
- *Extend your arms and cup your hands together to receive the host There is no need to hurry.*
- *We are receiving communion in one kind only (bread/host).*
- *Return to your pew by the side aisle.*

**Our COVID-19 task force** is assisting us as we remain open. Please thank Dr. Jessica Ericson, Sheridan Palmer, Deacon Harold Sargeant, Norma Shue, and Dr. Martha Thomas for their dedication and service.

# Third Sunday in Advent

December 12, 2021

8:00 & 10:30 AM

*The people's responses are in bold.*

PRELUDE

*Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People*

Gerald Near

*The people stand turning to face the Baptismal Font.*

***Stand***

## **BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

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

*Silence for reflection and self-examination.*

Gracious God,

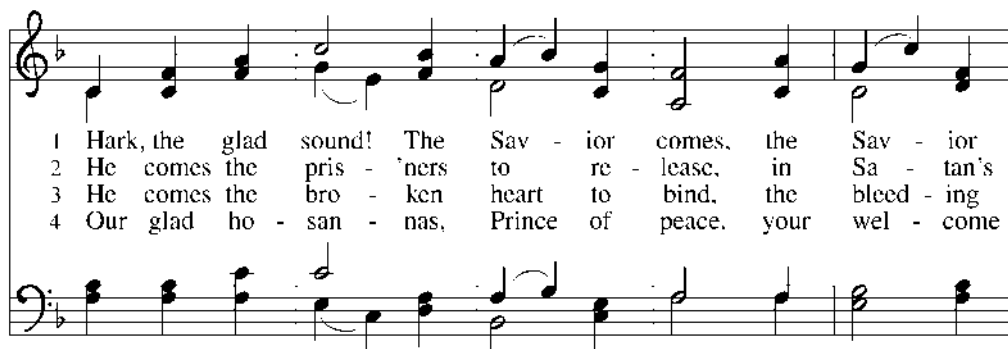
**have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of + Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

**Amen.**

## ENTRANCE HYMN

### *Hark, the Glad Sound! (ELW 239)*



1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior  
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's  
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing  
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come



prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -  
bond - age held. The gates of brass be -  
soul to cure, and with the trea - sures  
shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal



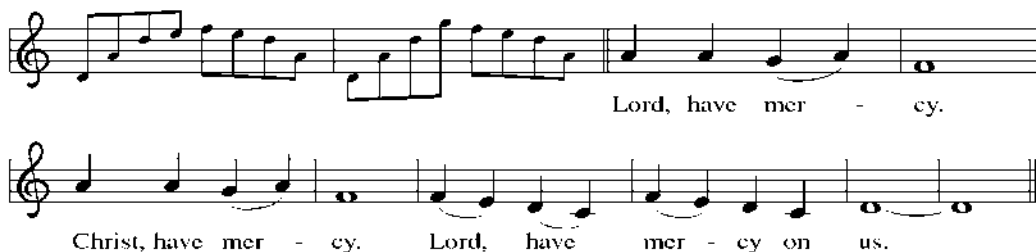
pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.  
fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.  
of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.  
arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

## APOSTOLIC 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**      *Introduction with handbells, Cantor, Choir*      **Congregation 2nd time**



Lord, have mer - cy.

Christ, have mer - cy.      Lord, have mer - cy on us.

Music: Swee Hong Lim  
Music © 1990 General Board of Global Ministries, GBC/MUSIC, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10115.  
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**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray. . . . Almighty God, you once called John the Baptist to give witness to the coming of your Son and to prepare his way. Grant us, your people, the wisdom to see your purpose today and the openness to hear your will, that we may witness to Christ's coming and so prepare his way; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

**Sit**

**FIRST READING**      Zephaniah 3:14-20 (back page)

*At the conclusion of the reading.*

The Word of the Lord.      **Thanks be to God.**

**PSALMODY**      **Isaiah 12:2-6**      *spoken responsively*

<sup>2</sup>Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the Lord GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.

