

3RD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 12th, 2021



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1
Church: 905-685-8294 Fax 905-685-7661

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon
Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoefts (289-362-0113) pastortoddhoefts@gmail.com
Parish Assistant: Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca
Business Manager: Karen McCumber business.manager@christlutheransc.ca
Secretary: Pat Kimpel secretary@christlutheransc.ca
Facebook: Lisa Gall www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC
Bulletin by email: Judy Mason chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca

Prayer: Almighty God, through John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, You once proclaimed salvation; now grant that we may know this salvation and serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Organist: Mayumi Munoz
Readers: 9 a.m. — Dan Figueroa 11 a.m. – Howard Bogusat

Children’s Message: “Christmas Joy” <https://youtu.be/HLz11z9Wjxc>

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: Matt. 11: 11-15 Wed.: Rev. 2: 1-5,7 Friday: Luke 17: 20-25
Tuesday: Matt. 3: 1-11 Thurs: Mark 13: 5-13 Saturday: Rev. 3: 14-22

WORSHIP NOTE:

- A recording of Sunday’s service will be uploaded to YouTube – “Gathering the Scattered” at: (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3a4p6prdJGEyP5S-q-cNSq>).
 - A PDF version of the order of service for each Sunday will also be posted on our church website: christlutheransc.ca.
 - Archived videos of Sunday’s service will be uploaded to christlutheransc.ca – “Worship” page.
- Any questions or concerns, please check out our church website (<http://christlutheransc.ca/>), contact Judy Slingerland (chairman.worship@christlutheransc.ca) or Pastor Todd (pastortoddhoefts@gmail.com), or phone the church office. May the peace of the risen Lord be with you all.

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2021 WORSHIP



- SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12TH
Advent 3:
9 AM: Morning Praise
11 AM: LSB setting 4 without Communion
- SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19 – 9 & 11 AM: – Lessons & Carols Service
- FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24 - CHRISTMAS EVE –
7 PM: Christmas Carol Candlelight Service
10 PM: Christmas Carol Candlelight Service
- SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25 – CHRISTMAS DAY–
10 AM: Christmas Carol Communion Worship
- SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26 – BOXING DAY –
10 AM: Christmas Carol Communion Worship
(no Education Hour this morning)
- SUNDAY, JANUARY 2ND, 2022 –
10 AM: Epiphany Blended Worship
(no Education Hour this morning)

Please feel WELCOME to join us for any / or all of these Special Advent and Christmas Services!!



CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES

in order to ensure that we can accommodate everyone we would ask that those attending please pre-register by:

- Registering on the sign-up sheets in the narthex
- calling the Church office at 905-685-8294
- by email at: secretary@christlutheransc.ca

the sign-up sheets in the narthex or by calling Pat at 905-685-8294 or emailing secretary@christlutheransc.ca

EDUCATION HOUR will not meet between the services in December. It will resume in late January for Sunday school and Bible Study. Youth Catechism will resume in February and March 2022. More information still to come. .

ADVENT ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN: to help families prepare for 'Jesus Birth' during this season of Advent, children are encouraged to pick up an "Advent Paper Chain" as a countdown to Christmas and an "Activity Book" from the narthex. Books are for children 3-6 years or 7-9 years.

YOUTH CAROLING at LUTHER MANOR: Sunday, December 19, 3:00 p.m.

We hope to be able to spread some Christmas cheer and enjoy an afternoon together. Friends, parents and others are welcome to join in on the fun and spreading of Christmas joy!

LWML-C/MARY MARTHA Christmas Dinner and Program:

- Tuesday, Dec. 21, 5:30 pm,
- Catered dinner served at 6 p.m. - Turkey or Vegetarian option (ricotta cannelloni) available.

Reserve your spot by December 16 by calling Lorraine at 905-371-3972 (*We need exact numbers to give to the caterer by December 17th*).

Proof of vaccination required. Cost is \$25/person.

Following dinner there will be an Advent/Christmas program.

Please remember to bring:

- your mites
- your reveal of your 2021 Secret Prayer Sister
- a Christmas card with your name, address and special dates for choosing a 2022 Secret Prayer Sister (if you wish to participate in that for the coming year).

Right Now Media resources at www.rightnowmedia.org.

