

You are to name him
Jesus!

MATTHEW 1:21

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

Email: st.pauls@comcast.net

www.stpauls.org

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

Offerings Offerings are received during the liturgy. They are presented along with gifts of bread and wine at the altar. You may also donate via our website at www.stpauls.org or use the QR Code provided.

Restrooms are located 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 restrooms are independent units. Please remember to latch the door.

An AED/Defibrillator unit is located in the Good Shepherd room. It is placed on the wall left side of the Springettsbury door exit.

The Nursery is accessed through the front right double doors. The liturgy is live-streamed into the Nursery. Parents are asked to stay with their children. Quiet activities are also available in the Narthex for infant through preschool children to use with an adult.

We ask parents to accompany their children to the restroom during the liturgy and wait with them. This is a way for us to practice good safety protocol within our building.



*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*



Lutheran Church in York, PA - St. Paul's Lutheran...

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

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	st.pauls@comcast.net
Youth Director	Kelly Moore-Spencer	kmoorespencer.stpauls@comcast.net
Organist, Choir Director	Victor Fields	vfields.stpauls@comcast.net
Bell Choirs Director	Leah McComas	lmccomas.stpauls@comcast.net
Children's Choir Director	Julianne Jones	jjones.stpauls@comcast.net
Secretary	Patee Pizzirusso	st.pauls@comcast.net
Sexton	Ted Weikert	tweikert.stpauls@comcast.net
Preschool Director	Deb Becker	presch.stpauls@comcast.net

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025 10:30 AM
Musical Setting #5 Evangelical Lutheran Worship

PRELUDE

Each Winter as the Year Grows Older

Ron Schmoltze

Stand turning to face the font

ENTRANCE HYMN

Creator of the Stars of Night (ELW 245) stanzas 1, 4 & 5



1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night, your peo - ple's ev - er -
2 When this old world drew on toward night, you came; but not in
3 At your great name, O Je - sus, now all knees must bend, all
4 Come in your ho - ly might, we pray, re - deem us for e -
5 To God the Fa - ther, God the Son, and God the Spir - it,



last - ing light, O Christ, re - deem - er of us all,
splen - dor bright, not as a mon - arch, but the child
hearts must bow: all things on earth with one ac - cord,
ter - nal day; de - fend us while we dwell be - low
Three in One, praise, hon - or, might, and glo - ry be



we pray you hear us when we call.
of Mar - y, bless - ed moth - er mild.
like those in heav'n, shall call you Lord.
from all as - saults of our dread foe.
from age to age e - ter - nal - ly. A - men.

CONFSSION 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 \div Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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 *During the singing of the Kyrie the procession moves to the Chancel.*



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



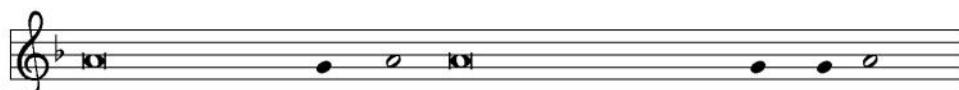
Lord, have mer - cy.



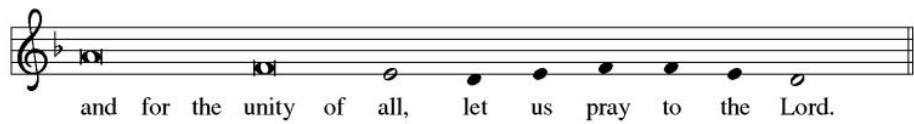
For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal-va-tion, let us pray to the Lord.



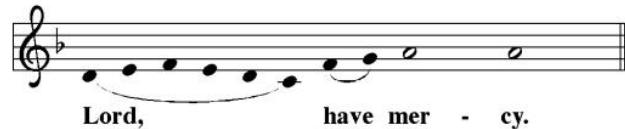
Lord, have mer - cy.



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



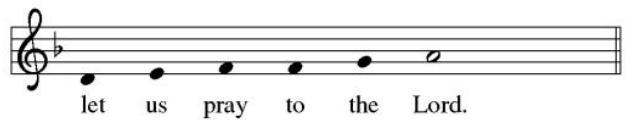
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



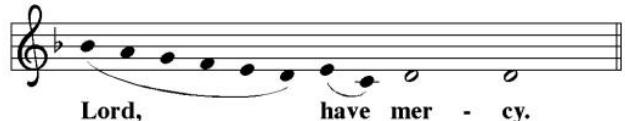
Lord, have mercy.



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



let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mercy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.



Amen.

