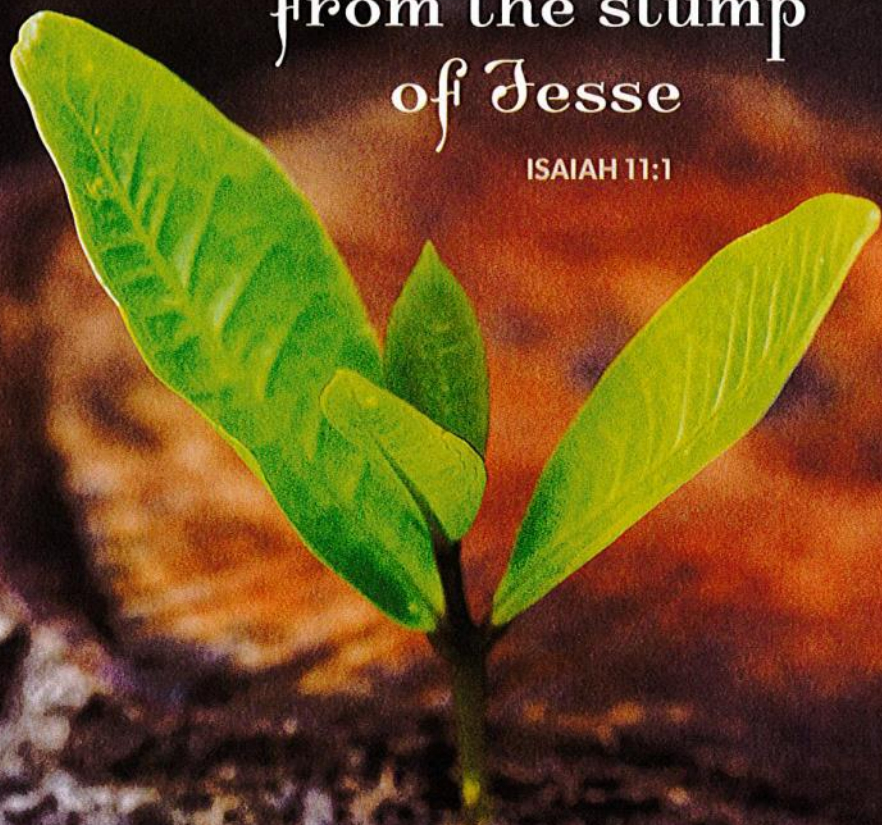


A shoot
shall come out
from the stump
of Jesse

ISAIAH 11:1



St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

www.stpaulsyork.org

Email: st.paulsyork@comcast.net

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 186 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition.

Postlude It is our tradition to remain seated for the postlude. If you need to leave we ask that you do so reverently. This tradition developed as a result of our livestream. We want anyone viewing to be able to listen to the postlude without unnecessary distraction. Thank you.

Restrooms are available off 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.

Offerings Monetary offerings may be placed in the basins provided at the entrances to the nave prior to the service. You may also donate via our website at www.stpaulsyork.org

The Nursery is accessed through the front right double doors. The 10:30AM liturgy is live-streamed into the Nursery. Currently, we are working to secure volunteer staff for the Nursery. Carrie Oberholtzer is coordinating a schedule. Please contact the office to volunteer.

Second Sunday of Advent December 4, 2022

Holy Communion 8:00 & 10:30 AM

Musical setting 1 from Evangelical Lutheran Worship

PRELUDE

On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry

Emma Lou Diemer

Stand turning towards the font.

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.**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God,

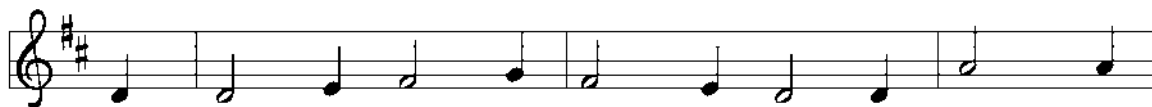
we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we

have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

ENTRANCE HYMN

On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry (ELW 249)



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an - nounc - es
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; make straight the
3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our ref - uge
4 Stretch forth your hand, our health re - store, and make us
5 All praise to you, e - ter - nal Son, whose ad - vent



that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,
way for God with - in, and let us all our
and our great re - ward; with - out your grace we
rise to fall no more; oh, let your face up -
has our free - dom won, whom with the Fa - ther



for he brings glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter there.
waste a - way like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.
on us shine and fill the world with love di - vine.
we a - dore, and Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er - more.