- Children's videos such as "The Story of Christmas", a 25 minute video that helps children laugh, wonder, and rejoice as they learn of God's love for the world in the gift of baby Jesus.
- Confirmants will find a Playmobil animation video on Martin Luther
- Sports enthusiasts will receive encouragement from Christian athletes such as Tim Tebow.

There are hundreds of other Videos and Bible Studies for children, youth and adults by presenters such as Francis Chan, John Piper, Kyle Idleman, Jeanie Allen, Max Lucado, Bianca Juarez Olthoff and many others. If you need login assistance contact Louise.

LUTHERAN CHURCH - CANADA NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING:

Lutheran Young people from across Canada will be gathering together this **July 15-19, 2022** in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The theme for the gathering is "**IN NOT OF**" from Philippians 3:20 "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, The Lord Jesus Christ." Information packages are available from Louise. Save the date, check out the website at <http://www.lccnyg.ca>, start following the Facebook and Instagram pages and check out this fun announcement from Pastor Glenn Worcester

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68gXVYofMYY> .

Last Sunday Attendance: Dec. 5th, 2021 Attn: 9 a.m. – 56; 11 a.m. — 43; Total: 99

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or - (--)</u>
Current:	271,175.00	5,214.90	4,221.00	189,714.34	(65,815.95)
LCC Missions	20,000.00	384.62	420.00	16,649.00	(2,197.15)
Property Improvement:			94.00	5,686.50	

2022 DONATION ENVELOPES are available for pick up in your mailbox. If you don't have a mailbox, please check the table at the entrance to the sanctuary. If you have not been issued envelopes and would like some, or, you would like to be assigned a mailbox, please contact Karen at: business.manager@christlutheransc.ca or the office at 905-685-8294.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS: will be available to take home after the service on Christmas Day at a cost of \$10 each. Please sign up in the Narthex. We will again list the flowers as a “memorial or in thankfulness for” in the bulletin on Dec. 26th.ch.

FLOWERS have been placed on the altar this morning to the glory of God by Gloria Meyer and Howard Bogusat on the occasion of their Birthdays.

HANDYMAN WANTED: Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary is looking for a handyman to help with odd jobs around the building, basic repair and maintenance issues. Time requirements are minimal - one or two days a month at most. If you have some free time and would like to volunteer, please contact the business manager, Ashu Paul, at business@concordia-seminary.ca or call 905-688-2362 ext. 24.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHURCH DURING THE PANDEMIC: It's important for members to keep in mind that expenses for payroll, utilities, maintenance, etc. continue to accumulate even when you are not comfortable attending service.

1. THROUGH EFT DONATIONS: Lutheran Church - Canada, East District Corporation continues to facilitate this service for us. To assist you in continuing your financial support to your church, we encourage you to fill out the form that is available for printing at: http://christlutheransc.ca/?page_id=96 and then mail the form along with a voided cheque to:

Lutheran Church - Canada, East District Corporation,
275 Lawrence Ave., Kitchener, ON N2M 1Y3,
Attn: Darryl Holland

2. BY MAIL: cheques can still be mailed to:

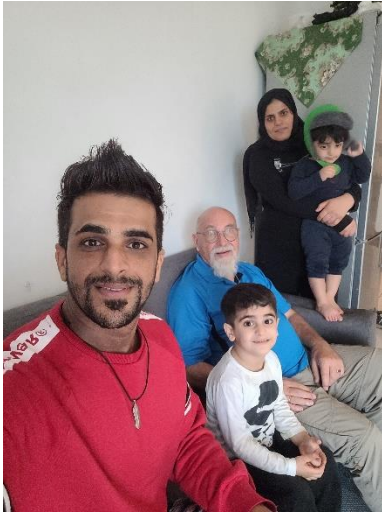
Christ Lutheran Church,
140 Russell Ave. St. Catharines, ON L2R 1W1

or dropped in the Church mailbox at the East entrance.

3. ONLINE VIA LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA: Lutheran Church-Canada has opened a web portal that allows parishioners to donate directly to their home church:

<https://lutheranchurch-canada.tng-secure.com/?pageId=donation-edit&categoryId=10972>

select "St. Catharines-Christ Lutheran-30950" from the drop down menu, enter the amount of your donations and LCC will transfer your donation to Christ. Donation is via VISA or Mastercard. Tax receipts will be issued by LCC (not Christ). This opportunity will be in effect until the COVID-19 emergency is over.



