

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

701 S. College Avenue, Newark, Delaware 19713

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Growing in faith. Growing in community. Welcoming all in Jesus' name.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Sunday, December 15, 2024

**10 AM Service of
Holy Communion**

Christ's presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good news—and cause for exultation—for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.



Catch the excitement! Witness the joy! Shape the vision!

ST. PAUL'S VISION STATEMENT (adopted 02/25/2018)

- To worship as a diverse community of all ages
- To engage in faith formation as a community grounded in God's word
- To maintain with depth and integrity the work of feeding the hungry and housing the homeless
- To nurture a strong foundation of generosity, giving, and caring for creation
- To provide a music ministry that encompasses congregation and surrounding communities

Worship at Home and Away

When we cannot be together in person, we can still hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. Therefore, we offer the 10 AM service through simultaneous live streaming to St. Paul's Facebook page. The service is then posted to the website, www.stpaulsnewarkde.org and can be found in the upper right hand corner of the home page, along with a digital copy of this worship folder, as well as a copy of the sermon.

**Large print worship folders and hearing assistance devices
are available in the narthex. Ask an usher for assistance.**

**A Prayground is available for young children
in the rear of the sanctuary.**

✠ GATHERING ✠

*Worship begins with God who takes the initiative and calls us into being.
We gather at the Holy Spirit's invitation and assemble as the community of faith
on the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection.*

*Upon entering the sanctuary, the people pray silently or engage in quiet meditation
allowing the music to focus their attention on God and God's kingdom.*

The sanctuary doors will be closed as worship begins with the prelude.

PRELUDE

“Rejoice, Rejoice!”

arr. Cathy Moglebust

HAF TRONES LAMPA FÄRDIG and VENI, EMMANUEL

Leah DiChristopher and Henry Chisholm

WELCOME

Please stand, as you are able.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
alive in the world, reviving creation, arriving soon.

Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

God of mercy, we confess that we have sinned.

We trust earthly powers and human authority alone.

We grow fearful. We cling to false comforts.

God of might, we confess that we have sinned.

We have turned away from our neighbors.

We have trusted false promises.

God in our midst, we confess that we have sinned.

We plead: come to us.

Bring your mercy to birth in us.

A righteous branch springs forth: it is Christ the Lord, our Savior, in whom we have forgiveness, life, and mercy. By the power of the Holy Spirit, receive the grace and forgiveness of God through † Christ Jesus, whose day draws near.

Amen.

ENTRANCE HYMN

Prepare the Royal Highway

ELW 264 (harmony)



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
Music: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.
Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress

GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.

Let us pray.

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching

of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Choir: Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
telling the world that the Savior is born.
Love is a flame that burns in our hearts,
Jesus has come and will never depart.

The assembly joins the choir in singing:



When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be
first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall
be a - fraid, none shall be a - fraid.

RESPONSIVE LITANY

In this season of Advent, we remember that Christ's coming will bring us great joy.

For those who are suffering and in need

Christ will bring us great joy.

For those who have experienced personal loss

Christ will bring us great joy.

For those who battle daily with inner demons

Christ will bring us great joy.

For those who endure deep disappointment

Christ will bring us great joy.

CANDLELIGHTING

This morning we light three candles. The first symbolizes the hope of Christ's coming. The second shows us the peace that the Messiah will bring us. Lighting the third candle signals the joy that is soon to spread throughout the world.

The assembly joins the choir in singing:



When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be
first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall
be a - fraid, none shall be a - fraid.

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious God, the remarkable joy that the birth of your son brings is a light to brighten our personal darkness and a reason to give all humankind a cause to rejoice. May this feeling of gladness and wonder fill our days throughout the year. We pray this in your holy name.

Amen.

✠ WORD ✠

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Rejoice, the LORD is in your midst

A reading from Zephaniah:

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
and has turned away your enemies.

The Sovereign of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;

the LORD will rejoice over you with gladness,
and will renew you with love;

the LORD will exult over you with loud singing
¹⁸ as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.

And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.

²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

Lord, we wait impatiently for you.

You are with us in your word.

RESPONSIVE READING

Isaiah 12:2-6

Antiphon: Is. 12:6

In your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

In your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might, and has become my salvation.

³ With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.

In your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

⁴ And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on God's name;
make known the deeds of the LORD among the nations;
proclaim that this name is exalted.

⁵ Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.

⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

In your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

SECOND READING

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice, the Lord is near

A reading from Philippians:

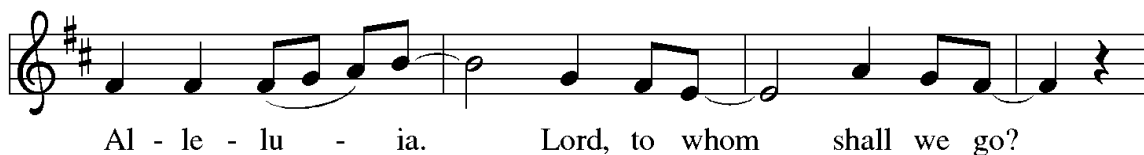
⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Lord, we wait impatiently for you.
You are with us in your word.

Please stand, as you are able.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

ELW Setting 6



HOLY GOSPEL

Luke 3:7-18

One more powerful is coming, baptizing with fire

The Gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

⁷ 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?” ⁸ 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. ⁹ Even now the ax 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.”

¹⁰ And the crowds asked John, “What then should we do?” ¹¹ In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³ John said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴ 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.”

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ With a winnowing fork in hand, he will clear the threshing floor and gather the wheat into his granary, burning the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, John proclaimed the good news to the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Be seated.

SERMON

Pastor Cris Frigm

Please stand, as you are able.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

ELW 242

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen

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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;
qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
crown you with light, 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.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

Nicene Creed

Let us confess our faith:

**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

As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

God who reforms, fill your church with courage to do your will. Empower your people in taking risks that bear fruit. Raise up leaders who will proclaim the good news. Lord, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

God who creates, you hold in balance diverse ecosystems. Encourage efforts to protect wild lands from devastation. Care for animals and people in the path of destructive fires, storms, and other disasters. Lord, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

God who leads, this world cries out for true justice. Guide legislatures, judges, and lawyers in actions steeped in love and restoration. Increase the desire to advocate for all who are confronted with discrimination and oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, class, or age. Lord, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

God who embraces, help us notice the places where your people are hurting or sick. We pray especially for Will, Jim, Dot, Jenny, Addison, Cindy, Judy, Stan, Janice, Claude, Nancy, Jane, Paul, Pat, Margaret, Jay, Rob, Marie, Susan, Michael, JoEllen, Elizabeth, Melissa, Ginny, Gary, Isabella, Heyward, Olive and Jim. Show your compassion and remember your people in love. Lord, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

God who abides, you dwell among the people of this congregation and those of our partners in ministry, especially Hope Lutheran Church in New Castle and St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Dover. Deepen our relationships with one another, and make us all aware of the diverse talents and gifts present in our congregations. Lord, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

God who consoles, we thank you for the time we have had with loved ones who have died, especially Karen, Gary, Sheri, and Ruth. Comfort us with the promise of everlasting life in you. Lord, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

The presiding minister concludes the prayers.

Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

*The assembly exchanges Christ's peace
in word and gesture, saying, **Peace be with you.***

Be seated.

***At this time, please sign the Fellowship Pad** (the black folder) found at the end of your pew and pass it to your neighbor and back again. We ask **visitors** to provide us with contact information so we can thank you for enriching our worship experience. We ask **members** to update any changes to their information so our records can be maintained.*

✠ MEAL ✠

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

GATHERING OF GIFTS

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, we offer our gifts for service and mission.

OFFERTORY

“Now Come, O Promised One”
Sanctuary Choir

Allen Koepke

Please stand, as you are able.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Let us pray.

Creator God, you made the whole world, even the farthest stars, and you draw near to feed us. We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine. Strengthen us with this food that we may live in expectation for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

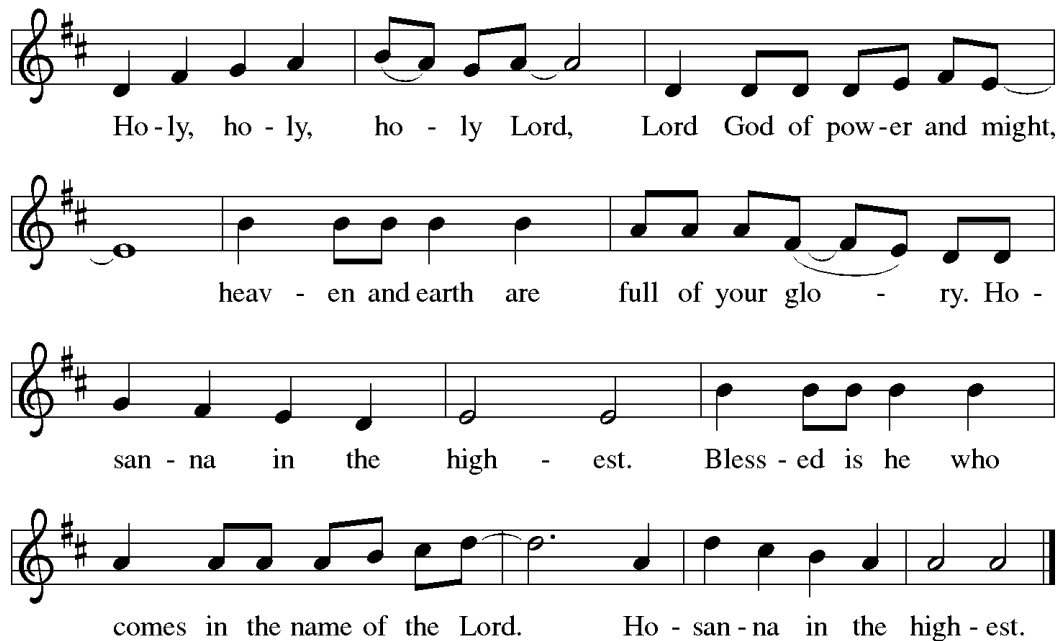
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