<sup>3</sup>**With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**

<sup>4</sup>And you will say in that day:

Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;

make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.

<sup>5</sup>**Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;**

**let this be known in all the earth.**

<sup>6</sup>Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,

**for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.**

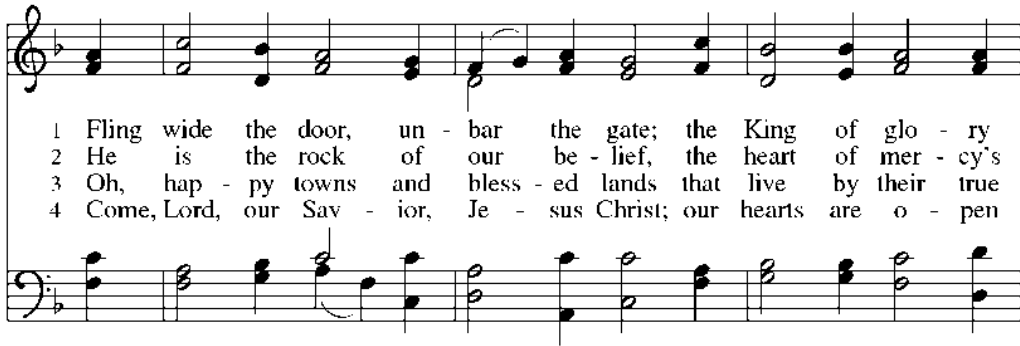
**SECOND READING**      **Philippians 4:4-7** (back page)

*At the conclusion of the reading.*

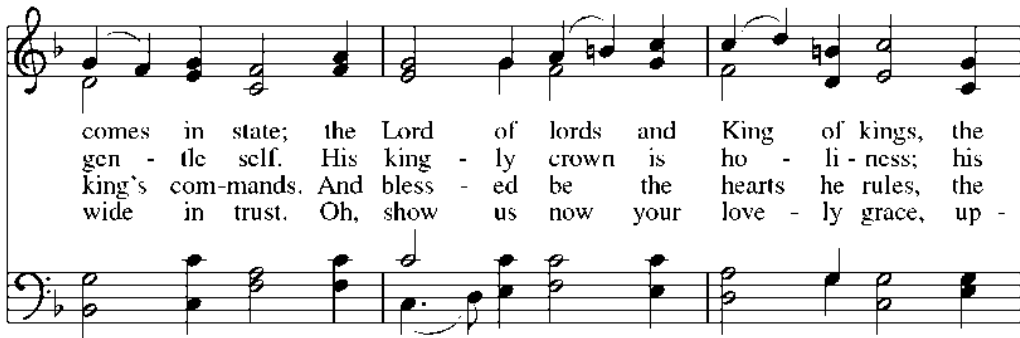
The Word of the Lord.      **Thanks be to God.**

