

Sunday, December 14, 2025
9:00 a.m.

Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church

It is a joy to gather together for worship!

St. Paul Purpose Statement

Living Christ centered lives so we may love all, serve our community, and share the Word.

Sunday Worship Schedule

9:00 a.m. In-person worship with Holy Communion

10:15 a.m. In-person Sunday School – September – May

Communion

We celebrate Jesus' presence each week in Holy Communion. This is the Lord's Supper and Jesus invites us: whether you are a lifelong Lutheran, or just considering Christianity; if you are an infant or elderly; if your family has been in the United States for generations, or has only recently arrived; if you are LGBTQIA+ or straight; if you live with disabilities, chronic illness, or are able-bodied and currently healthy; if you are home-blessed or homeless; ... YOU are welcome at God's meal of grace at St. Paul.

Accessibility

Handicap parking, entrance, wheelchair, and restrooms are available. Sound amplifiers and large print bulletins are available. Please ask an usher for assistance.

Children's Offering

The December children's offering will be for the God's Global Barnyard through the ELCA Good Gifts. A gift to God's Global Barnyard will be used where needed most to support livestock, agriculture and other sustainable-development projects, which help farmers and families with the resources they need to thrive.

Pastor Mark Luepke, Part-time Interim

pastormark@stpaulsterling.com

1701 16th Ave. Sterling, IL 61081

815-625-3069

Church email: stpaulsterling@comcast.net

www.stpaulsterling.com

From sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2025 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

Third Sunday of Advent

A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.

Prelude

"Advent Contemplation"

Edward Broughton

Welcome/Announcements

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose home is heaven and earth, whose salvation is sure.

All: Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Long-expected God,

All: we confess that we look to ourselves for the peace and security only you can provide. We reach for swords and spears, reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war. We become impatient while waiting and weary of keeping awake. Free us from self-reliance, and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors. Increase our trust in God's timing, and awaken us to your advent among us, that we may abound in the hope you have promised. Amen.

P: God judges us not as we deserve, but according to God's own righteousness. ☩ You are freed and forgiven, saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior.

All: Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“Awake, Awake, and Greet the New Morn”

ELW #242

1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for
2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when
4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though

an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for
man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is
all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall

soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.
qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;
crown you with light, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing,
be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.

Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -
Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in
Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less

geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and
kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to
won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and
sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share, and

lives now in - side us for - ev - er.
shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.
weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen

Text and music © 1983 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358.

All rights reserved. Used by permission.

GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray together:

All: Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Leader: On this third Sunday of Advent, we light the pink candle, the candle of joy. We rejoice in the coming of Jesus, who brings joy to our hearts.

All: “You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy” (Isaiah 9:3).

The first, second and third candles are lit.

Leader: May the light of joy fill our hearts as we prepare for the coming of Jesus.

All: We light this candle of joy, rejoicing in the hope of Christ.

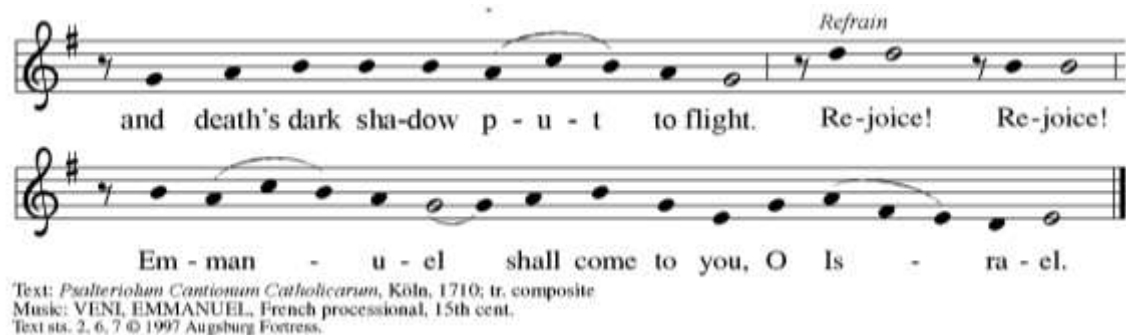
Advent Song

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

ELW #257 vs 6 only

6 O come, O Day-spring, co - me and cheer; O Sun. of jus - tice

co - me draw near. Dis - perse the glo - omy clo - uds of night,



First Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.]]

³ Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; ⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. ⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. ¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

R: Word of God, Word of Life,
All: Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: James 5:7-10

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

R: Word of God, Word of Life,
All: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

P: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew the 11th chapter.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” ⁴ Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the

wind? ⁸What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹“Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord,
All: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon
“Jesus IS the One We are Looking For!”

