



Blessed are you  
among women

LUKE 1:42

# St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

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

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

YouTube: St. Paul's Lutheran Church - South George St. York

**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 Loving Memory of Mr. & Mrs. Melvin E. Lanning by daughter, Mrs. Richard Ault & Family and in honor of Tina's Llorente's birthday by her 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.

**Fourth Sunday in Advent**  
December 19, 2021 10:30 AM  
*The people's responses are in bold.*

**PRELUDE**

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

Leonard Danek

*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.

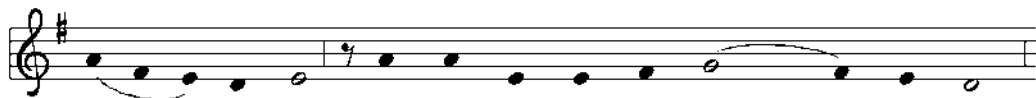
**Amen.**

## ENTRANCE HYMN

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (ELW 257) stanzas 1-4*



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive  
2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things  
3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on  
4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
far and nigh: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;  
Si - nai's height in an - cient times you gave the law  
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
teach us your will and guide our way. Re-joice! Re-joice!  
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.  
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

## 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.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. . . . Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the hindrance of our sins and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen**

*Sit*

## CHILDREN'S CHOIR

*Away in a Manger*

## FIRST READING

*Micah 5:2-5a (back page)*

*At the conclusion of the reading.*

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

**PSALMODY** *Magnificat* Solo, Carolyn Kapoun arr. Aron David Miller

**SECOND READING** Hebrews 10:5-10 (back page)

*At the conclusion of the reading.*

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

*Stand*

**HYMN**

*The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came (ELW 265)*



1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,  
2 "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,  
3 Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly howed her head;  
4 Of her, Em-man - u - el, the Christ, was born



with wings as drift - ed snow, with eyes as flame:  
all gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or thee;  
"To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said.  
in Beth - le - hem all on a Christ - mas morn,



"All hail to thee, O low - ly maid - en Mar - y,  
thy son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,  
"My soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy God's ho - ly name."  
and Chris-tian folk through-out the world will ev - er say:



most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."  
most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!  
Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy,  
"Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."

**HOLY GOSPEL** Luke 1: 39-45 (back page)

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, use our gifts and ministry for your service. Bring your word of grace to all. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Renew barren lands, polluted waters, and melting ice caps. Make us servants of your creation.. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Strengthen those who seek justice. Bless the work of all who call our attention to imbalances of power. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Show your lovingkindness to teen parents and those who are pregnant. Comfort those struggling with infertility. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Bless the feeding ministries of this congregation and community. Guide us to share your bounty with those who hunger. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We pray for those who have asked for prayers: *Dr. Julia (Cromer) Stanford, James Young, Peggy Novotny, Rick Lloyd, Deirdre McManama, Drew Herdson, Kristine Gross, Porter Stacey, Courtney Snell, the family and loved ones of Betty Hoffmaster*, Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We give you thanks for those who, like Mary, were courageous in their witness (*especially*). Give us such courage until that day when you fulfill all things. 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 your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*Sit*