*Stand*  
HYMN

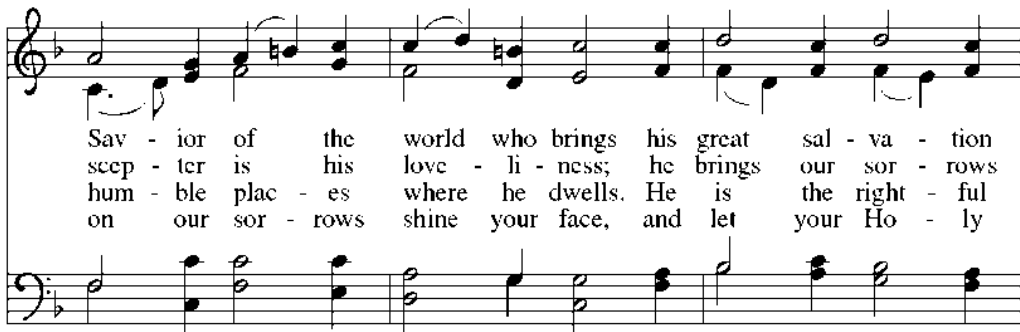
*Fling Wide the Door (ELW 259)*



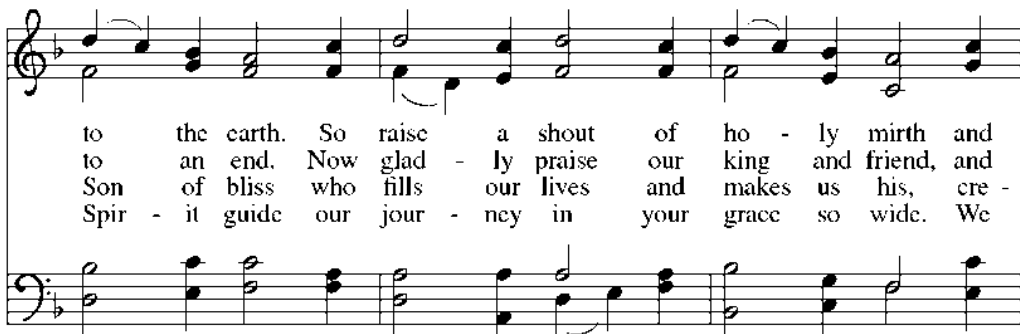
1 Fling wide the door, un - bar the gate; the King of glo - ry  
2 He is the rock of our be - lief, the heart of mer - cy's  
3 Oh, hap - py towns and bless - ed lands that live by their true  
4 Come, Lord, our Sav - ior, Je - sus Christ; our hearts are o - pen



comes in state; the Lord of lords and King of kings, the  
gen - tle self. His king - ly crown is ho - li - ness; his  
king's com - mands. And bless - ed be the hearts he rules, the  
wide in trust. Oh, show us now your love - ly grace, up -



Sav - ior of the world who brings his great sal - va - tion  
scep - ter is his love - li - ness; he brings our sor - rows  
hum - ble plac - es where he dwells. He is the right - ful  
on our sor - rows shine your face, and let your Ho - ly



to the earth. So raise a shout of ho - ly mirth and  
to an end. Now glad - ly praise our king and friend, and  
Son of bliss who fills our lives and makes us his, cre -  
Spir - it guide our jour - ney in your grace so wide. We



**HOLY GOSPEL**

Luke 3:7-18

The Holy Gospel according to **St. Luke**. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

*At the conclusion of the reading.*

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Sit*

**SERMON**

Rev. Stan Reep

*Stand*

**NICENE CREED**

**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**

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

*A brief silence.*

Holy God, renew your church and raise up leaders who announce your good news. Grant peace to congregations in the midst of transition. Guide the work of candidacy and call committees. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Your Spirit brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Breathe life into us, that we are inspired to live in harmony with one another and the planet. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You lead your people in paths of righteousness. Raise up prophets in our own day who warn against captivity to greed and point us to the freedom found in generosity. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You come near in times of worry and need. Cradle us in your arms, that we trust you and are not afraid. Attend to any who are hungry, imprisoned, or ill this day (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You exult over us in singing. Enliven the song of this assembly and bless the ministry of church musicians (*especially Victor, Leah, and Cody*). With instruments and dance, join our voices to the song of all creation. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We give you thanks for your servants who showed us your goodness and grace (*especially*). By the power of your Spirit, keep us steadfast in faith until we make our home with you. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of new life, you come among us in the places we least expect. Receive these prayers and those of our hearts, in the name of Jesus.

**Amen.**

## PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*Sit*

**ANTHEM 10:30 AM**

*Creator of the Stars of Night*

John Scott



*Stand*

**OFFERTORY HYMN**

*All Earth is Hopeful (ELW 266) stanza 3*



3 Moun - tains and val - leys will have to be pre - pared;  
4 We first saw Je - sus a ba - by in a crib.



new high - ways o - pened, new pro - to - cols de - clared. Al - most  
This same Lord Je - sus to - day has come to live in our



here! God is near - ing, in beau - ty and grace! All  
world; he is pres - ent, in neigh - bors we see our



clear ev - 'ry gate - way, in haste, come out in haste!  
Je - sus is with us, and ev - er sets us free.