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.**

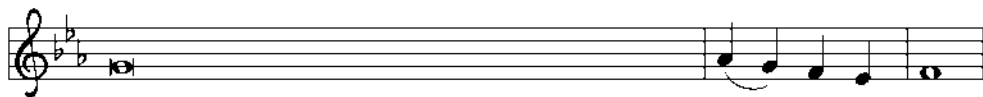
KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



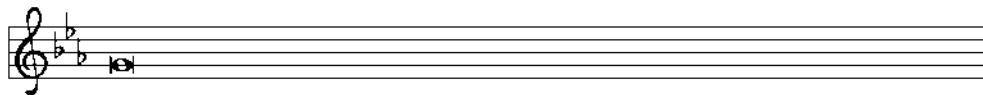
Lord, have mer - cy.



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



Lord, have mer - cy.



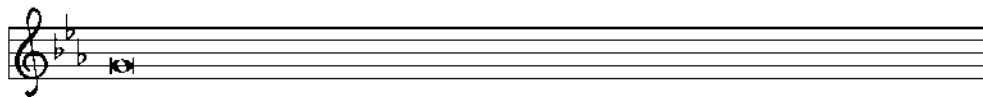
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



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 de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men, a - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. . . . Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By his coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Sit

CHILDREN'S SERMON

FIRST READING

Isaiah 11:1-10 (*back cover*)

10:30 AM

CHANCEL CHOIR

Zion Hears the Watchmen Singing J. S. Bach/John Shannon
Andrew Jones, Violin

SECOND READING

Romans 15: 4-13

⁴For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, ⁶so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ⁸For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

"Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name";

¹⁰and again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people";

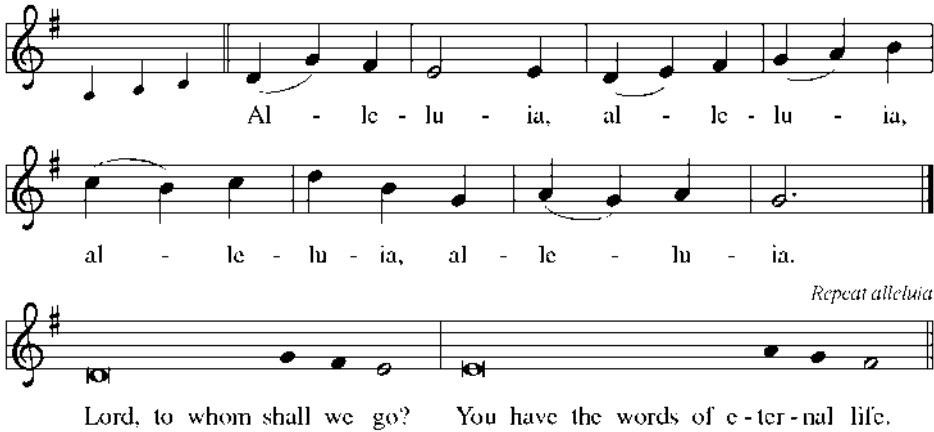
¹¹and again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him";

¹²and again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope."

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Stand

VERSE



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia

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

HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 3:1-12 (*back cover*)

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion of the Gospel.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON

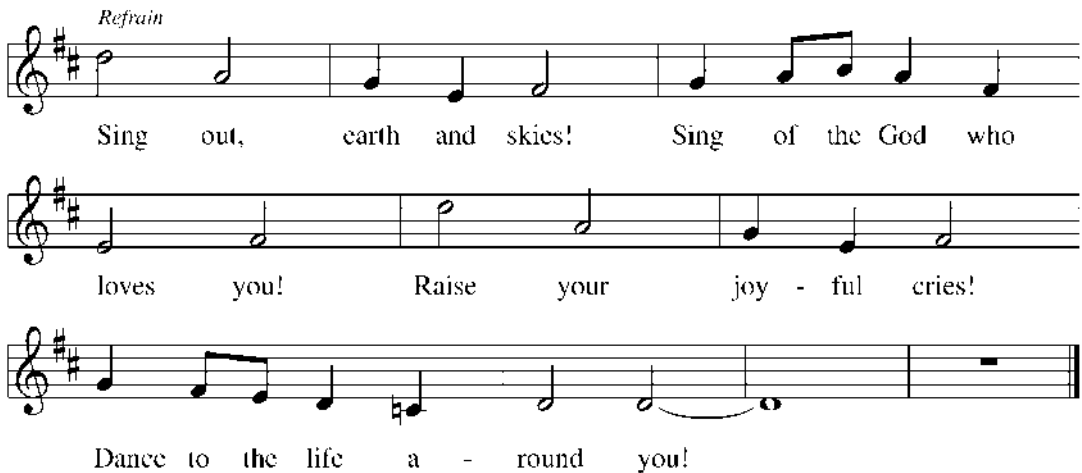
Pastor Stan Reep

10:30 AM

Sing Out, Earth and Skies

The Handbell choir rings the hymn. The Cantor sings the verses.

The Congregation sings the refrain.



Refrain

Sing out, earth and skies! Sing of the God who
loves you! Raise your joy - ful cries!
Dance to the life a - round you!

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.*

God, you renew the church in every age. We give thanks for hymn writers and theologians. Inspire teachers, writers, and musicians to bring delight and instruction for your people. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You give us a vision of creation in harmony, a time when hurting and destruction will be no more. Teach us to be stewards of the earth and companions to its creatures. Restore to balance and wholeness what human greed has harmed. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You defend the cause of all who are poor and oppressed. Raise up leaders who will govern with equity and serve the common good. Guide judges, lawmakers, and public officials to protect the rights of those who cannot advocate for themselves. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You deliver those in need from suffering and fear. Come to the aid of any who are exploited or abused, especially children, elders, and victims of human trafficking. Provide safety and help to our neighbors without shelter, refugees, and those fleeing violence. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You command your followers to welcome one another as you have welcomed us. Nurture ministries of hospitality and care in this and every congregation We pray for people who are homebound, hospitalized, or separated from loved ones (*especially June Heistand, Hugh Miller, Bill Diaczun, Kathy Ruth, Wayne Umland, Jim Yanick, Maria Laczkoskie, Mary Buler, Marcie Walker, Bonnie Schmidt, Jim Young, Gary Bilbie, Erin Bastian, Harry Harman, Katie Guyer, Amy Hollis, Heidi Glaudel, Kristine Gross, Rachel Barnes, Courtney Snell*). God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You embrace all who have died trusting in your promises. Sustain us in hope until we are united with them in the joy of your eternal presence. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

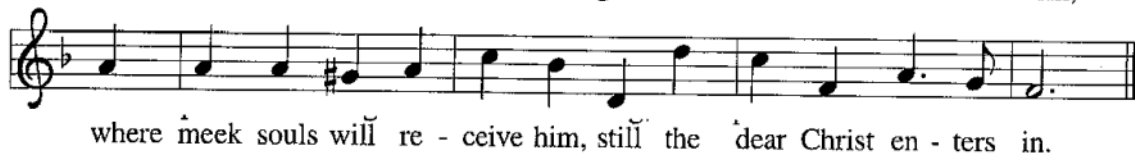
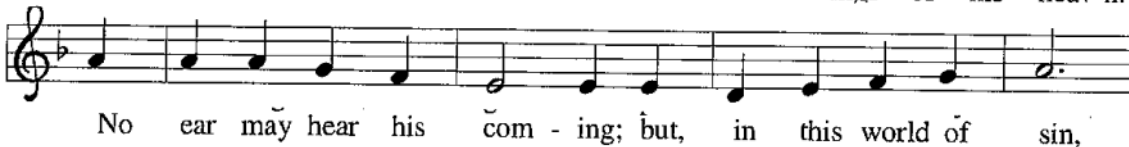
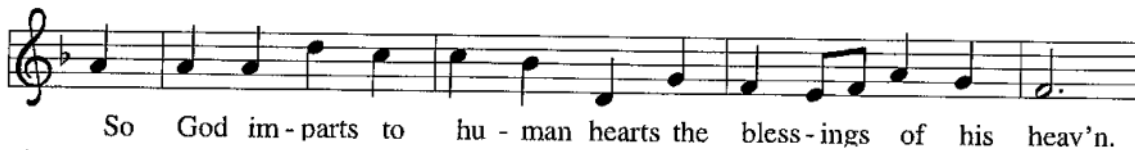
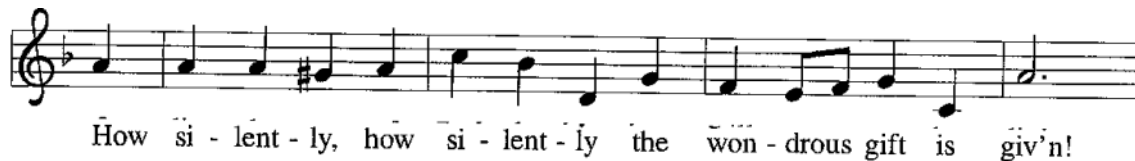
God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen**

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

The people share signs of peace.