**ANTHEM**

*Jesus Christ the Apple Tree*

Alan Bullard

*Stand*

**OFFERTORY HYMN**

*All Earth is Hopeful (ELW 266) stanza 4*

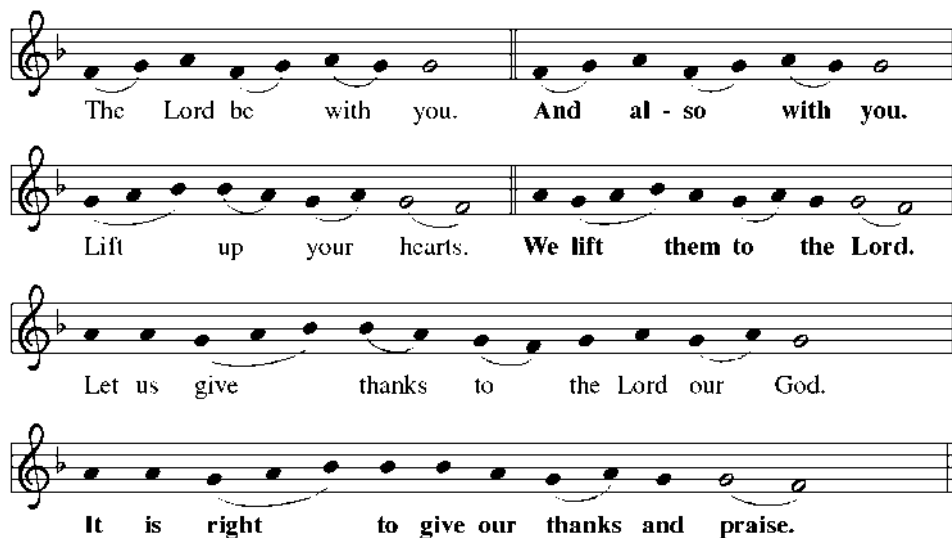
3 Moun-tains and val-leys will have to be pre-pared;  
4 We first saw Je-sus a ba-by in a crib.  
new high-ways o-pened, new pro-to-cols de-clared. Al-most  
This same Lord Je-sus to-day has come to live in our  
here! God is near-ing, in beau-ty and grace! All  
world; he is pres-ent, in neigh-bors 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 al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

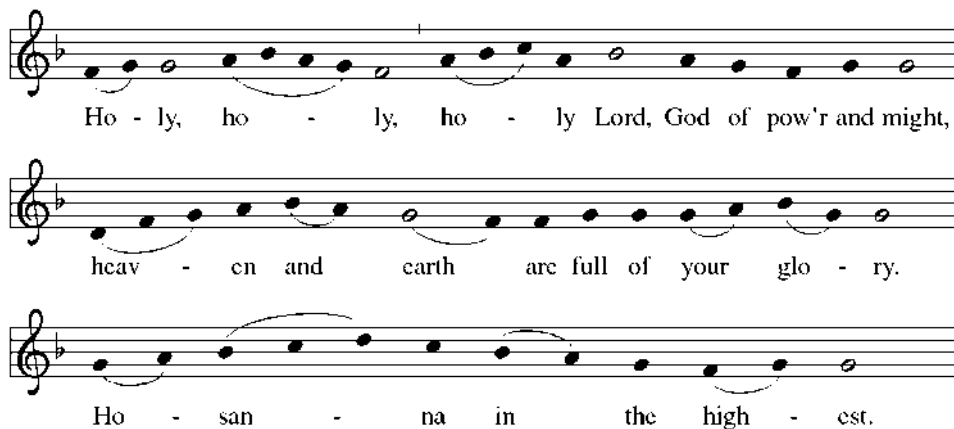
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

## 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



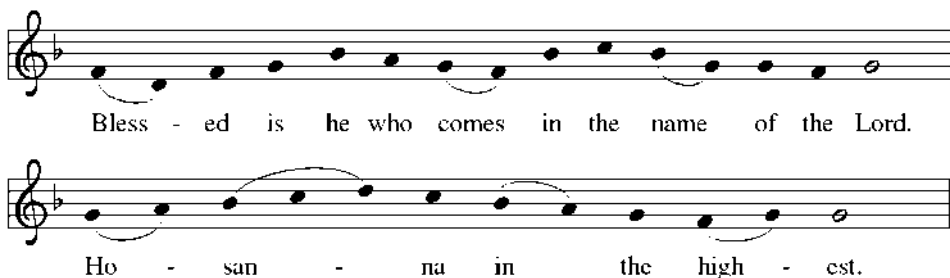
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,

heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.

Ho - san - na in the high - est.

*Continued on next page...*





## 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.*

***Stand***

### 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 RINGING IN OF CHRISTMAS

### HYMN

*Joy to the World (ELW 267) (next page)*

*The congregation remains standing until the minsters and servers have left the chancel.*