Kareem and Family

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as I write this note of update it is exactly one year ago today that we were notified of the Approval of Sponsorship for AL HUMAIDI, Kareem Abadi and given a G application number from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. We all had high hopes that the process would only take one year. However, Covid effected it as everything in our community and world-wide. I contacted my MPP Vance Badawey after returning from my trip to Athens to visit Kareem and his family. Unfortunately, the Immigration and Refugee ministry had to lend employees to Canada Revenue Agency to pay out all the CERB money. It has just been this fall that the refugee ministry is starting to process applications, and of course the whole Afghan situation has complicated the process even further. I checked online and found that Kareem's file was still on hold waiting to be processed. I am in contact with Kareem and his family on a regular basis and we video call from time to time. It was just last December 24, 2020 that the family was moved to

the apartment building in Athens. Three families are living in a 3 bedroom apartment. There is a possibility that the family may have to move again. I would ask that you keep them in prayer that they would be able to remain where they are at present. We thank God for keeping them safe and in a clean apartment this past year. Ameer turned 4 on November 15th, and Asser will turn 2 on January 9, 2022. At the present time there is a balance of \$17,334.03 in the Refugee Settlement Fund, there were a few disbursements last year for translation services. When I preached at Clarington Lutheran Church in Bowmanville on November 21st, and told them about Kareem and his family there was interest in contributing towards our Refugee Fund. This is all the news I have to date. Please continue to pray for Kareem, Hamida, Ameer, and Asser, that despite the Refugee Ministry being overwhelmed that some how they will process the application for Kareem and his family before another year goes by. Just as we waited for an answer to our prayers for bringing us Pastor Todd, we pray in God's good timing he will bring Kareem and his family here for us to reach out to them with God's amazing grace and love.

God bless, and Merry Christmas, Pastor John and your Refugee Committee



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHEER

To share the joy of Christmas with those in our community who are less fortunate than we are, the "Outreach Committee" is planning to distribute, complete Christmas turkey dinner packages. We are asking

for confidential referrals from our members. Last year we helped 25 families by making up 25 baskets.

We need your help by:

- Providing us with confidential referrals which can be placed into a box located in our church narthex
- Donating the funds required for the purchase of perishable and non-perishable food items which will be purchased just before the packages are distributed
- Letting the Outreach Committee,
Judy Mason—905-641-7546
Howard Bogusat—905-468-3566
know if you would be willing to help package baskets
- Praying that this project is a success and that those who receive these gifts are touched by the joy and wonder of our Saviour's birth and by His love for each one of us.

(PLEASE NOTE THAT WE ARE COLLECTING "MONETARY DONATIONS" ONLY FOR THIS PROJECT)

THANK YOU!

CONTEMPORARY MORNING PRAISE

Adapted from Lutheran Church of Australia Modern Matins

December 12, 2021 + 9 AM Contemporary Service

FIRST SONG:

“On Jordan’s Banks”

**On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry - announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings, glad tidings of the King of kings.**

**Then cleansed be every life from sin; make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts pre-prepare, for Christ to come and enter there.**

**We hail You as our Saviour, Lord, our refuge and our great reward;
without Your grace we waste away like flow'rs that wither and decay.**

**All praise to You, eternal Son, Whose advent has our freedom won;
Whom with the Father we adore and Holy Spirit for evermore.**

Words: Charles Coffin, 1736; trans. John Chandler, 1837; Music: PUER NOBIS public domain

SPOKEN MORNING PRAYER SCRIPTURE RESPONSES:

Open up my lips O LORD!

And my mouth will sing praises to Your Name!

Come quickly to Help me, O Lord

And be speedy to keep me away from harm.

Teach me Your Way, O Lord, that I may walk in Your truth.

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As it was then, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Praise to You, O Christ!

King Who comes to save us.

Give glory to our God, our Light and our Life!

O come, let us worship Him!

PSALMODY

“Come Let Us Worship & Bow Down” [Dave Doherty]

Come let us worship and bow down

Let us kneel before the Lord, our God, our Maker.

Come let us worship and bow down

Let us kneel before the Lord, our God, our Maker.