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

FIRST READING

Isaiah 7:10-16

(back cover)

PSALM Psalm 80: 1-7, 16-18

Sung Cantor/Congregation



Let your face shine up - on us, and we shall be saved.

The antiphon is introduced by the Cantor and then sung by all at the appointed time.

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- on the cherubim.

**²In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

³Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

**⁴O LORD God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray? R**

⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

**⁶You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

**¹⁷Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

**¹⁸And so will we never turn a way from you;
give us life, that we may call upon your name.**

**¹⁹Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved. R**

SECOND READING

Romans 1:1-7

(back cover)

Stand

HYMN

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (ELW 257)**Please sing the Carol as indicated by the stanza designations.*

All 1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
 All 2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things
 High voice 3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on
 Low voice 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.

All 5 O come, O Key of David, come,
 and open wide our heav'nly home;
 make safe the way that leads on high,
 and close the path to misery. *Refrain*

High 6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
 O Sun of justice, now draw near.
 Voice Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
 and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*

Low 7 O come, O King of nations, come,
 O Cornerstone that binds in one:
 Voice refresh the hearts that long for you;
 restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*

All 8 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
 and ransom captive Israel,
 that mourns in lonely exile here
 until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*

HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 1:18-25 (*back cover*)

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew

At the conclusion of the Gospel.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON

The Reverend Stanley 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.

O God, use the gifts of artists, musicians, poets, and preachers to stir our spirits as we
we proclaim your advent among us. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in announcing this holy birth.
God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Lead us in work for justice and care for the common good. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Uphold all who are anxious, who know the challenges of depression, or who are ill
(especially). God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Bless young children and new parents. Guide us in ways that provide safety for all children and those who care for them. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for all who have treasured the gospel and lived in faithful service.

Strengthen our earthly journeys until, at the last, your face shines upon us and we are held fully in your love. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. **Amen.**

PEACE

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

The ministers and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Sit

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS

Chancel Choir

Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus

arr. David H. Williams

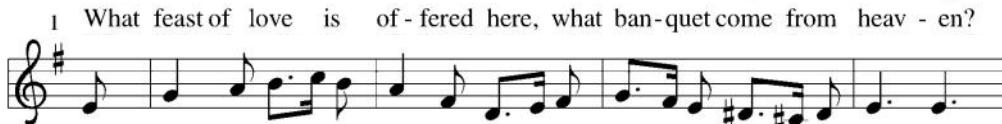
Stand

OFFERTORY

What Feast of Love (ELW 487)



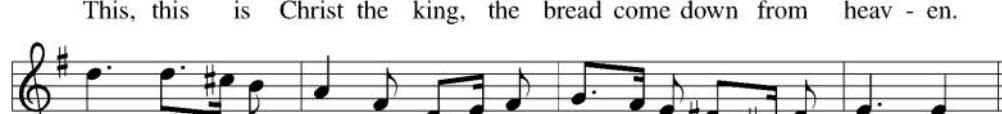
1 What feast of love is of - fered here, what ban - quet come from heav - en?



What food of ev - er - last - ing life, what gra - cious gift is giv - en?



This, this is Christ the king, the bread come down from heav - en.



Oh, taste and see and sing! How sweet the man - na giv - en!