### POSTLUDE

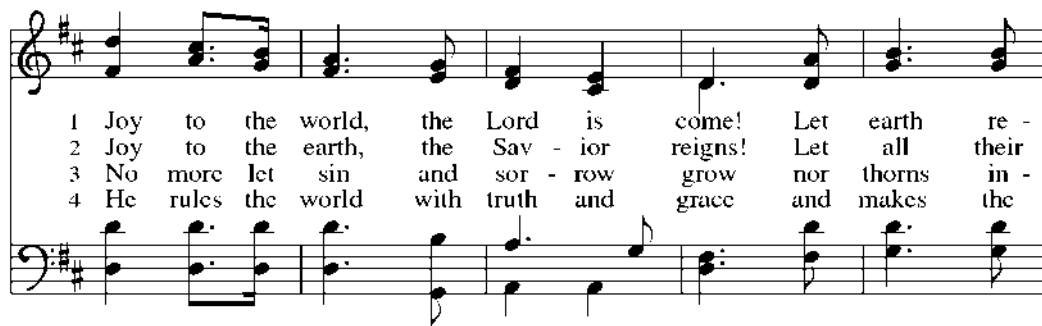
*Joy to the World*

Emma Lou Diemer

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*Please be respectful of distancing and personal space as you leave.  
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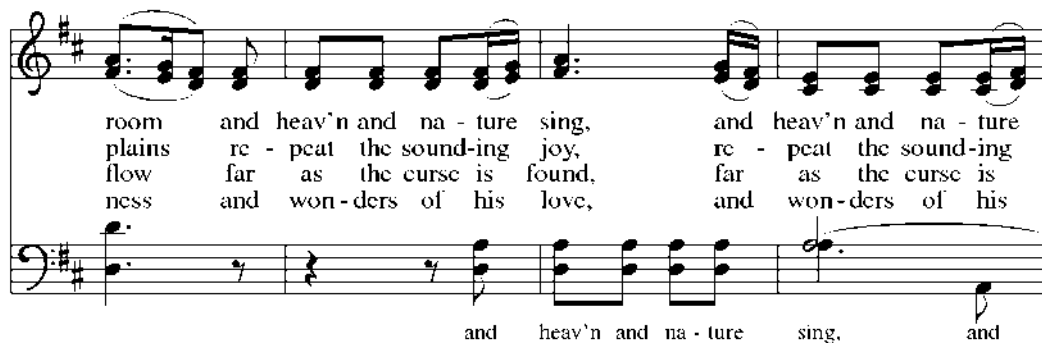
# Joy to the World



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -  
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their  
 3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -  
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the



ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him  
 songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and  
 fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings  
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -



room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture  
 plains re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat the sound-ing  
 flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is  
 ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

and heav'n and na - ture sing, and



sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.  
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.  
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.  
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heav'n and na - ture sing,

## NEWS AND UPDATES

**Adult Education** December 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.

**2022 Offering Envelopes** - A few envelope packets for 2022 remain 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. Please take them and receive donations for the Food Pantry.

### **Installation of Council Members—Sunday, January 2, 10:30 AM**

**Sunday, January 9—The Baptism of Our Lord**—At the 10:30 AM liturgy we will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Baptism for some and receive others into St. Paul's Lutheran Church membership. If you or someone you know would like to receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism please contact the church office or Pastor Reep as soon as possible.

**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.

## **This Week at St. Paul's December 19—26** Church office open Mon—Wed, 7:30 AM—4:00 PM

### **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

### **Monday, December 20**

7:00 PM Finance Mtg—ZOOM

### **Tuesday, December 21**

9:30 AM Pantry  
6:00 PM Church Decoratng

### **Wednesday December 22**

7:30 PM GA meeting Community Rm

### **Thursday, December 23**

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

### **Friday, December 24 Christmas Eve**

4 & 7PM Christmas Eve Services

### **Saturday, December 25 Christmas Day**

10:30 AM Christmas Day Service

### **Sunday, December 26 Feast of St. Stephen**

10:30 AM Holy Eucharist  
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

## ***Serving the Lord with Gladness***

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Cantor	Acolytes	AV Team	Ushers	Early: Altar Set-up Late: Altar Clean-up
12/19 Advent 4	Early	Harold Sargeant	Densie Rider	Dale Smith					Kathleen Lemke Pat Scarborough
12/19 Advent 4	Late	Janet Fitch	Larry Becker	Jessica Ericson	Carolyn Kapoun				Pat Rudacille Gerry Briggs
12/24 Christmas Eve	4PM	Tristan Ericson	Larry Becker	Allison Lehr	Emily Reep	Isabella Lehr Addison Harrington	Andrew		Pat Scarborough
12/24 Christmas Eve	7PM	Tom Gibson	Riley Jones	Nancy Bennett	Carolyn Kapoun	Anna Herdson Jacklyn Kinkella	Andrew		Pat Rudacille Gerry Briggs
12/25 Christmas	10:30 AM	Harold Sargeant	Allen Reep	Bill Snyder					Kathleen Lemke
12/26	10:30 AM	Kirsten Barnes	Tonya Cave	Scott Herdson		Anna Herdson Paula Herdson			Kathleen Lemke Pat Scarborough