OFFERTORY *O Little Town of Bethlehem stanza 3 (ELW 279)*

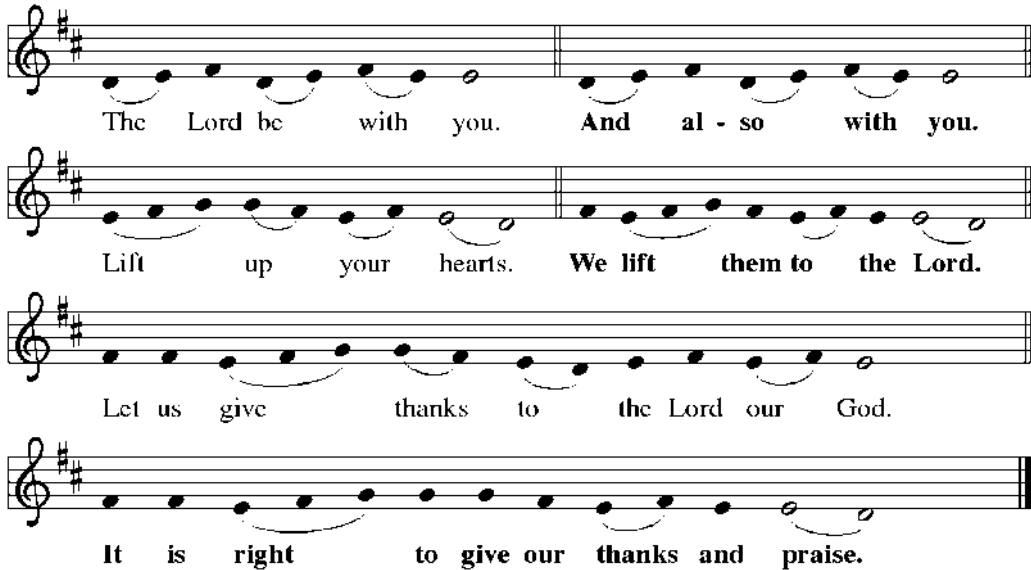


OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Blessed are you,

O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

DIALOGUE



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

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

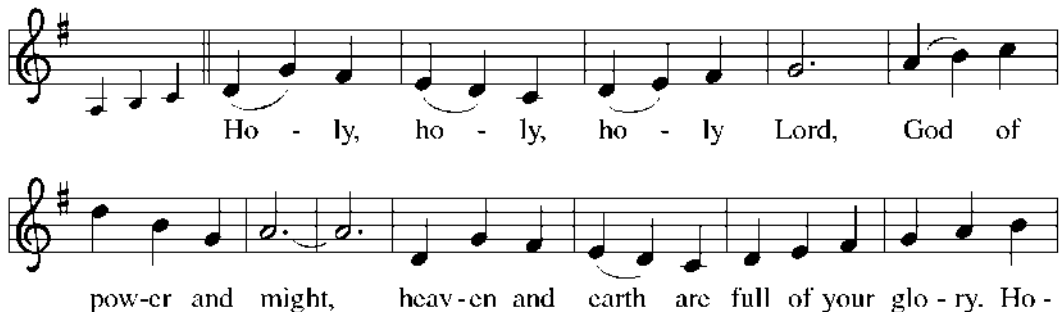
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. 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 to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, 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-er and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -

Continued on next page...



THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, 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, grant us peace.

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

COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL

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

1. Come to communion using the center aisle (about 10 adults per side).
2. Communion glasses are placed on credence tables at the front pews (left and right side).
3. Take a communion glass from the tray of glasses.
4. Take your place along the chancel step. The ministers will bring the bread and wine to you.
5. Extend your hands to receive the communion host.
6. Consume the communion host.
7. Hold the communion glass with both hands at chest height so that the communion assistant can easily pour the wine into the glass.
8. Consume the wine before you leave the chancel edge.
9. Place the used cup in an empty tray located on a credence table at the side aisle.
10. Return to your pew using the side aisle.