**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray. **Blessed are you,**

**O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

**DIALOGUE**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

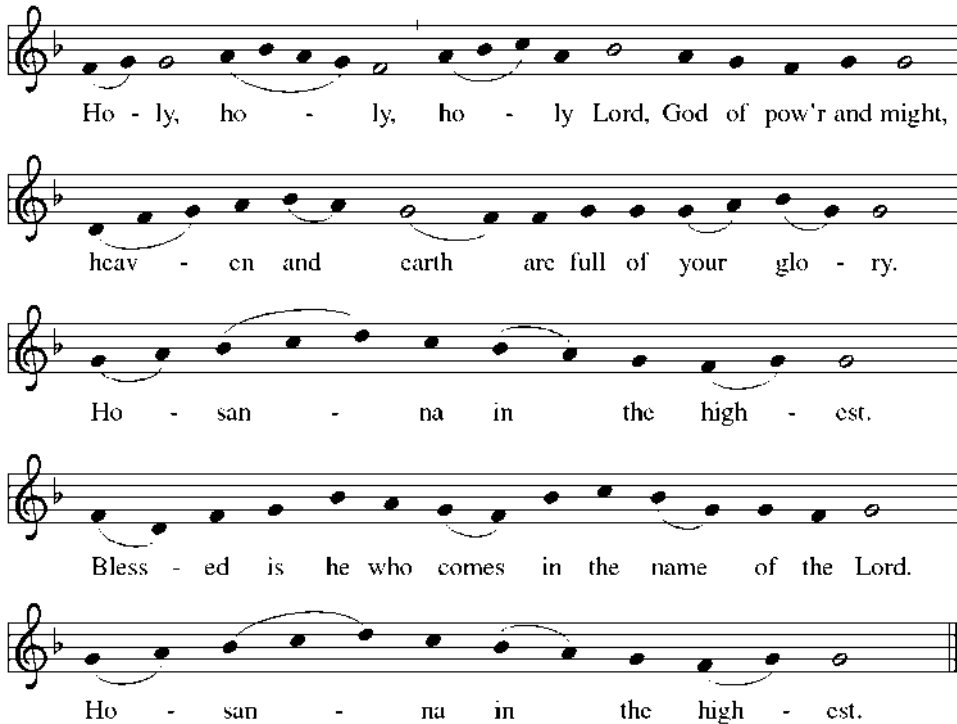
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**PREFACE**

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everliving God. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes again to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## SANCTUS



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 in the high - est.  
Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Ho - san - na in the high - est.

## THANKSGIVING

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.**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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.**

**FRACTION** *a brief silence is kept*

**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. A - men.

*Sit* The pastor cleanses hands and prepares for the distribution of Holy Communion.

## COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL

*Instructions for receiving the sacrament are on the inside front cover of the bulletin.*

### COMMUNION HYMN *What Feast of Love (ELW 487)*

*Stand*



- 1 What feast of love is of - fered here, what ban-quet come from heav - en?
- 2 What light of truth is of - fered here, what cov - e - nant from heav - en?
- 3 What wine of love is of - fered here, what crim-son drink from heav - en?



What food of ev - er - last - ing life, what gra - cious gift is giv - en?  
What hope of ev - er - last - ing life, what won - drous word is giv - en?  
What stream of ev - er - last - ing life, what pre - cious blood is giv - en?



This, this is Christ the king, the bread come down from heav - en.  
This, this is Christ the king, the sun come down from heav - en.  
This, this is Christ the king, the sweet - est wine of heav - en.



Oh, taste and see and sing! How sweet the man - na giv - en!  
Oh, see and hear and sing! The Word of God is giv - en!  
Oh, taste and see and sing! The Son of God is giv - en!

