


IN THE
beginning
WAS THE
word.

John 1:1



Sunday, January 4, 2026
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 January children's offering will go to the Sauk Valley Food Bank. Sauk Valley Foodbank supplies food to our local pantries so they are able to provide food to families in need during the week. We also run mobile pantries at various sites in Sterling and Rock Falls throughout the week where we give directly to families.

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

Second Sunday of Christmas

Within the gospel reading's profound words lies the simple message that God is revealed in a human person. Though we may try to understand how the Word existed with God from the beginning of time, the wonder we celebrate at Christmas is that the Word continues to dwell among us. Christ comes among us in the gathered assembly, the scriptures, the waters of new birth, and the bread and the wine. Through these ordinary gifts we receive the fullness of God's grace and truth.

Prelude

"We Three Kings"

arr. Carol Tornquist

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, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Savior, Prince of Peace.

All: Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Reconciling God,

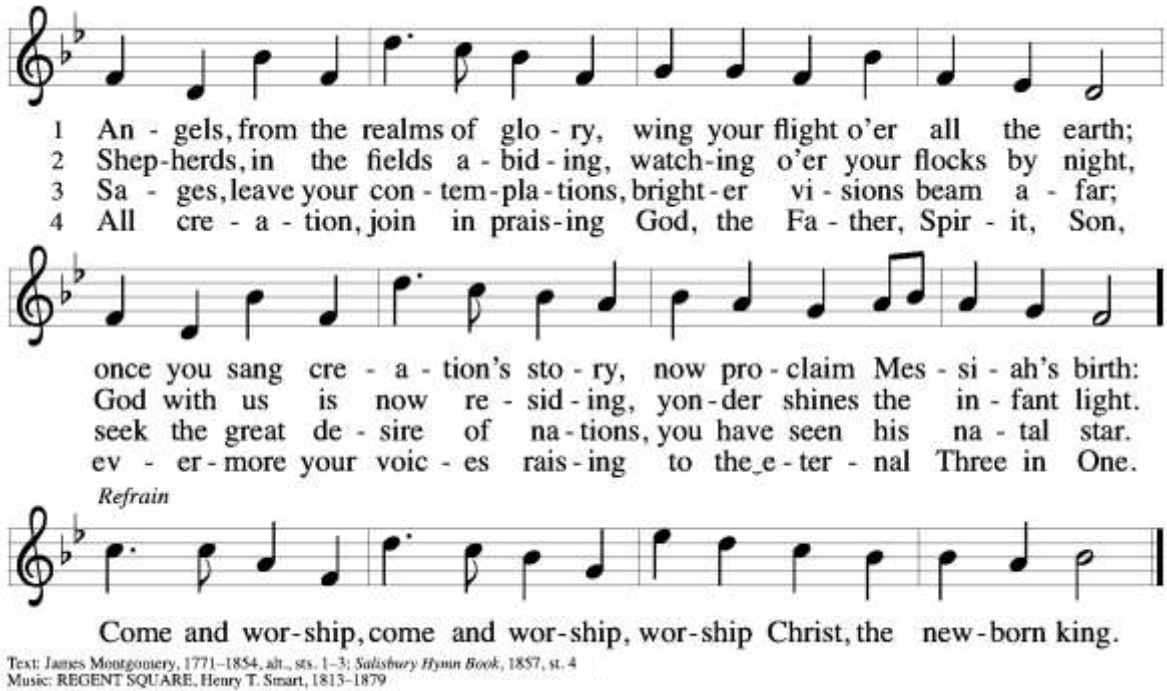
All; we yearn for your presence to transform our grief, pain, and despair. We confess that we have not always prepared room in our hearts for your love; we have not always recognized your presence among us; we have not always embraced your message of peace. We cry out, weary with the burden of violence, oppression, and fear. We confess our failure to make room for those seeking refuge; our participation in violent systems that harm your innocent ones; our reluctance to embody your good news. Be born in us today and teach us to sing the joyful song of your salvation. Amen.

P: God’s grace upon grace flows over you. ✝ Christ’s presence redeems the whole creation. Your sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad!

All: Amen.

Gathering Hymn
“Angels from the Realms of Glory”

ELW #275



1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
2 Shep - herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your flocks by night,
3 Sa - ges, leave your con - tem - pla - tions, bright - er vi - sions beam a - far;
4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God, the Fa - ther, Spir - it, Son,

once you sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
God with us is now re - sid - ing, yon - der shines the in - fant light.
seek the great de - sire of na - tions, you have seen his na - tal star.
ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing to the e - ter - nal Three in One.