**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.

### **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”.

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	orreep.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

## **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)

Being totally caught off guard can be a bit unnerving. Angels generally don't just appear out of nowhere, at least not to me. They appear out of nowhere in the Bible: to Zachariah while tending the incense in the temple, to Mary going about her chores in Nazareth, to Shepherds tending sheep on the Bethlehem hillside, to the Magi after offering their gifts to the Christ Child, but honestly those encounters all happened centuries ago. Each of those situations was punctuated with surprise. Each one was caught off guard and wasn't certain what all of this might mean.

I do recall one occasion when I was startled by an angel. It was an experience which I remember quite vividly. So taken by the splendor, the brilliance, the color, the glistening wings, the close proximity to which I was encountered, that I didn't have the sense to even snap a picture; didn't think to take a selfie. We were all together, the entire family; Emily, Amelia, Allen and I, when the angel appeared.

We were on sabbatical. It was the summer of 2013. We were in Italy. We had just finished touring the Academe Museum in Florence. We had a 9:00 a.m. timed entrance for our tickets. The Academe is home to Michael Angelo's huge marble sculpture of David. There in the rotunda especially created for him he stands larger than life poised ready to engage in battle with the enormous Philistine warrior, Goliath. This was the first time that an artist depicted David before the encounter with the towering opposing giant. This was also the first time to see David a winner before the battle, with the sling shot hanging over his shoulder and the smooth rock, which would penetrate the forehead of the antagonist, still in the palm of his hand.

We had spent a rather lengthy time not only admiring Michael Angelo's work, but the work of lesser known artists. Allen at age 5 especially liked all of the altar piece paintings depicting our Lord on Calvary's Cross. He picked out the swords, the blood dripping down from the wounds, and the skull often depicted at the foot of the cross in most every painting. So there we were, late morning on a gorgeous June day in Florence Italy, and after visually feasting on such incredible artwork, our stomachs indicated the need for feasting on some incredible Italian Focaccia bread.

Emily had researched a little place just around the corner off of Piazza San Marco. There we ate our fill. With our hunger pangs eliminated by the delicious flat bread sandwiches we ventured into a little lesser known convent. It is now called the Museum of San Marco. For the equivalent of about \$11 dollars the four of us were granted entrance. There were no crowds. The place was nearly vacant. The frescos in the court yard were beautiful and told the story of the life of Christ. The Refectory had a corky fresco of the Last Supper; definitely not painted by Leonardo Da Vinci. As we made our way up the broad stair case to the portion of the former convent occupied by the sisters that is when we encountered the angel.

As we turned at the landing to complete the last half dozen stairs, there the angel Gabriel stood. Well not so much standing but bending forward, as if to kneel, but not yet on one knee. The robes were a dazzling rose color, trimmed with golden lace. And the wings were more colorful than a peacock. And they glistened in the light, as if preschoolers had decided to use multicolored glitter all over them. The angel was speechless. And so was I; caught off guard, taken back by such beauty, by such an unexpected encounter.

My family and I were not the first ones to have our jaws drop open out of reverence, amazement, awe, wonder. This angel had encountered others, many, many others. This angel Gabriel has occupied the wall at the top of the staircase since 1436 when Fra Angelico painted him there; placed into the plaster in perpetuity announcing to Mary that she will bear a son and will name him Jesus. That she of all women has found favor with God. And that she, Mary, will bear the long awaited Messiah, the one who will save humanity from sin.

So the four of us, Emily, Amelia, Allen and I stood there mesmerized by the dazzling glory. There were no velvet covered ropes keeping us back, holding us at a distance. We were able to place our noses next to the fresco, next to the image of Gabriel heralding salvations tidings. I had studied this particular piece of art work during my undergraduate days of art school. Then I viewed the angelic messenger through a vintage slide projected onto a screen during an art history class. I had visited Florence Italy many times before. I had even visited the old convent made museum once before but the second floor was then off limits to guests. It was time. It was the right time. It was the time when for some peculiar reason the angel appeared to me and my family. And we didn't think to take a picture, to document the moment, to hold it in time.

