

Sunday, December 21, 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

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Fourth Sunday of Advent Children's Christmas Program

Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

Prelude

"Fling Wide the Door"

stg. Nancy Raabe

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
“Canticle of the Turning”
ELW #723

1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
2 Though I am small, my . . . God, my all, you . . .
3 From the halls of pow'r to the for - tress tow'r, not a . . .
4 Though the na - tions rage from . . . age to age, we re -

God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
work great . . . things in great, and your mer - cy will last from the
stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -

won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait,
depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
jus - tice tears to ev - 'ry ty - rant . . . from his throne.
liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.

You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
The hun - gry poor shall . . . weep no more, for the
This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the

weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry
prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be

name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.

Refrain
My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your jus - tice burn.

Wipe a - way all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

Text: Rory Cooney, b. 1952, based on the Magnificat
Music: STAR OF COUNTY DAWN, Irish traditional
Text © 1990 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com, 800.442.5358.
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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 your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

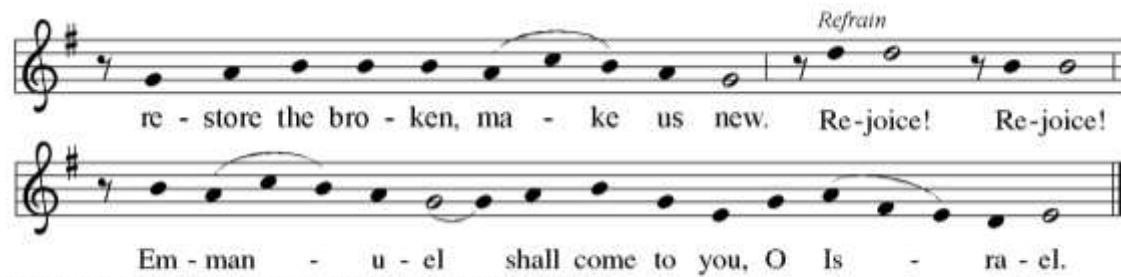
Lighting of the Advent Wreath
Leader: On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of love. The love of God is made known in the birth of Jesus, the Savior of the world.
All: “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).
All four candles are lit.

Leader: May the love of Christ fill our hearts as we prepare for His coming.
All: We light this candle of love, celebrating the love of Christ.

Advent Song
“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”
ELW #257 vs 7 only

7 O come, O King of na - tion - s, come, O Cor - ner - stone that

bi - nds us one: re - fresh the hearts that lo - ng for you;



Text: *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. composite
 Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.
 Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

“Just A Little Christmas” – Our children share the Christmas story

Welcome

Welcome everyone to Bethlehem! Let us open our eyes and ears and listen to the story of when Christ was born.

PART 1: Mary, Joseph and Angel

READING: Luke 1:28-38

²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” ³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.” ³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.



Special Music

“Away in a Manger”

Makenzie Bartel

READING: Matthew 1:18-24

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But after he had considered 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 home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). ²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

PART 2: Herod, Soldiers, Mary, Joseph and All Actors

READING: Luke 2:1-5

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while^l Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register. ⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

ELW #279



O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
For Christ is born of Mar - y, and, gath - ered all a - bove
How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is giv'n!
O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - d'ring love.
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heav'n.
cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.



yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light.
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
No ear may hear his com - ing; but, in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;



The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
and prais - es sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!
where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
oh, come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Im - man - u - el!

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1835–1893

Music: ST. LOUIS, Lewis H. Redner, 1831–1908

“Away in a Manger”

ELW #277



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for his bed, the lit - tle Lord
2 The cat - tle are low - ing; the ba - by a - wakes, but lit - tle Lord
3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay close by me for -



Je - sus laid down his sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked
Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I love you, Lord Je - sus; look
ev - er and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear chil - dren in



down where he lay, the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
down from the sky and stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.
your ten - der care and fit us for heav - en, to live with you there.

Text: North American, 19th cent.

Music: AWAY IN A MANGER, James R. Murray, 1841–1905

PART 3: Shepherds and Angels

READING: Luke 2:8-14

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

“The First Noel”

ELW #300 verses 1&2

1 The first No - el the an - gel did say was to
2 They look - ed up and saw . . a star shin - ing

cer - tain poor shep - herds in fields as they lay; in fields where
in . . . the east . . . be - yond . . . them far; and to the

they lay, keep - ing their sheep, on a cold win - ter's
earth it gave . . . great light, and . . . so it con -

Refrain

night that was so deep. No - el, No - el, No -
tin - ued both day and night. No - el, No - el, No -

el, No - el! Born is the King of Is - ra - el.