Refrain

Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771–1854, alt., sts. 1–3; Salisbury Hymn Book, 1857, st. 4
Music: REGENT SQUARE, Henry T. Smart, 1813–1879

GREETING

P: 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.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray together:

All: Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives

and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14

⁷ Thus says the LORD: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, “Save, O LORD, your people, the remnant of Israel.”

⁸ See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor together; a great company, they shall return here.

⁹ With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back; I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path where they shall not stumble, for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him and will keep him as a shepherd does a flock.”

¹¹ For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

¹² They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again.

¹³ Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.

¹⁴ I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the LORD.

R: Word of God, Word of Life,

All: Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 147:12-20

R: Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion,

All: who has strengthened the bars of your gates and has blessed your children within you.

R: God has established peace on your borders and satisfies you with the finest wheat.

All: God sends out a command to the earth, a word that runs very swiftly.

R: God gives snow like wool, scattering frost like ashes.

All: God scatters hail like bread crumbs. Who can stand against God's cold?

R: The LORD sends forth the word and melts them; the wind blows, and the waters flow.

All: God declares the word to Jacob, statutes and judgments to Israel.

R: The LORD has not done so to any other nation; they do not know God's judgments. Hallelujah!

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the

gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

R: Word of God, Word of Life,

All: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel: John 1:1-18

P: The Holy Gospel according to John the 1st chapter.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

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

Children's Message

Sermon – “The Word Among Us”

Hymn of the Day

“Let Our Gladness Have No End”

ELW #291

1 Let our glad - ness have no end, Hal - le - lu - jah!
2 Proph-e - sies in days of old, Hal - le - lu - jah!
3 See the love - liest bloom - ing rose, Hal - le - lu - jah!
4 In - to flesh is made the Word, Hal - le - lu - jah!

for to earth did Christ de - scend. Hal - le - lu - jah!
God has sent the one fore - told. Hal - le - lu - jah!
from the branch of Jes - se grows. Hal - le - lu - jah!
our true ref - uge and our Lord. Hal - le - lu - jah!

Refrain
On this day God gave us Christ, the Son, to
save us; Christ, the Son, to save us.

Text: Bohemian carol, 15th cent.; tr. unknown
Music: NARODIL SE KRISTUS PAN, Bohemian carol, 15th cent.

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

P: Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

P: Hear us, O God.

All: Your mercy is great.

P: Hear us O God.

All: Your mercy is great.

P: With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

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

"Morning Star"

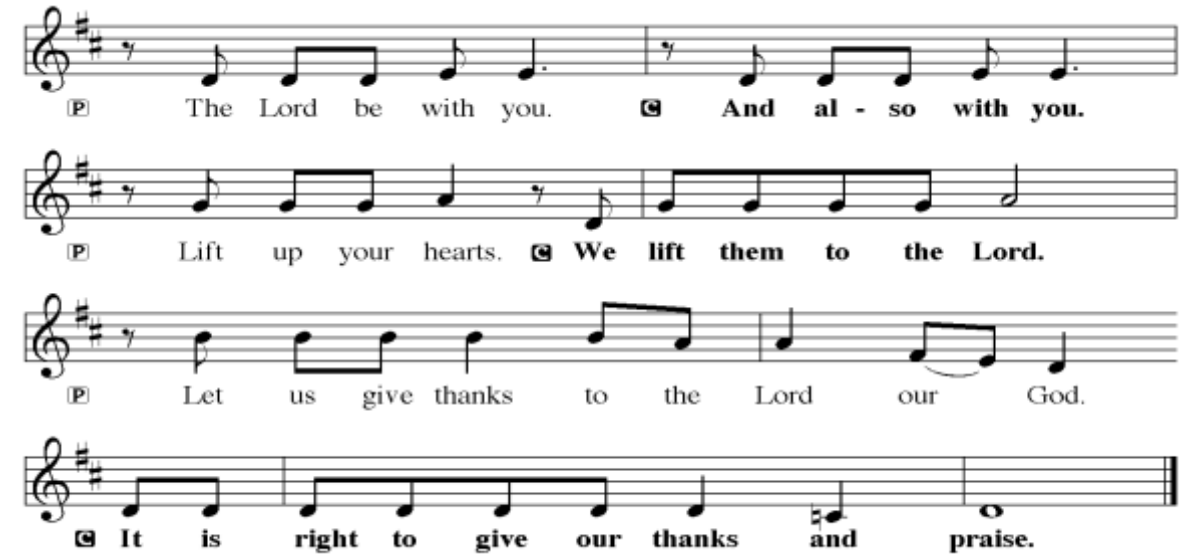
arr. Dorothy Wells

Offering Prayer

P: God of glory, great are your wonders among us and many are the blessings you bestow. Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world, that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace, through Christ our Savior.

All: Amen.