1 O day of peace that dim-ly shines through all our hopes and prayers and dreams,
2 Then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb, nor shall the fierce de-vour the small;



guide us to jus-tice, truth, and love, de-liv-ered from our self-ish schemes.
as beasts and cat-tle calm-ly graze, a lit-tle child shall lead them all.



May swords of hate fall from our hands, our hearts from en-vy find re-lease,
Then en-c-mies shall learn to love, all crea-tures find their true ac-cord;



till by God's grace our war-ring world shall see Christ's prom-ised reign of peace.
the hope of peace shall be ful-filled, for all the earth shall know the Lord.

Stand

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen**

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, Holy Spirit, Bless you now and forever. **Amen**

HYMN *Before the Ancient One, Christ Stands (ACS 953) next page*

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE *Lo! He Comes with Clouds Ascending* Lloyd Webber

Before the Ancient One, Christ Stands



1 Be - fore the An - cient One, Christ stands, en - robed in cloud and
 2 Who was, who is, and is to come as ser - vant lived in
 3 Now in the lat - ter days you call, O Christ, and plead the



bright as snow, five wounds im - print his side, feet, hands, and
 hu - man sphere; com - pas - sion was his di - a - dem; his
 prem - ise clear, that pow - er grasped is none at all, and



thorns, the gar - land on his brow. Yet thrones and
 glo - ry was the gen - tle tear; hu - mil - i -
 serv - ing shows your Spir - it near. As na - tions



pow'rs fall to the knee and weave a song of maj - es - ty,
 ty, his pur - ple garb; the heal - ing hand, his roy - al orb.
 clash and wis - dom wanes, as glo - ries tempt and greed sus - tains,



for what the world ad - mires as gain is not the es - sence
 Such love drew ire and ire drew death, but God has proved the
 you bid us choose in ev - 'ry hour the pow'r of love, the



of Christ's reign, and strength is his, and name and
 tru - er strength, and through all space the host pro -
 great - est pow'r, that love may her - ald God's do -



might, be - cause he pit - ied hu - mans' plight.
 claims the name a - bove all oth - er names.
 main, and you, at last, may come to reign.

This Week at St. Paul's

Church office open 7:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m. Mon—Thurs

Sunday, December 4 Advent 2

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
 9:15 AM Sunday School for all ages
 & Usher Training
 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist
 3:00 PM York College Choir Holiday Concert
 6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

Tuesday, December 6

9:30 AM Pantry
 6:00 PM Nativity play practice
 Children age 3 through grade 6

Wednesday, December 7

10—10:30 AM Pastor & Preschool - Nave
 10:30 AM Scripture Study—Christ Hall
 7:00 PM Vespers—Love

Thursday, December 8

10—10:30 AM Pastor & Preschool - Nave
 6:30 PM Handbells—Christ Hall
 7:30 PM Chancel Choir—Music Rm

Saturday, December 10

9-12 noon Preschool Christmas Gathering—
 Fellowship Hall
 1:00 PM Orven Cook Funeral—Nave

Sunday, December 11 Advent 3

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
 9:15 AM Sunday School for all ages
 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist

*The altar flowers are presented to the Glory
 of God in memory of Anna Glessner.*

Serving the Lord with Gladness



Flowers This Week

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Set-up & Altar Clean-up	
12/4 Advent 2	8:00 AM	Tony Culp	Kirsten Barnes	Dale Smith		Ron & Norma Riese	Alex Bastian, Michael Poster	Kathleen Lemke, Pat Scarborough	
12/4 Advent 2	10:30 AM	George Fitch	Larry Moore	Allen Reep	Janet Moore	Barb Young, Sharon Diaczun	Kem Vaught, Larry Becker, Dan Garber,	Pat Rudicille, Jerry Briggs	

Food Pantry—Winter Items needed: Rice, beans, Tomato sauce, pasta, mashed potato mix, gravy and stuffing mix for the holidays. We also need paper grocery bags with handles and plastic bags. Anyone able to help can contact Teresa Rohrbaugh, Patty Snyder, or Janet and Larry Moore. Money donations are gratefully accepted. Please place cash or check in a “special” envelope marked “Pantry”.

Guidelines for Worship during the time of COVID-19

Wearing a mask while in worship is optional, recommended or required based on the CDC guidelines. Green/Optional, Yellow/Recommended, Red/Required. The instruction will be posted on the entry doors. Please be sure to bring a mask in the event of required/recommended masking. Disposable masks are available at the entrance to the church nave.