Text: English traditional

Music: THE FIRST NOWELL, English traditional

READING: Luke 2:15-20

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” ¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned,

glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”

ELW #282

1 It came up - on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come with peace - ful wings un - furled,
3 And you, be - neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing low,
4 For lo! The days are has - t'ning on, by proph - ets seen of old,

from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
and still their heav'n - ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world.
who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow:
when with the ev - er - cir - cling years shall come the time fore - told,

“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all - gra - cious king.”
A - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov - 'ring wing,
look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing;
when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors fling,

The world in sol - emn still - ness lay to hear the an - gels sing.
and ev - er o'er its ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.
oh, rest be - side the wea - ry road and hear the an - gels sing!
and all the world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

Text: Edmund H. Sears, 1810–1876

Music: CAROL, Richard S. Willis, 1819–1900

PART 4: Wise Men, Mary, Joseph, Angel and All the Actors

"We Three Kings"

1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are; bear - ing
2 Born a king on Beth - le - hem's plain, gold I
3 Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I; in - cense
4 Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume breathes a
5 Glo - rious now be - hold him a - rise, King and

gifts we tra - verse a - far, field and foun - tain,
bring to crown him a - gain; king for - ev - er,
owns a de - i - ty nigh; prayer and prais - ing,
life of gath - er - ing gloom; sor - rowing, sigh - ing,
God and Sac - ri - fice; heav'n sings al - le -

moor and moun - tain, fol - low - ing yon - der star,
ceas - ing nev - er, o - ver us all to reign.
glad - ly rais - ing, wor - ship - ing God Most High.
bleed - ing, dy - ing, sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia the earth re - plies.

Refrain

Oh, star of won - der, star of night, star with roy - al beau - ty bright;

west - ward lead - ing, still pro - ceed - ing, guide us to thy per - fect light!

Text: John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1820–1891, alt.
Music: THREE KINGS OF ORIENT, John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1820–1891

"Silent Night"

ELW #281

1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,

all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
love's pure light ra - diant beams from your ho - ly face,

Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly
heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your

peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792–1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885
Music: STILLE NACHT, Franz Gruber, 1787–1863

Thank you to all our Musicians, Sunday School Teachers, Parents, and Students for a wonderful Christmas Program!

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

“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”

arr. Mark Hayes

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 first measure contains a half note G4 and a half note A4, and the second measure contains a half note B4 and a half note C5. The second staff has two measures: the first measure contains a half note D5 and a half note E5, and the second measure contains a half note F#5 and a half note G5. The third staff has two measures: the first measure contains a half note A5 and a half note B5, and the second measure contains a half note C6 and a half note D6. The fourth staff has two measures: the first measure contains a half note E6 and a half note F#6, and the second measure contains a half note G6 and a half note A6. The lyrics are: [P] The Lord be with you. [C] And al - so with you. [P] Lift up your hearts. [C] We lift them to the Lord. [P] Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. [C] It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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 six staves in G major (one sharp). The first staff has four measures: the first measure contains a half note G4 and a half note A4, the second measure contains a half note B4 and a half note C5, the third measure contains a half note D5 and a half note E5, and the fourth measure contains a half note F#5 and a half note G5. The second staff has four measures: the first measure contains a half note A5 and a half note B5, the second measure contains a half note C6 and a half note D6, the third measure contains a half note E6 and a half note F#6, and the fourth measure contains a half note G6 and a half note A6. The third staff has four measures: the first measure contains a half note B6 and a half note C7, the second measure contains a half note D7 and a half note E7, the third measure contains a half note F#7 and a half note G7, and the fourth measure contains a half note A7 and a half note B7. The fourth staff has four measures: the first measure contains a half note C8 and a half note D8, the second measure contains a half note E8 and a half note F#8, the third measure contains a half note G8 and a half note A8, and the fourth measure contains a half note B8 and a half note C9. The fifth staff has four measures: the first measure contains a half note D9 and a half note E9, the second measure contains a half note F#9 and a half note G9, the third measure contains a half note A9 and a half note B9, and the fourth measure contains a half note C10 and a half note D10. The sixth staff has four measures: the first measure contains a half note E10 and a half note F#10, the second measure contains a half note G10 and a half note A10, the third measure contains a half note B10 and a half note C11, and the fourth measure contains a half note D11 and a half note E11. The lyrics are: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed, bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