For He is our God

And we are the people of his pasture

And the sheep of his hand

Just the sheep of his hand

For He is our God

And we are the people of his pasture

And the sheep of his hand

Just the sheep of his hand.

Writer(s): David J. Doherty

RESPONSIVE PRAYER & LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH:

O Lord, have mercy and come to us.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Key of David and scepter of the house of Israel, you open and no one can close, you close and no one can open:

Come, rescue the prisoners who are in darkness and the shadow of death.

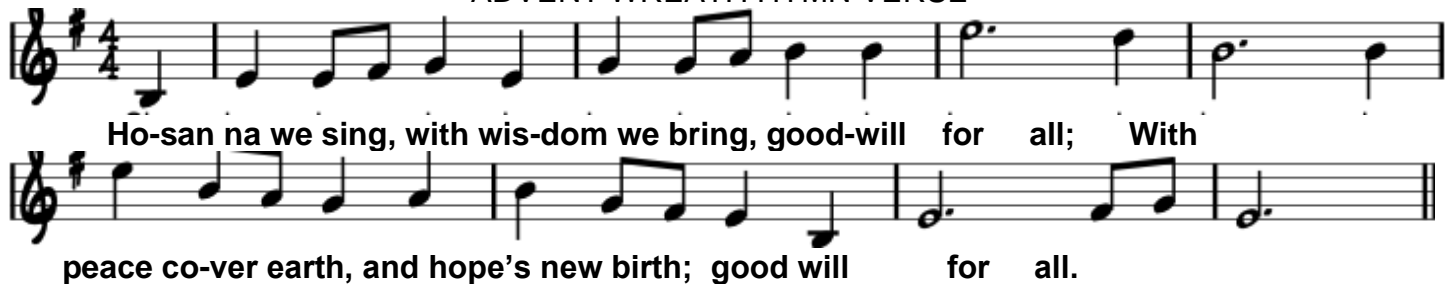
O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting:

Come, enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Light three candles.

We pray: **We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord's coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this, O Lord God, through Christ our Lord, in the Holy Spirit's power, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. Amen.**

ADVENT WREATH HYMN VERSE



Ho-san na we sing, with wis-dom we bring, good-will for all; With
peace co-ver earth, and hope's new birth; good will for all.

Words: Unknown, 1967; Music: SHALOM, CHAVERIM Jewish melody, 1944

THE WORD

Old Testament: *Isaiah 12:2-6*

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say on that day; Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Epistle: *Philippians 4:4-9*

[St. Paul writes:] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ADVENT SEASON VERSE: **"O, Come, Emmanuel"**

**O come, O Key of Da-vid come, and open wide our Heav—n'ly home,
Make safe the way that leads—on high; and close the path to mis-ery;
Re-joyce! Re-joyce!**

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

The Holy Gospel: *St. Luke 3:7-18*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Luke, the 3rd chapter:

Glory to You, O Lord.

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe 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.' And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.' As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ!

GOSPEL SONG:

"Come O Long Expected Jesus"

LSB 338 Jefferson tune

1 Come, O long-expected Jesus,
born to set your people free!
from our fears and sins release us,
Christ in whom our rest shall be.
Israel's strength and consolation,
born salvation to impart;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

2 Born your people to deliver,
born a child, and yet a king;
born to reign in us for ever,
now your gracious kingdom bring:
By your own eternal Spirit
rule in our hearts alone;
by your all-sufficient merit
raise us to your glorious throne.

Charles Wesley public domain

MESSAGE

MAGNIFICAT SONG:

"Mary Had A Baby"

1. Mary had a baby, yes, Lord;
Mary had a baby, yes, my Lord;
Mary had a baby, yes, Lord!
The people keep a-coming just to
see the little child!

2. What did she name him, yes, Lord;
what did she name him, yes, my
Lord;
what did she name him, yes, Lord?
The people keep a-coming just to
see the little child!

3. Mary named him Jesus, yes, Lord;
Mary named him Jesus, yes, my
Lord;

**Mary named him Jesus, yes, Lord!
The people keep a-coming just to
see the little child!**

4. Where was he born, yes, Lord;
where was he born, yes, my Lord;
where was he born, yes, Lord?
The people keep a-coming just to
see the little child!

5. Born in a stable, yes, Lord;
born in a stable, yes, my Lord;
born in a stable, yes, Lord!
The people keep a-coming just to
see the little child!