Hymn of the Day
“We Are Waiting for Jesus”

1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
2 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

Sun of jus - tice, shine up - on us; we are trust - ing in your prom - ise.
Lov - ing Shep - herd, walk be - side us; stir our hearts, and gent - ly guide us.

We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

Text: John Helgen, b. 1957
Music: JESUS BRINGS PEACE, John Helgen
Text and music © 2013 Augsburg Fortress

Nicene Creed
P: Trusting in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, let us profess our faith through the words of the Nicene Creed:

All: 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, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.

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, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who 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
In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

P: God of grace.
All: hear our prayer.

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

Peace
P: The peace of Christ be with you always.
All: And also with you!

P: Let us share a sign of Christ’s peace in whatever way you are comfortable.

Offering
“Emmanuel”
arr. Carol Tornquist

Offering Prayer
P: Nourishing God, you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come.
All: Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

The Great Thanksgiving musical notation consists of four staves in G major (one sharp). The first staff has two measures: "The Lord be with you." and "And al - so with you." The second staff has two measures: "Lift up your hearts." and "We lift them to the Lord." The third staff has two measures: "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God." The fourth staff has two measures: "It is right to give our thanks and praise." The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble clef, key signature, time signature, and note values.

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

“Holy, Holy, Holy”

Holy, Holy, Holy musical notation consists of five staves in G major (one sharp). The first staff has four measures: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,". The second staff has four measures: "Lord God of pow'r and might, heav- en and earth are". The third staff has four measures: "full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est." The fourth staff has four measures: "Bless - ed, bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the". The fifth staff has four measures: "Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est." The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble clef, key signature, time signature, and note values.

The Words of Institution

Lord’s Prayer
P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:
All: 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.

Invitation to Communion

P: Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised.

Communion

Communion Music

“Lamb of God”



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;

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

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;

have mer-cy on us, havemer-cy on us, have mer - cy.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us peace.

“There Is a Longing in Our Hearts”



Refrain

There is a long-ing in our hearts, O Lord, for you to re -

veal your - self to us. There is a long-ing in our

hearts for love we on - ly find in you, our God.

1 For jus - tice, for free - dom, for mer - cy:
2 For wis - dom, for cour - age, for com - fort:
3 For heal - ing, for whole-ness, for new life:
4 Lord, save us, take pit - y, light in our

hear our prayer. In sor - row, in grief:
hear our prayer. In weak - ness, in fear:
hear our prayer. In sick - ness, in death:
deep-est night. We call you; we wait:

Refrain

be near; hear our prayer, O God.

Text: Anne Quigley, b. 1955
Music: LONGING, Anne Quigley
Text and music © 1992 Anne Quigley. Published by OCP, 5536 N. Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213. All rights reserved.

Prayer after Communion

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in God's grace.

All: Amen.

P: Let us pray.

God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.

All: Amen.

P: I invite you to rise in body or spirit to receive a blessing.

Blessing

P: May God who comes among us, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always.

All: Amen.

Sending Song

“People, Look East”

ELW #248

1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing
2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is
3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the
4 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new
of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,
plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,
bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,
life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming
trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look
that in course the flour - ish. Peo - ple, look
bright as sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo - ple, look
with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Rose, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Star, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965
Music: BESANÇON, French carol
Text © Miss E. Farjeon Will Trust, by permission of David Higham Associates.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Keep awake.

All: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

“From the Squalor of a Borrowed Stable”

Stuart Townend

We Remember in Prayer; those hospitalized this week: Lori Dewey; those on our Home Visitation list and those on our prayer list: Maggie N., John Renner, the Woodworth family, Michelle Klinger, Pastor Bree, Matt Friel, Sandy Julifs, Mike, Dylan Wescott, Phyllis Jacobson, and Betty Steinke

Worship Assistants:

Opener/Head Usher/Closer – Dan Bartel

Acolytes – Bartel family

Greeters – Bartel family

Ushers – John Renner, Diane Yoeckel

Advent Readers – Bill & Carolyn Duncan

Reader – Carolyn Duncan

Sound – Bradyn Arians

Communion Assistant – Chad Arians

Altar Guild – Debbie O’Brien, Diane Yoeckel

Musicians:

Live:

Julie Woessner DeJonge

Recorded:

Dawn Zeigler

Next Week – December 21

Children's Christmas Program

Worship Assistants

Opener/Head Usher/Closer – Stacey Avelar

Acolytes – Avelar family

Greeters – Janie Billings, Nancy Eilers

Ushers – Nancy Beck, *Volunteer needed*

Advent Readers – Shore family

Readers – Stacey Avelar, Greg Zeigler

Sound – David Carrillo

Communion Assistant – Nancy Eilers

Altar Guild – Debbie O'Brien, Diane Yoeckel

Coffee Fellowship – Christmas cookies