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

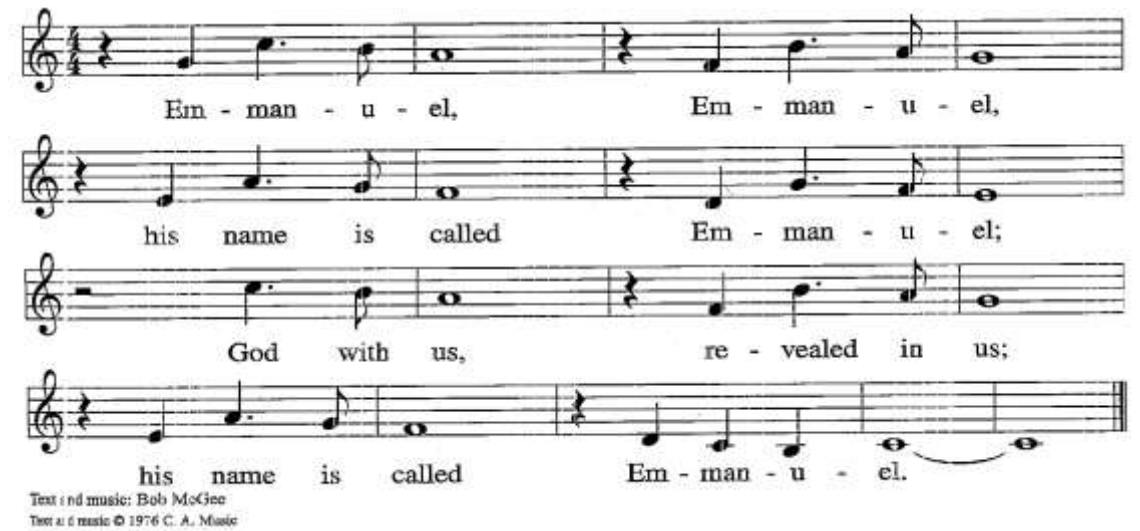
“Lamb of God”



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

“Emmanuel”

Sing three times



Em - man - u - el, Em - man - u - el,
 his name is called Em - man - u - el;
 God with us, re - vealed in us;
 his name is called Em - man - u - el.

Text and music: Bob McGee
 Text and music © 1976 C. A. Music

“In a Far-Off Place, Jesus Comes”



1 In a far - off place, Je - sus comes to earth.
 2 For the poor in heart, Je - sus comes to earth.
 3 In our deep - est night, Je - sus comes to earth:
 Sheep and cat - tle grace the site. As the
 Hum - ble shep - herds start the news. For each
 ra - diant star to light our way. Sum-mer's
 an - gel 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,
 na - ture'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.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953
 Music: TENTH NIGHT, Sally Ann Morris, b. 1952
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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

"He Came Down"

ELW #253



1 He came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love;
2 He came down that we may have light; he came down that we may have light;
3 He came down that we may have peace; he came down that we may have peace;
4 He came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy;



he came down that we may have love;
he came down that we may have light; hal-le-lu-jah for-ev-er - more.
he came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have joy;

Text: Cameroon traditional

Music: HE CAME DOWN, Cameroon traditional

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Keep awake.

All: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" with "Joy to the World"

arr. Christopher R. Brown

Coffee Fellowship Christmas cookies will be served following worship. Thank you to Bill & Carolyn Duncan for setting this up and to who donated cookies. All are welcome!

We Remember in Prayer; those hospitalized this week: Ron Billings; those on our Home Visitation list and those on our prayer list: Lori Dewey, 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 – 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

Musicians:

St. John's and St. Paul Sunday School & Confirmation Students

Makenzie Bartel

Mont Cessna

Julie Woessner DeJonge

Amy Zeigler

Dawn Zeigler

Christmas Eve Worship Assistants

8:00 p.m.

Opener/Head Usher/Closer – David Carrillo

Acolytes – Altar Guild

Greeters – Bob & Judy Bartel

Ushers – Bill & Carolyn Duncan

Advent Readers – Gale family

Reader – Bill Duncan

Sound – Greg Zeigler

Communion Assistant – Greg Zeigler

Altar Guild – Debbie O'Brien, Diane Yoeckel

Next Week – December 28

Worship Assistants

Opener/Head Usher/Closer – Mary Ordean

Acolytes – Ordean family

Greeters/Ushers – Dan Dir, Gary Fields, Keith Peugh

Reader – Keith Peugh

Sound – Bradyn Arians

Communion Assistant – Janie Billings

Altar Guild – Debbie O'Brien, Diane Yoeckel

Coffee Fellowship – *Volunteer Needed*