**6. Where did she lay him, yes, Lord;
where did she lay him, yes, my Lord;
where did she lay him, yes, Lord?
The people keep a-coming just to
see the little child!**

**7. Laid him in a manger, yes, Lord;
laid him in a manger, yes, my Lord;
laid him in a manger, yes, Lord!
The people keep a-coming just to
see the little child!**

West Indian traditional

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PRAYERS

Almighty God and Father, through John the Baptizer, the forerunner of Christ, You once proclaimed salvation; give unto us now, we pray, that we may know this salvation and service You in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for the beauty and abundance of the earth. Give us and all people grace to live in harmony with your creation, wisdom and generosity in our use of its bounty. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for leaders who serve the common good. Give wisdom to those who have responsibility and authority in every land, that we may share with justice the resources of the world, and work together in trust. Prosper the work of Lutheran Church Canada, Canadian Lutheran World Relief and other such agencies of help through generous contributions and good relations with the communities and governments whom they seek to assist. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for this land and the diversity of its peoples. Grant that we may honour one another and that all people may be enriched by our common heritage and freed from despair, poverty and exclusion. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for the good news of salvation for all people. Strengthen us for our work in the world, empower your Church to proclaim the gospel in service, word and sacrament. Unite in the truth all who confess your name, that we may live together in love to your glory. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for the fellowship of the communities in which we live and work. We commend to your safe keeping our families, those with whom we work and learn, our neighbours and our friends. Enable us by your Spirit to live in love for you and for one another. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks that you are the God who brings mercy and wholeness. Comfort and heal, we pray, all who are in sorrow, need, sickness, or any other trouble...especially we remember [names added here...] Give to those who care for them wisdom, patience and gentleness and, to us all, your peace. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

Lord God, you alone know our true needs and desires. Shed your light on our lives and hearts, keep us walking in your path, and hear the prayers that we have offered in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Lord, remember us in Your Kingdom, and teach us to pray:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. 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

LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER:

I thank You, Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger. And I pray that You would keep me this day, also, from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe have no power over me. Amen.

BLESSING & BENEDICTION:

Let us praise our Lord:

Praise God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, + be with you all.

Amen.

SENDING SONG:

"Hallowed Manger Ground"

Verse 1:

**What hope we hold this starlit night
A King is born in Bethlehem
Our journey long we seek the light
That leads to the hallowed manger ground**

Verse 2:

**What fear we felt in the silent age
Four-hundred years can He be found
But broken by a baby's cry
Rejoice in the hallowed manger ground**

Chorus:

**Emmanuel Emmanuel
God incarnate here to dwell
Emmanuel Emmanuel
Praise His name Emmanuel
(Praise His name Emmanuel)**

Verse 3:

**The Son of God here born to bleed
A crown of thorns would pierce His brow
And we beheld this offering
Exalted now the King of kings
Praise God for the hallowed manger
ground.**

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DIVINE SERVICE

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Hymnal Supplement '98 service
December 12th, 2021 + 11 AM Traditional Worship

OPENING HYMN:

"On Jordan's Banks"

**On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry - announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings, glad tidings of the King of kings.**

**Then cleansed be every life from sin; make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts pre-prepare, for Christ to come and enter there.**

**We hail You as our Saviour, Lord, our refuge and our great reward;
without Your grace we waste away like flow'rs that wither and decay.**

**All praise to You, eternal Son, Whose advent has our freedom won;
Whom with the Father we adore and Holy Spirit for evermore.**

Words: Charles Coffin, 1736; trans. John Chandler, 1837; Music: PUER NOBIS public domain

INVOCATION, CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

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

Amen.

If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins,

O Lord, who could stand?

But with You there is forgiveness,

therefore, You are feared.

[Brief silence for prayerful reflection]

O Almighty God, merciful Father,

**I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess to You all my sins and iniquities, with which I have ever
offended You, and justly deserved Your punishment now and forever. But I am heartily sorry for
them and sincerely repent of them and I pray You of Your boundless mercy, and for the sake of
the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death, of Your Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious
and merciful to me, a poor sinful being.**

Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the
grace of God to all of you; and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of
your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER & LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

O Lord, have mercy upon us.

Come and save your people.