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.

News and Updates December 4, 2022

Concert Today! The York College Chorale and Chamber Singers under the direction of Dr. Grace Muzzo will present a Holiday Voices with Friends Concert in the church sanctuary at 3:00pm. The concert will feature a variety of holiday music accompanied by Victor Fields and a string ensemble.

Wanted...Quarters! The “quarter tube” in Good Shepherd Hall awaits your quarters for the God’s Global Barnyard mission project. Our 3rd - 6th grades Sunday school class will select farm animals to purchase for family farmers around the world. Please support this worthy cause with your quarters or your Advent offering envelope as all Advent Midweek offerings will support this effort.

Advent Vespers—Every Wednesday we will gather at 7:00 PM for the beautiful service of Evening Prayer. We are host for collaborative services with Grace York, St. Peter’s N. York, and Christ Manchester.

2023 Church Offering Envelopes are ready for you to pick up in the Good Shepherd Room.

2023 Calendars are available for a requested donation of \$20.00. They make wonderful Christmas gifts! All proceeds go towards the construction of a canopy for the Food Pantry.

Children’s Nativity Play, 10:30 AM Sunday, December 18 During the service the children of the parish will present a Nativity Play. Please support the children of the parish through you participation on December 18th. We are blessed with an incredibly talented group of children and a gifted director for our children’s choirs.

The Ringing in of Christmas, 10:30 AM Sunday, December 18 Bells have been rung throughout the centuries to mark both solemn and joyful occasions. At the conclusion of the liturgy on Sunday December 18th the members of the Handbell and Children’s Choirs will join forces to ring in the joyful season of Christmas at St. Paul’s. We will add our voices joyfully singing together with our thoughts focused on the birth of our Savior.

Christmas Decorating Tuesday, December 20 at 6:00 PM The Worship and Arts Committee invites anyone able and willing to help with the church decorating this year on Tuesday December 20th at 6:00 PM. We will work with fresh evergreens and fruit so that our decorations are at their peak for our Christmas services at the end of the week. If you are able to help decorate please notify the church office. Thank you.

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
Bell Choirs Director	Leah McComas	lmccomas.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Children’s Choir Director	Julianna Jones	Jjones.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Secretary	Patee Pizzirusso	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Sexton	Ted Weikert	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Preschool Director	Deb Becker	director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com

In those days Esther ironed and the kids played Monopoly. The fire was going in the basement fireplace. Esther positioned the ironing board in such a way with the warmth at her back and a good view of the mammoth console television set airing her favorite day time drama, *Days of Our Lives*. Esther was a good neighbor. During winter school holidays neighborhood children would hang out with her kids in the warmth of their large basement rec room. They played endless games of Monopoly while Esther ironed shirts and table clothes and napkins and watched *Days of Our Lives*. As the kids played the board game they couldn't help but over hear the dialogue radiating from the TV set. Conflict and angst were experienced by most every character. The rich didn't associate with the poor, or when they did it was fraught with tragedy. Love was always complicated. Jealousy was prevalent. Medical conditions were always life threatening if not terminal. Incarcerations allowed characters to be locked away for years without parole. The children weighed in reminding Esther that playing Monopoly was the better option, because there was "Free Parking" and it was possible to "get out of jail free." Those were the days of Esther ironing and neighborhood children playing board games; those were the days of our lives. This morning we hear about other days, days when John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea. John's message could be perceived as scorching hot, like an iron, depending upon who heard it. He proclaimed a message. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

In those days, the days leading up to John's appearance, wise men from the east brought gifts to the new born King; gold, frank incense, myrrh. In those days the wise men left for their home country by another road so as to avoid Jerusalem and King Herod. In those days, King Herod's insecurity and jealousy would stop at nothing in order to secure his future. The sheer thought of someone else rivaling his authority, word of a new born king, threatened him beyond reason. In those days an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him to take the child Jesus and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and stay there until he heard otherwise; because Herod was about to search for the child, to destroy him. In those days the infuriated King Herod sent out a decree and an entourage of soldiers to accomplish it, killing all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years of age or younger. In those days after King Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt and told him to take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who were seeking the child's life were dead. In those days Joseph remained fearful of Herod's son who was ruling over Judea. So he went north, further north, to the district of Galilee to a town called Nazareth. It was in Nazareth where Joseph would establish a home for his beloved Mary and their son Jesus.