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. Almighty God, in the Eucharist you cleanse us from our sins and prepare us for the coming of your Son. Make us ready always to welcome Him into our hearts as we receive your Holy Sacrament; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, Son and † Holy Spirit bless you now and forever. **Amen.**  
*The congregation remains standing until the ministers and servers have left the chancel.*

## POSTLUDE

*O Word, that Goest Forth on High*

Robert J. Powell

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*Please be respectful of distancing and personal space as you leave.  
Please take your service bulletin with you and dispose of it properly.*

### *In our prayers we remember...*

*Dr. Julia (Cromer) Stanford, James Young, Peggy Novotny, Steph Reid, Betty Hoffmaster, Rick Lloyd, Deirdre McManama, Drew Herdson, Kristine Gross, Porter Stacey, Morgan Lanzalotti, Courtney Snell, the family and loved ones of Betty Hoffmaster.*

## NEWS AND UPDATES

**Adult Education** December 12 & 19, 9:15-10:15 AM . *The Intersections of Faith and Science* led by Tristan Ericson. We will explore the relationship between Christian faith and science: their intended purposes, the questions they seek to answer, where they agree, disagree, or avoid each other altogether. Meet in the Youth Room upstairs. Elevator is available if needed.

**Advent Outreach for Jackson Elementary School**—Look for the Advent Tree in the Good Shepherd Room. There you'll find a giving opportunity as you choose an ornament decorated by our St. Paul's children. Select to give mittens, gloves, socks, tights, or leggings for any age, grades K – 8. Please return your gift **unwrapped** to the collection box. Your gift will be much appreciated.

**2022 Offering Envelopes** - Envelope packets for 2022 are available in the Good Shepherd Room (Springettsbury Ave. Entrance). Please help us get all of the envelopes out of the church building and into the homes of our members by simply taking envelopes to neighbors and family members who may not be able to attend church services in person.

**2022 American Heritage Calendars** - Are available today. Requested donation of \$20 is desired. All proceeds benefit the Food Pantry and Preschool renovations.

**Altar Flower Sign-up for 2022**— There are many open dates. Select your by signing up on list posted in the Springettsbury Lobby Entrance. Don't forget to fill out the sentiment form and slip it under the secretary's window.

**Christ in Our Home** devotional booklets for Nov/Dec are available in the narthex and in the Good Shepherd Room.

## Food Pantry—December

**Items needed:** Pancake mix, 4 pks of toilet paper, canned or boxed potatoes, stuffing mix, jelly, boxed rice, 4 roll packs of toilet paper. We also need paper grocery bags with handles. Anyone able to help can contact Teresa Rohrbaugh, Patty Snyder, or Janet and Larry Moore. Plastic Bags are always needed. Money donations are gratefully accepted. Please place cash or check in a “special” envelope marked “Pantry”.

### Serving the Lord with Gladness

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Cantor	Acolytes	AV Team	Ushers	Early: Altar Set-up Late: Altar Clean-up
12/12	Early	Harold Sargeant	Densie Rider	Dale Smith					Kathleen Lemke Pat Scarborough
12/12	Late	Janet Fitch	Larry Becker	Jessica Ericson	Carolyn Kapoun		Palmers		Pat Rudacille Gerry Briggs

**Volunteers are needed** for all positions during our Sunday services, especially for the early service. Please contact the office if you are able to serve.

### This Week at St. Paul's December 12—19

Church office open Tues—Thurs, 7:30 AM—4:00 PM; Fri 7:30-11:30 AM

#### Sunday, December 12 Advent 3

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist  
 9:15 AM Sunday School  
 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist  
 6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm  
 6:30 PM Youth Night Confirmation Students

#### Monday, December 13

7:00 PM Council Mtg—Good Shepherd Rm

#### Tuesday, December 14

9:30 AM Pantry  
 6:00 PM Children's Christmas Rehearsal

#### Wednesday December 15

7:30 PM GA meeting Community Rm

#### Thursday, December 16

6:30 PM Handbell Choir—Chancel  
 7:30 PM Adult Choir—Music Rm

#### Sunday, December 19 Advent 4

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist  
 9:15 AM Sunday School  
 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist—the Ringing in of Christmas  
 6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	prreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
Youth Director	Kelly Moore-Spencer	kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
Organist, Choir Director	Victor Fields	vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
Children's Music Director	Cody Messersmith	cmessersmith.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Bell Choirs Director	Leah McComas	lmccomas.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Secretary	Patee Pizzirusso	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Sexton	Ted Weikert	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Preschool Director	Deb Becker	director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com