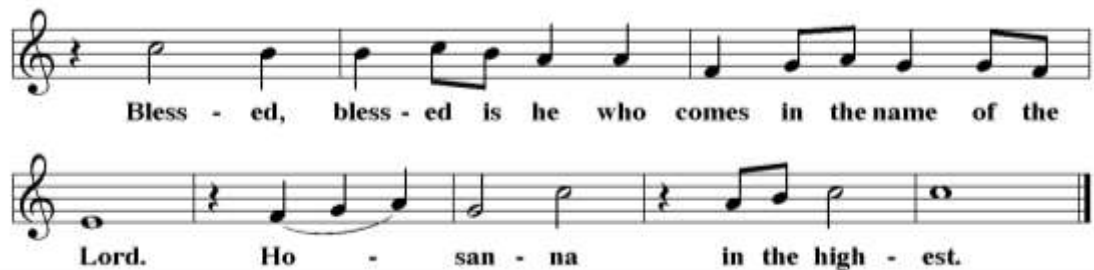
The Great Thanksgiving



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"





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: God is now in flesh appearing.
Come to the feast of joy!

Communion

“Lamb of God”



Communion Music

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

ELW #296



Text: Christina Georgina Rossetti, 1830–1894
Music: CRANHAM, Gustav Holst, 1874–1934

"The First Noel"

ELW #300

1 The first No - el the an - gel did say was to
2 They look - ed up and saw . . a star shin - ing
3 And by the light of that . . same star three . .
4 This star drew near to the . . north - west, o'er . .
5 Then en - tered in those wise . . men three, full . .

cer - tain poor shep - herds in fields as they lay; in fields where
in . . . the east . . be - yond . . them far; and to the
wise . . men came . . from coun - try far; to seek for a
Beth - le - hem . . it took . . its rest; and there it
rev - 'rent - ly . . up - on . . their knee, and of - fered

they lay, keep - ing their sheep, on a cold win - ter's
earth it gave . . great light, and . . so it con -
king was their . . in - tent, and to fol - low the
did both stop . . and stay right . . o - ver the
there in his . . pres - ence their . . gold, . . . and

Refrain

night that was so deep.
tin - ued both day and night.
star wher - ev - er it went. No - el, No - el, No -
place where Je - sus lay.
myrrh, and frank - in - cense.

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

Text: English traditional

Music: THE FIRST NOWELL, English traditional

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.

Incarnate God, you are among us at this table. May we treasure this gift and ponder in our hearts the mystery of your presence. Move us to discover the wonders of your love in the everyday moments of our lives, through Christ born in us.

All: Amen.

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

Blessing

P: The triune God, glorious Mystery, holy Incarnate One, abiding Comforter, ✠ bless you with endless grace, peace, and joy.

All: Amen.

Sending Song

"When a Star Is Shining"

1 When a star is shin-ing o-ver east-ern hills,
2 Where the world is wait-ing for an un-known day,
3 Lead us on, O Day-star, in the qui-et night;

when the air is si-lent, and the clam-or stills,
where a voice for-got-ten cries, "Pre-pare the way!"
guide us through the shad-ow with your gen-tle light;

when the night is wait-ing, and the old hopes rise,
Where an earth-ly pow-er makes the heart turn cold,
show us in a man-ger our re-demp-tion's sign;

then the time has rip-ened and the heart grows wise.
there the gifts are of-fered— in-cense, myrrh, and gold.
bring us to a morn-ing where the prom-ise shines.

Refrain
Lead us on, lead us on, to a morn-ing where the
prom-ise shines. Lead us on, lead us on,
to a morn-ing where the prom-ise shines.

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955–1993
Music: WHERE THE PROMISE SHINES, Bob Moore, b. 1962
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Dismissal

P: Glory to God in the highest!

All: And peace to God's people on earth!

P: Go in joy. Embody God's redeeming grace.

All: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

"Christmas Joy"

arr. Joel Raney

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

Worship Assistants:

Opener/Head Usher/Closer – Greg Zeigler

Acolytes – Altar Guild

Greeters – Susan Kuehl, Bev Graunke

Ushers – Nancy Beck, Donna Kendall

Reader – Greg Zeigler

Sound – David Carrillo

Communion Assistant – Nancy Beck

Altar Guild – Judy Bartel, Donna Kendal

Musicians:

Julie Woessner DeJonge

Amy Zeigler

Dawn Zeigler

Next Week – January 11

Worship Assistants

Opener/Head Usher/Closer – Stacey Avelar

Acolytes – Avelar family

Greeters – Audrey & Cathy Cox

Ushers – Ruben & JoAnn Garcia

Reader – JoAnn Garcia

Sound – Bradyn Arians
Communion Assistant – Chad Arians
Altar Guild – Judy Bartel, Donna Kendall
Coffee Fellowship – *Volunteer Needed*