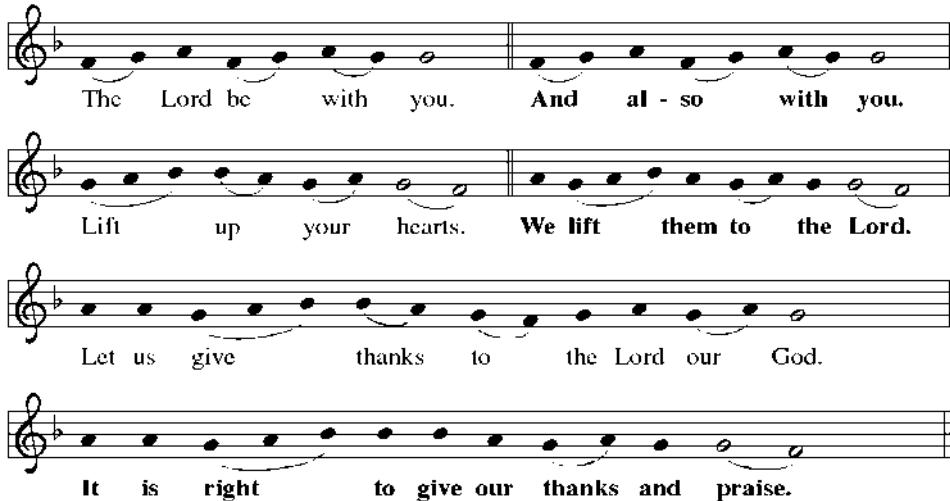
OFFERTORY PRAYER

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

Sung by Pastor and congregation



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

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

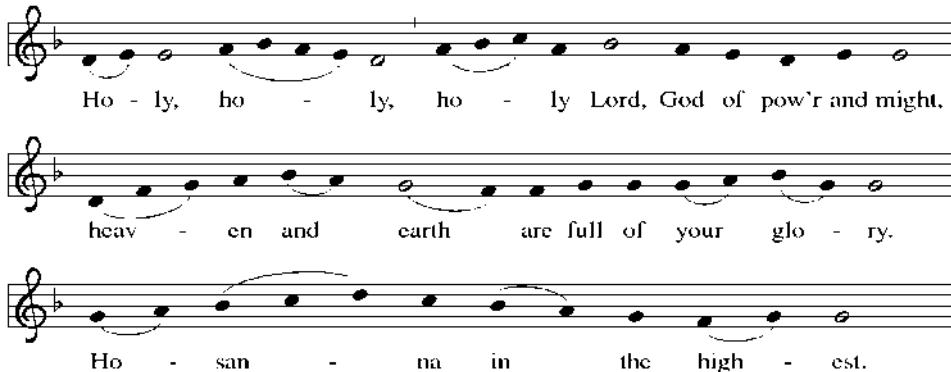
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE *The preface appropriate to the day is sung.*

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:

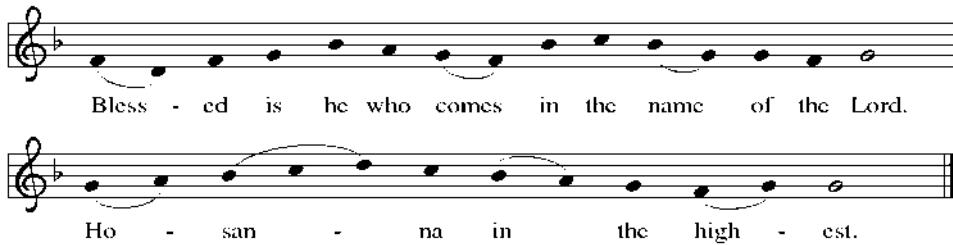
SANCTUS



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

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

Ho - san - na in the high - est.



THANKSGIVING

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth.

In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son,
that all those who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

We give thanks to you for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ.

Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may receive our Lord with a
living faith as he comes to us in his holy supper.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

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, then, his death and resurrection, we lift this bread and cup before you,
giving you thanks that you have made us worthy to stand before you and to serve
you as your priestly people.

And we ask you:

Send your Spirit upon these gifts of your Church; gather into one all who share this
bread and wine; fill us with your Holy Spirit to establish our faith in truth, that we may
praise and glorify you through your Son Jesus Christ.

Through him all glory and honor are yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
in your holy Church both now and forever. **Amen**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Fa - ther in heav - en, hal - lowed be your name,
your king-dom come, your will be done, on earth as in heav - en.
Give us to - day our dai - ly bread. For - give us our sins as we
for-give those who sin a-against us. Save us from the time of tri - al
and de - liv - er us from c - vil. For the king - dom, the pow'r,
and the glo - ry are yours, now and for - ev - er. A - men.

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. Amen.

Sit

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.

Procedure for receiving Communion:

1. Come to communion using the center aisle.
2. Take a communion glass from the tray of glasses.
3. Take your place along the chancel step.
4. The ministers will bring the bread and wine to you.
5. Place the used cup in an empty tray located on a credence table at the side aisle.
6. Return to your pew using the side aisle

COMMUNION HYMN

In a Far Off Place, Jesus Comes (ACS 908)

1. In a far-off place, Jesus comes to earth.
2. For the poor in heart, Jesus comes to earth.
3. In our deep-est night, Jesus comes to earth:
Sheep and cattle grace the site. As the
Humble shep-herds start the news.
For each
radiant star to light our way.
Summer's
an- angel songs be- gin, like the whis- per of the wind,
home-less in- fant born, for the meek and those who mourn,
heat or win- ter's chill, with a warm and lov- ing will,
nature's hope a- wakes a gain; Je - sus comes.
for the wear- y and the worn, Je - sus comes.
to a world that needs him still, Je - sus comes.