# **Christmas Worship Schedule**

Please note the alternate service times throughout the Christmas/Epiphany Season

## **Sunday December 19 – The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

8:00 AM, The Holy Eucharist (liturgy spoken)

*Blessing of the Crèche*

10:30 AM, The Holy Eucharist (liturgy sung)

*The Ringing in of Christmas*

## **Friday, Christmas Eve, December 24 - The Nativity of Our Lord**

4:00 PM, The Holy Eucharist (liturgy sung)

*Youth Handbells, Organ, Children's Choir*

7:00 PM, The Holy Eucharist (liturgy sung)

*Handbells, Organ, Choir*

## **Saturday December 25 – Christmas Day**

10:30 AM, The Holy Eucharist

*German Chorals*

## **Sunday December 26 – The Feast of St. Stephen**

10:30 AM, The Holy Eucharist

*“Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit”*

## **Sunday January 2 – The Second Sunday of Christmas**

10:30 AM, The Holy Eucharist

*Lessons, Readings & Carols*

## **Thursday January 6 – The Epiphany of Our Lord**

7:00 PM, Vespers

*Piano, Flute, Handbells*

## **Sunday January 9 – The Baptism of Our Lord**

8:00 AM, The Holy Eucharist (spoken liturgy)

*With Thanksgiving for Holy Baptism*

10:30 AM, The Holy Eucharist (sung liturgy)

Advent 3 C, 2021      Zephaniah 3:14-20,    Philippians 4:4-7,      Luke 3:7-18

“Lower than a snake belly lizard lipped two timing gossip breading sack of crumbled cookies!” Welcome to the preaching of John the Baptist.

On this third week of Advent we are introduced to one of the finest preachers of Bible times. “You brood of vipers” is really a much more polite translation than what may have been stated in his native language. A clearer more direct string of adjectives might better shed light on his passionate proclamation for listeners to “repent.” I can imagine a compilation of expletives rolling of the lips from a preacher like that of Nadia Boltz-Webber. I haven’t been able to bring myself to use “R” rated language from the pulpit. So, you are stuck this morning with; “Lower than a snake belly lizard lipped two timing gossip breading sack of crumbled cookies!”

John is a seasoned preacher. He knows his material and his audience. He is knowledgeable with the words from the prophets Isaiah and Malachi. He shouts out for repentance and reminds his listeners of who they are; children of Abraham. He is part of a long line of preachers. He is the forerunner of preachers who like many of those in the previous century that we referred to as pulpit giants. Great orators who frequented podiums and pulpits gaining celebrity like status:

James Stewart (not the American actor) the Scottish preacher and New Testament professor at the University of Edinburgh,

Billy Graham perhaps a more familiar name,

Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights leader and Nobel Prize recipient,

George Buttrick, 30 years preaching at the NY Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church,

and Harry Emerson Fosdick of famed River Side Church.

I have been blessed through the years to hear some preachers of such acclaimed status at the Chautauqua Institute amphitheater;

Barbara Lundblad, preaching professor at Union Theological, and frequent guest on the radio show the Protestant Hour;

Raphael Warnock, now Senator Warnock, but former preacher who stood and preached from the pulpit of Martin Luther King Jr;

Barbara Brown-Taylor, *New York Times* best-selling author, preacher, educator;

Craig Barnes, President at Princeton Theological, and former Old Testament professor Pittsburgh Theological; these are just a few of my contemporaries who preach, in the long line like that of John. They all have their unique styles, vocabularies, perspectives, life experiences and theological traditions. But they all preach the expectancy of another way of life and living revealed through God’s love in Christ Jesus.