The angel Gabriel appeared out of nowhere to Mary. The startling news didn't seem to faze her. She was composed enough to ask a question or two and then after he departed from her she set off to visit a family member, Elizabeth. She needed to tell someone about the encounter. Who would believe her story? Who would grasp that the time had come? Who would bask in the moment with her before her finding "favor" would lead to marriage, nine months of pregnancy, travel, giving birth, motherhood, escape, teaching, nurturing, loving, sorrow, grief and mourning. This favorable news from the unexpected encounter with the angel Gabriel caught her off guard, but in humility she responded to the magnitude of such news with confidence. When she enters the home of Zechariah and greets Elizabeth, Elizabeth knows that the time has come. There is no photo opportunity of this moment either, only the story told by those for whom salvation, forgiveness, and hope matter. Luke tells the story. We tell the story. But Mary, in that moment of unbelievable amazement sings. She sings of God's power, she sings of God's deeds, she sings of God's equity, she sings of God's hope for all who are yet to come, all for whom God's gift of life is miraculously given.

On this fourth Sunday in Advent we encounter the message of hope and salvation in the Word proclaimed and in the sacrament given in the body of Christ Jesus. We are not the first ones to have our jaws drop open out of reverence, amazement, awe, and wonder at the presence of God among us. His Word and sacramental gift encounters generation after generation since Easter's Angel announced an empty tomb. The Bread of Heaven placed into our hands; the Body of Christ given announcing in perpetuity God's grace, forgiveness and love for you and for me. This one, Jesus, is the long awaited one. He is the one who saves humanity from sin. He is the one announced through the angel Gabriel, and the one acknowledged by Elizabeth, and the one magnified in song by Mary.

Being caught off guard can be a bit unnerving. We encounter God this morning. Take in the season's splendor, brilliance, color, and the close proximity in which Jesus comes giving himself to you. Don't be taken back by such simple beauty. In these means of grace he comes to us at the right time; be it marriage, pregnancy, travel, giving birth, parenting, teaching, nurturing, loving, sorrow, grief, mourning -he comes. In humility we confidently receive his love. Amen.

**FIRST READING: Micah 5:2-5a**

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
 who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
 from you shall come forth for me  
 one who is to rule in Israel,  
 whose origin is from of old,  
 from ancient days.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
 when she who is in labor has brought forth;  
 then the rest of his kindred shall return  
 to the people of Israel.

<sup>4</sup>And he shall stand and feed his flock in the  
 strength of the LORD,  
 in the majesty of the name of the LORD  
 his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be  
 great

to the ends of the earth;

<sup>5a</sup>and he shall be the one of peace.

**Psalmody: Luke 1:46b-55**

or Psalm 80:1-7

**SECOND READING: Hebrews 10:5-10**

Consequently, when Christ came into the world,  
 he said,

"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,  
 but a body you have prepared for me;

<sup>6</sup>in burnt offerings and sin offerings  
 you have taken no pleasure.

<sup>7</sup>Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do  
 your will, O God'

(in the scroll of the book it is written of  
 me)."

<sup>8</sup>When he said above, "You have neither desired  
 nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings  
 and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are  
 offered according to the law), <sup>9</sup>then he added,  
 "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes  
 the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup>And  
 it is by God's will that we have been sanctified  
 through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ  
 once for all.

**GOSPEL: Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]**

In those days Mary set out and went with haste  
 to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup>where  
 she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted  
 Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greet-  
 ing, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth  
 was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup>and exclaimed  
 with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women,  
 and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup>And why  
 has this happened to me, that the mother of my  
 Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup>For as soon as I heard the  
 sound of your greeting, the child in my womb  
 leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed  
 that there would be a fulfillment of what was spo-  
 ken to her by the Lord."

[<sup>46</sup>And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favor on the lowliness  
 of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will  
 call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things  
 for me,

and holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup>His mercy is for those who fear him  
 from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm;  
 he has scattered the proud in the thoughts  
 of their hearts.

<sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from  
 their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

<sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things,  
 and sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,  
 in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup>according to the promise he made to our  
 ancestors,  
 to Abraham and to his descendants  
 forever.]"