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 you Holy Sacrament; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen**

RINGING IN OF CHRISTMAS

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

DISMISSAL

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

Sit

POSTLUDE

Fling Wide the Door

Klaus Uwe Ludwig

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Serving the Lord with Gladness

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Greeters	Ushers -	Altar Guild	Bread Bakers
12/21 Advent 4	10:30 AM	Harrison Palmer	Christine Kates	James Palmer	Tom Gibson, Gail Kerchner	Team 2E: Ron Riese, Kathy Monk, Ken Hinkle, Alex Bastian	Lois Ann Schroeder, Kathy Monk	Norma Shue

This Week at St. Paul's

Church office open Mon–Tues 8:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 21 Fourth Sunday of Advent

9:15 AM Sunday School for All Ages
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist Combined Liturgy—
Live Stream

10:30 AM Ringing in of Christmas

6:30 PM AA Meeting—Community Rm

Tuesday, December 23

9:30 AM Pantry

Wednesday, December 24 Christmas Eve

3:30 PM Children's Choir reports
4:00 PM Holy Eucharist
7:00 PM Holy Eucharist—Live Stream

Thursday, December 25 Christmas Day

10:30 AM Holy Eucharist Combined Liturgy—
Live Stream

Sunday, December 28 Lessons & Carols

Holy Innocents
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist Combined Liturgy—
Live Stream
6:30 PM AA Meeting—Community Rm

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 sing.
found, far as, far as the curse is found.
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heav'n and na - ture sing,



Visit from the Bishop—The Rev. Stephen Herr, Bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, ELCA, will be with us on Sunday, January 25, 2026 for both liturgies and a Forum at 9:15 AM in Christ Hall. We are delighted to have him as our guest.

BASKETBALL REFEREES NEEDED—On Tuesday, December 23rd, Jackson Elementary School is having a basketball “tournament” and is in need of referees or people who are somewhat proficient in basketball rules. It’ll be held from 9 a.m. till 11:30 a.m. This is a grand opportunity to interact with kids engaging in a healthy activity. Please contact Nancy Bennett if at all interested.

The Children Need You in the New Year

Jackson Elementary School needs some adult volunteers for their kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms. They’re asking for an hour or two per week, more if desired in order to read to/with children and assist teachers. This need is a result of the former “grandparent” program losing its funding. If you have any interest or questions, please contact Nancy Bennett

St Paul’s is collecting clothing for Union Lutheran Church’s Clothing Ministry and your help is requested. Union’s volunteers are very appreciative of our cooperation and our help. If you have large donations you may take them directly to Union Lutheran Church. Simply call them to arrange a time.



ADDITIONAL DATES HAVE BEEN ADDED! You may schedule your photo session on December 29 & 30. To keep the 30th date we must have 12 households register. Please do so ASAP. Please call the church office if you have any questions. And remember that the 8 X 10 family portrait is free! Go to the Universal Church Directories website (www.ucdir.com) to schedule your appointment.



Food Pantry Needs: St. Paul’s Food Pantry needs **Whole Grain Cereal donations**. We give out 80 boxes of cereal each week and our sources for cereal currently have very little available.

Other Pantry Needs: **Peanut butter, Plastic and paper shopping bags, Monetary donations.** Monetary donations can be placed in a special” envelope marked “Pantry”.



A Partnership Between Local Churches & LifePath Thrift Stores

Now is the time to clear out unwanted toys and donate them to LifePath BEFORE Christmas so families can purchase them to give to children at Christmas. The stores then return a portion of the value of these items in the form of gift cards to your church to help those directly in your care. Look in your newsletter for more information.





Christmas Worship Schedule

Please note the alternate service times throughout the Christmas Season

Sunday December 21, Fourth Sunday of Advent 10:30 AM

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
The Holy Eucharist
The Ringing in of Christmas
Joy to the World

Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve - The Nativity of Our Lord

4:00 PM

O Come All Ye Faithful
The Holy Eucharist
Lighting of Hand Candles
Children's Choir

7:00 PM

Once in Royal David's City
The Holy Eucharist
Lighting of Hand Candles
Handbells, Organ, Chancel Choir,

Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day 10:30 AM

When Christmas Morn is Dawning
The Holy Eucharist

Sunday December 28, The Holy Innocents, Martyrs 10:30 AM

Lully, Lullay, Thou Little Tiny Child
The Holy Eucharist

Sunday January 4, Second Sunday after Christmas 10:30 AM

A Stable Lamp is Lighted
The Holy Eucharist
Installation of Congregation Council

Tuesday, January 6, Epiphany of Our Lord 6:00 PM

What Child is This?
The Holy Eucharist
A liturgy designed for the children of the parish
All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Advent 4 A 2025

Isaiah 7:10-16

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

Names tell a lot about places and people. York, Hanover, Lancaster local communities share something with York, Hanover and Lancaster across the Atlantic Ocean. As far as people are concerned, names are either part of a family's ancestry, or they are familiar reminders of another place, time, or situation. Names are fashionable. This year Noah and Olivia along with Liam and Emma top the list of popular names.