The faculty of Gettysburg Seminary shaped me as a preacher. I was formed by then President Herman Stuempfle who taught a form of preaching that was poetic and elegant; a balance of law and gospel revealing God's infinite power and love. We glimpse his creative prose in some of our modern hymn texts.

Tom Ridenhour who was all about the earthiness of life, when we students were piling it on a little bit thick, if you get my gist, he would leap up on top of a desk holding up his arm high over his head shouting "Save the watch!" Or "golly I wish I would have worn waders!"

Richard Thulin was a brilliant story teller; he had the ability to weave a sermon together in such a way that you could almost feel the threads and see the beauty of the whole as he communicated the love of Christ and his desire for your life.

Bob Kysier intently listened to us as we honed our craft presenting sermons and would ask at the conclusion "where was Jesus?" Doctors; Stuempfle, Ridenhour, Thulin and Kysier all stressed the importance of the content, like John, of the one who is to come, and the one who comes, and the one who is present with us now.

John preaches of a new age. He advances the image of refiner's fire of Malachi and of purifying water and fire of Isaiah. He uses metaphors familiar to those who were standing on the banks of the Jordan River listening; "threshing floor" and "winnowing fork." That language doesn't necessarily translate well for us, but it is all about bearing fruit, in this case the grain so that there is life. John boldly proclaims what he can do and what he can't. He baptizes with water, but the Mightier One will baptize with the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament it is the Spirit that is life-giving. John is pointing to the Spirit Bearer. He is pointing to Jesus. He identifies Jesus by and through life giving ministry.

On this day when we are presented with the powerful preaching of John, when we recognize powerful preachers; eloquent, earthy, captivating and content concerned, I think of Peter and his sermon in the book of Acts. There he proclaims Christ Jesus crucified and risen in such a way that the people are cut to the heart and begin to question among themselves "what should we do?" They are so moved by the spirit of the Living Lord that they want to figure out, discern, come up with ways to focus life in Christ Jesus. They want to tell the story of Jesus and the power of his Spirit. They want the repentant purified life that John preached that day by the Jordan River. They want the risen Christ to be the center of their life and of their living. Maybe you want that too.

Expletives may very well get your attention, "Lower than a snake belly lizard lipped two timing gossip breading sack of crumbled cookies!" John's preaching wasn't just about getting your attention; it was about a different way to live. It was about experiencing life refined by the Spirit of God. That has been the work of preachers throughout the ages, to move from the self-centered culture of which we are apart, to the repentant, refined, refocused community of Christ Jesus. We are invited into that community through baptism.

**FIRST READING: Zephaniah 3:14-20**

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;  
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter Jerusalem!

<sup>15</sup>The LORD has taken away the judgments  
against you,

he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;  
you shall fear disaster no more.

<sup>16</sup>On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
Do not fear, O Zion;

do not let your hands grow weak.

<sup>17</sup>The LORD, your God, is in your midst,  
a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness,  
he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing  
<sup>18</sup>as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,  
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

<sup>19</sup>I will deal with all your oppressors  
at that time.

And I will save the lame  
and gather the outcast,  
and I will change their shame into praise  
and renown in all the earth.

<sup>20</sup>At that time I will bring you home,  
at the time when I gather you;

for I will make you renowned and praised  
among all the peoples of the earth,  
when I restore your fortunes  
before your eyes, says the LORD.

**Psalmody: Isaiah 12:2-6****SECOND READING: Philippians 4:4-7**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say,  
Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to  
everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry  
about anything, but in everything by prayer and

supplication with thanksgiving let your requests  
be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God,  
which surpasses all understanding, will guard  
your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18**

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>9</sup>Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

<sup>10</sup>And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" <sup>11</sup>In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." <sup>12</sup>Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" <sup>13</sup>He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." <sup>14</sup>Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

<sup>15</sup>As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup>John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

<sup>18</sup>So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

**Next Sunday's Readings:** Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 [46-55].

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