Now it was in those days that John, son of Zachariah and Elizabeth, appeared in the wilderness of Judea, preaching repentance and reiterating the words of the prophet Isaiah. "*The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*" These were not good days. These were days of an insecure tyrannical ruler. These were days of educated folks fearing the political establishment. These were days of uncertainty when the ruler of the nation thought so little of human life that extermination of infants and children seemed quite all right if it secured his future. No, these were not good days. These were days when the Word of the Lord needed to be proclaimed in order for people to live in hope. These were days when the Word of the Lord needed to be proclaimed in order to live another day; for without the Word of the Lord, they had nothing but more of, "those days."

Now in the days of John, people went out to hear him, to see him, to find out what on earth he was preaching about. Some were curious. Some were fearful. Some sought new beginnings. Some yearned for forgiveness. Some wanted to be made right with God and with one another. You might say they were looking for “free parking” and an opportunity to “get out of jail free.” To experience the days of their lives refreshed, renewed, forgiven was why they traveled out into the Judean countryside. And there it was that they were baptized by John in the river Jordan.

We live in days of uncertainty. We live in days of tyrannical rulers. We live in days where the educational community and the political community are often at odds. We live in days when leaders of nations have little concern for the sanctity of human life. We live in days when securing our own future is tantamount to just about everything else. And into these days, the Word of the Lord comes. It is easy to think that the Word of the Lord has all but dried up in the land. But that is not so. In our days, the days of our lives, the Word of the Lord is coming to us.

Hopefully crowds will once again make their way to church for the celebration of Christmas. Among them there are bound to be; some who are curious, some who are fearful given the demise of national and international affairs, some seeking new beginnings, some yearning for forgiveness, some longing for restored relationships with God and with neighbor, spouse, co-worker, friend, or classmate. Through the liturgy, scripture and preaching, through beloved carols and anthems, through the bread and wine of Holy Communion the Word, Christ Jesus, is experienced. Through Christ we are given forgiveness of our sins and brought into a way of life leading to repentance, a life of fruit bearing, of generosity, of giving, and forgiving, and actively contributing in kingdom life.

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Turn around. Straighten out the path. Get on the road, the highway of God. The Lord comes, and with him comes a new way to live, a new way to view the world, and a new way to view our neighbor. The Word of the Lord brings hope into what appears to be hopeless. The Word of the Lord makes a way when it seems that there isn’t any way forward. And this Word, this Incarnate Word, this Christ Child, this Jesus, is the Word that John heralded. There is one who is more powerful says John. There is one whom I am not worthy to carry his sandals. This one comes baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire. The One about whom John preached is; in our midst, bestowing the Holy Spirit, making a way when it seems that there is no way. Jesus is the one sent from heaven to a virgin’s womb, the one born in Bethlehem, threatening rulers, and the self-absorbed. John heralded Jesus, the one coming into the world forgiving you and loving you and longing to have you on the right path bearing fruit fit for the kingdom.

In those days the Word of the Lord was proclaimed bringing renewal and hope. These days, the days of our lives, the Word of the Lord is proclaimed bringing us joy and hope. What Christ brings is greater than “free parking” and a “get out of jail free card.” We are promised life with him now and for eternity. We are released from all that binds us and holds us captive. The Word of the Lord, Christ Jesus, brings hope, for with him there is forgiveness of sins, and where there is forgiveness of sins there is life and salvation; hope for all the days of your lives. Amen.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot shall come out from the stump
of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
²The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of
the LORD.
³His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
⁴but with righteousness he shall judge
the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the
earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of
his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the
wicked.
⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around
his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
⁷The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of
the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the
adder's den.
⁹They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy
mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the
LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a
signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of
him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19

SECOND READING: Romans 15:4-13

[not printed]

GOSPEL: Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wil-
derness of Judea, proclaiming, ²"Repent, for the
kingdom of heaven has come near." ³This is the one
of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,
"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.'"

⁴Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with
a leather belt around his waist, and his food was
locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then the people of
Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him,
and all the region along the Jordan, ⁶and they
were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confess-
ing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees
coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood
of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath
to come? ⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not
presume 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. ¹⁰Even
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.

¹¹"I baptize you with water for repentance, but
one who is more powerful than I is coming after
me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will
baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His
winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear
his threshing floor and will gather his wheat
into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with
unquenchable fire."

Next Sunday's Readings: Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11.

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