O Key of David and scepter of the house of Israel, you open and no one can close, you close and no
one can open:

Come, rescue the prisoners who are in darkness and the shadow of death.

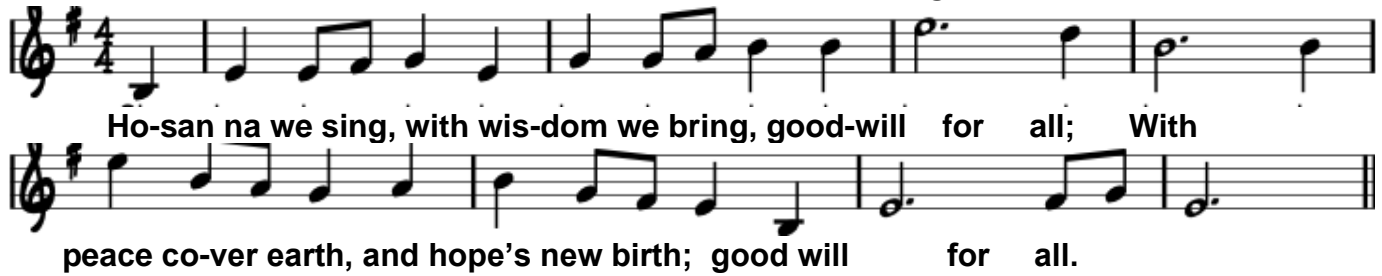
O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting:

Come, enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Light three candles.

We pray: **We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ's
advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord's coming in
glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this, O Lord God,
through Christ our Lord, in the Holy Spirit's power, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.**
Amen.

ADVENT WREATH HYMN VERSE



Ho-san na we sing, with wis-dom we bring, good-will for all; With
peace co-ver earth, and hope's new birth; good will for all.

Words: Unknown, 1967; Music: SHALOM, CHAVERIM Jewish melody, 1944

THE WORD

Old Testament: *Isaiah 12:2-6*

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say on that day; Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Epistle: *Philippians 4:4-9*

[St. Paul writes:] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ADVENT SEASON VERSE:

“O, Come, Emmanuel”

**O come, O Key of Da-vid come, and open wide our Heav—n'ly home,
Make safe the way that leads—on high; and close the path to mis-ery;
Re-joice! Re-joice!
Em-man-uel, shall come to you, O Is-ra-el.**

The Holy Gospel: *St. Luke 3:7-18*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Luke, the 3rd chapter:

Glorify to You, O Lord.

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our ancestor”; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe 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.’ And the crowds asked him, ‘What then should we do?’ In reply he said to them, ‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.’ Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, ‘Teacher, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.’ Soldiers also asked him, ‘And we, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.’ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ!

APOSTLES' CREED:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life + everlasting. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY:

"I Wonder As I Wander"

www.hymnary.org/ELW

I wonder as I wander out under the sky
How Jesus the Saviour did come for to die
For poor ord'ry people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander out under the sky

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing
A star in the sky or a bird on the wing
Or all of God's Angels in heaven to sing
He surely could have it, 'cause he was the King

When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all
But high from God's heaven, a star's light did fall
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

I wonder as I wander out under the sky
How Jesus the Saviour did come for to die
For poor on'ry people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander out under the sky

Appalachian Carol, © 1954

MESSAGE

OFFERTORY: *"Create In Me A Clean Heart"*

Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your
pres-ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -
store un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

Music: J. A. Freylinghausen, 1670-1739

THE PRAYERS

Almighty God and Father, through John the Baptizer, the forerunner of Christ, You once proclaimed salvation; give unto us now, we pray, that we may know this salvation and service You in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for the beauty and abundance of the earth. Give us and all people grace to live in harmony with your creation, wisdom and generosity in our use of its bounty. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for leaders who serve the common good. Give wisdom to those who have responsibility and authority in every land, that we may share with justice the resources of the world, and work together in trust. Prosper the work of Lutheran Church Canada, Canadian Lutheran World Relief and other such agencies of help through generous contributions this Christmas, and good relations with the communities and governments whom they seek to assist. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for this land and the diversity of its peoples. Grant that we may honour one another and that all people may be enriched by our common heritage and freed from despair, poverty and exclusion. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for the good news of salvation for all people. Strengthen us for our work in the world, empower your Church to proclaim the gospel in service, word and sacrament. Unite in the truth all who confess your name, that we may live together in love to your glory. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks for the fellowship of the communities in which we live and work. We commend to your safe keeping our families, those with whom we work and learn, our neighbours and our friends. Enable us by your Spirit to live in love for you and for one another. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

We give thanks that you are the God who brings mercy and wholeness. Comfort and heal, we pray, all who are in sorrow, need, sickness, or any other trouble...especially we remember [names added here...] Give to those who care for them wisdom, patience and gentleness and, to us all, your peace. Lord, in Your Advent mercy...

come and save Your people.