When I married Emily, my mentor professor friend Dr. Brown teased me and suggested that I take her maiden name of Wysocki. "Stanley Wysocki, now there's a good Lutheran pastor's name," he would say in Pennsylvania Dutch. Later he presented me with an old religious picture of the martyrdom of Saint Stanislaus. It graces the top shelf in my office. When my parents named me, it wasn't for St. Stanislaus, but rather for my great uncle. He was a simple hard-working farmer. When we had our daughter, I was unaware of the popularity of "A names.

In some families, names are used so frequently that they require numerals. It is not uncommon to end up with the third, or fourth, or the fifth in the same family. But whether it is number or popularity, names give shape to life and keep chronology and genealogy in a correct line.

That is where the writer of Matthew begins his account of the Lord's birth. Matthew wants us to follow the ancestral tree to recall the past saving action of God, as well as to point us toward God doing a new thing. The beginning of Matthew starts off with a report akin to something you could download from Ancestry.com. Great care is given to substantiate the genealogical line of David, from Abraham, all the way to Joseph, the husband of Mary.

This morning, we hear how the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Mary as his wife and that she will bear a son and then he is to name their newborn son Jesus; for he will save his people from their sins. Joseph in this account of the birth of Jesus is the one who gives the name to the newborn child. Joseph is the one who passes on the Davidic line. The child is named Jesus.

Now it seems that in the day of Mary and Joseph "J" names were as popular as "A" names where in the late 90's when our daughter was born. As Jesus grows, we hear about John the Baptizer, Jesus' cousin, who shares a "J" name. And then later in adult life we hear of another Jesus, another man sharing a "J" name.

This time it is not about a man who will save people from sin. This other Jesus indulges in acts of aggression, is a common criminal, robber, murderer, a savage disserving of the punishment which awaits him. This one is standing trial in Pilate's court in

Jerusalem when Jesus of Nazareth is hauled into court for erroneous charges. Jesus Barabbas is the name people shout out. They scream Jesus Barabbas when asked by Pilate Which Jesus should go free. The people cried out to let Jesus Barabbas go free! “*And what should I do with the Jesus who is called Messiah?*” asks Pilate. And the crowd together, their voices raised “*let him be crucified!*”

The kingly line of David didn’t silence the crowd that day. Prestige, number, namesake, popularity must have ruled the day, or perhaps those with the loudest voices. They shared the name Jesus, but it was their action that identified them and told them apart for everyone to see.

Amid Christmas crowds shoving and shouting, honking horns and waving vulgar hand gestures, we wait for Jesus, Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph and his betrothed Mary. We wait for the one whose actions speak louder than words. Among the multitude who sell out the season for another good bargain, another holiday sale or bonus coupon, we look for the one named Jesus to come establishing his gentle reign punctuated by peace and good will, justice and righteousness. His action speaks in contrast to a world engulfed in high decibel meaninglessness.

The fourth Advent candle is lighted as we await Jesus. Which Jesus? King Jesus, Jesus the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus born of Mary whose earthly father was Joseph. This is the one who takes us into his reign and grafts us into his family through Holy Baptism. The font stands in our midst reminding us of the powerful event of God’s Spirit poured out on us, the water washing us from the filth of our human existence, the oil of gladness anointing us for service in his earthly and heavenly kingdom. This is the Jesus who welcomes us at his table and invites us to be his guests. In the Eucharistic fellowship we share with him and with one another a simple meal of bread and wine assuring us of his presence now, and in the future. Jesus saves us from our sins and offers us a new lease of life. He gives us another go at things we have royally botched. We are granted another day to share in his gracious love.

Names are important because they connect us. They tell us about ourselves and give shape to our lives. Through Jesus of Nazareth, we are connected to the history of salvation beginning from Abraham. Jesus gives shape to our lives, the cruciform shape of his cross traced on us, marking us for eternity. Let there be no confusion about which Jesus we await, which one we celebrate on Christmas. This is Emmanuel, God with us. The one who gives us his good name, a name above all names. Amen.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10-16

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹²But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19**SECOND READING: Romans 1:1-7**

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name,

⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³“Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.