Lord God, you alone know our true needs and desires. Shed your light on our lives and hearts, keep us walking in your path, and hear the prayers that we have offered in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Lord, remember us in Your Kingdom, and teach us to pray:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. 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

LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER:

I thank You, Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger. And I pray that You would keep me this day, also, from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe have no power over me. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord upon you with favour, + and give you peace.

Amen.

CLOSING HYMM:

"Come, O Precious Ransom"

www.hymnary.org

- 1. Come, O precious Ransom, come,
Only Hope for sinful mortals!
Come, O Savior of the world!
Open are to You all portals.
Come, your beauty let us view;
Anxiously we wait for you.**
- 2. Enter now my waiting heart,
Glorious King and Lord most holy.
Dwell in me and ne'er depart,
Though I am but poor and lowly.**

- Ah, what riches will be mine
When you are my Guest Divine!**
- 3. My hosannas and my palms
Graciously receive, I pray You;
Evermore, as best I can,
Savior, I will homage pay You,
And in faith I will embrace,
Life eternal by Your grace.**

J. Olearius, public domain;

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REV. TODD HOEFFS

Advent 3

St. Luke 3: 8-14

December 12, 2021

“Trimming Trees & Cleaning House”

“John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.... The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Having an older home in a mature neighbourhood as we do, Naturally we have very large, older trees. Most of them haven't been trimmed back in a long, long time. Take a look at this one [in the picture]. Its our decorative weeping mulberry, supposedly over 40 years old. Going without any major trimming in over a decade. Its over 8 feet in height, very wild and bushy. It's so large, so overgrown, I hardly know where to begin trimming and where to stop. It's not good to have a tree grow so out of control. Nothing living should ever get so far overgrown. Even people need trimming. Imagine a person who lives their life, always making sure they have everything their own way -- They overtake their own space, the dead wood of life experiences are covered over In growth that looks new, but in actuality it's just spreading out wanting more, which becomes overbearing and a problem. Cutting and trimming helps create better growth and may even produce good fruit. The crowds following John as he's baptizing people Are part of the overgrown, unruly masses who call themselves God's children

They've grown apart from His goodness. Often God compared His people to a vineyard or a forest overgrown and wild. When they remain close to God and benefit from His nourishing grace, They flourish. But the times when other things drew their attention away from God They grew in on themselves and thus, had outgrown their need for Him. By virtue of John's harsh tone with these crowds, they are a mixture of religious elite, ordinary people and those deemed sinners by the powers that be. A brood of vipers is a strong judgement. Brings to mind the satanic serpent Adam and Eve listened to, causing sin's dreaded disease. Snakes are deadly and devious. Vipers especially are cagey. They bite their prey, injecting just enough venom to stun them. The viper will release, so as not to have the prey retaliate. The wounded prey wanders off, dies and then the viper devours it based on smell. While its effective, it's evidence of cunning skill. Vipers hide and wait to attack.

Truly, a very precise indictment by John. The crowds are trying to escape the impending doom John's been preaching. They'd like to dip their toes in the water and be ok. Say the right words, offer the right sacrifice, do the best deed and they're off the hook. The impending doom they want to avoid

is the deadly divide the coming Messiah will create by His Fiery Word. Those who are not for Christ are against Him. Those who are not ready will be unknowns to God in the end of all things. Those without faith, or misplaced loyalties, may find themselves in a bad spot. Before they can make excuses, John tells them their ancestry means nothing. Don't expect being related to Abraham to be of any value. Abraham lived by faith and righteousness was credited to Him. God promised Abraham as many descendants IN THE FAITH as stars in the sky. Not because of relatives but relationship to God by faith. These vipers have created no faithful descendants....They expect their culture and lineage to save them. How could they think they'd escape the fire of God's judgment by relying on their own works, which were not at all honest or good? Calling them a brood of vipers hopefully insults or scares them enough to recognize their sinfulness and come to repentance. If being related to Abraham won't help when Jesus' comes, Or if John's washing won't remove any sinful stains,

If behaving the way they have all those years in the temple is of no help, Then what are they to do?

What to do? A simple yet profound question. Bear fruit in keeping with repentance! Repentance is METANOIA in Greek. A change. A life change. An attitude shift. A person who begins seeing themselves as extensions of God's grace out in the world. Not only a turning away from what you've been doing wrong And a turning toward God An embrace of the way God comes to us, Which is centred in the difficulties and disappointments we all face. God alone gives the ability and the will to continue turning toward Him day after day. Our will gets trimmed so that we begin to desire what God desires us –Which is faith in His Son and a life which helps those in need. With an emptying of the sinful self, God fills us up with His Spirit. A baptism of Spirit and of fire. The fire melts the hardness of heart And the Spirit keeps the believer connected to Jesus. Repentance is a full body, mind and soul way of living. A new outlook. It would be a lot easier if it was a checklist of duties to fulfill.

There isn't one duty on a checklist we could ever accomplish that would give us a readiness for receiving the Living Lord. There's nothing we think or do is so perfect that it can't be changed and transformed. But once we're transformed, once we're changed, once we're made new, We grow good fruits of faith. A life changed by fire and Spirit is cleansed and made sacred. A cleansed and sacred life will see life new and begin treating people in new kind ways. A cleansed and sacred life enjoys repentant living and is fully aware of what it means to trust in God.

Without trust,
Without faith,
Without hope,
Without Jesus,
Without the Spirit and fire,
There is no new life.

It's all about making people in need a priority to serve and welcome. When John tells the tax collectors, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you" They're earned enough. Give back what wasn't yours in the first place. He's speaking radical words to a profession marked by entrenched, systemic injustice. The tax collectors' own profits were the amounts they charged over and above what they passed up to the governmental officials. Notice that John does not offer them the option to stop being tax collectors. He doesn't condemn their fraud and theft. HE tells them to give back what they took in their dishonesty. Like the soldiers, John's wants them to bring justice to a system deeply marked by injustice. We should not underestimate how difficult that would have been.

Holding citizenship in God's kingdom while living under the rule of kings of the fallen world can be dangerous and difficult. John isn't forcing anyone to promise to give up everything. Give what you owe due to illegal activity. Don't be harsh or intimidating. Give one tunic if you have 2.

These Tunics (*chiton*) were the undergarment one wore underneath their coat. Most people had two of them, one they wore every day, and another they wore for sabbath. The needs of your neighbor outweigh saving the sabbath tunic--or, to put it a different way, deeds of compassion outweigh the practice of religion. Sharing is a way of living where you grow in your giving. Stealing and brutality and stinginess is not a fruit of a repentant life. That's a selfish, overgrown, inward focused way of living. That's why John ends with the swing of an ax. That's a drastic measure. Cutting a tree down is more than just trimming. It's a re-rooting. And by re-rooting, a whole new tree will emerge.

A tree in the form of a cross. And by being nailed on this cross our lord Jesus will draw all people into His Body And die – And this death eliminates any and all needs for having a right family connection or claiming a right religion. His death trims our lives that we all can grow into His Body, baptized and made new. . This means, it's not about feeling sorry or badly about what you've done wrong – It's about having a changed life. A change we have by our baptism with the Spirit and with fire.

The Spirit animates our steps and the fire purifies and seals us as our Lord's brother and sister. As Jesus goes from place to place, teaching, healing, freeing from all sin's threats, He is very much separating wheat from the chaff. With a winnowing fork, like a garden pitchfork Tosses up the grains of wheat in the air. Whatever lands on the ground is a good, healthy kernel of wheat. Bits of the

chaff [which is a shell over the grain] blow away, and later get burned up. This is the Lord's doing. While it seems very serious and frightening, It is GOOD NEWS for us. Because as the trimming and separating of the good from the bad happen in us, We are prepared to meet the Lord when He returns in His time.

We have faith.

By that gift of faith we can embrace what the future holds.

Because we know Who holds the future Which makes the trimming of overgrowth much more liveable.

Amen.