ELW Setting 6



Ho-ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow-er and might,
heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Holy God, the Beginning and the End, our Salvation and our Hope, we praise you for creating a world of order and beauty. When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair, you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy. At this end of the ages your Son Jesus came to bring us your love and to heal all the suffering world.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his life, death, and resurrection, we await his coming again in righteousness and peace. Send your Spirit on us and on this bread and wine we share: strengthen our faith, increase our hope, and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.

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

Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

We will be led in this holy season to the place of our hope and redemption, even as we pray, saying:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

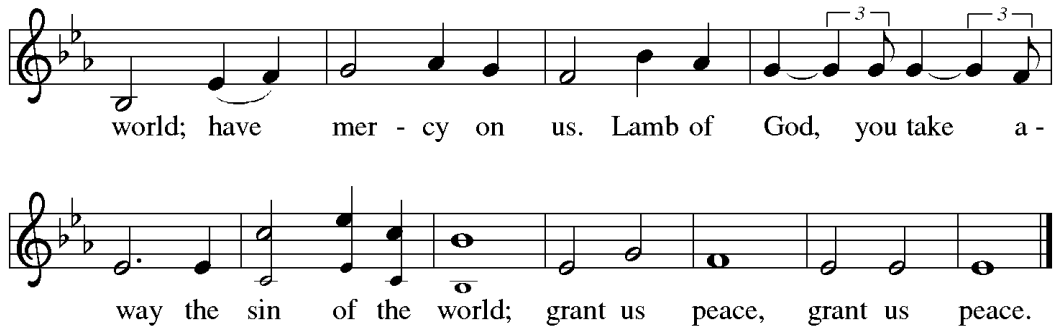
God feeds us with tender mercy. Come to the table.

As we wait and wonder, let us also be fed.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

ELW Setting 6

The musical notation consists of two staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is written in treble clef. The first staff contains the lyrics: "Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have". The second staff contains the lyrics: "mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the". There are two triplet markings (indicated by a bracket with a '3' above) over the notes "a-way" in both staves.



Be seated.

HOLY COMMUNION

In Christ's body and blood given to us, God forgives us and nourishes us for mission.



All are welcome at the Lord's Table. Children not yet communing are welcome to come forward for a blessing, indicated by crossed arms. If you would like to receive communion in your pew, please notify an usher.

Non-alcoholic grape juice and gluten-free communion wafers are available upon request.

DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

As the Dark Awaits the Dawn

ELW 261

Found on p. 16

Now the Heavens Start to Whisper

ACS 901

Found on p. 17



As the Dark Awaits the Dawn



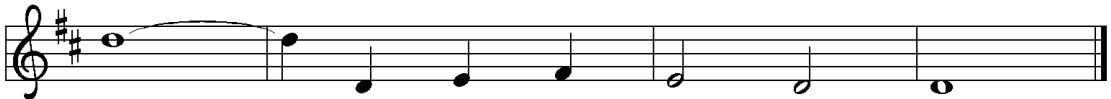
1 As the dark a - waits the dawn,
 2 As the blue ex - pec - tant hour
 3 As the moon re - flects the sun
 4 Shine your fu - ture on this place,



so we a - wait your light. O Star of
 be - fore the sil - v'ring skies, we long to
 un - til the night's de - crease, may we your
 en - light - en ev - 'ry guest, that through us



prom - ise, scat - ter night, lov - ing bright, lov - ing
 see your day a - rise, whole and wise, whole and
 heal - ing light re - lease, liv - ing peace, liv - ing
 stream your ho - li - ness, bright and blest, bright and



bright, till shades of fear are gone.
 wise, O lu - cent Morn - ing Star.
 peace, un - to your ho - ly dawn.
 blest; come dawn, O Sun of grace.

Text: Susan Palo Cherwien, b. 1953
 Music: LUCENT, Carl F. Schalk, b. 1929
 Text © 1996 Susan Palo Cherwien, admin. Augsburg Fortress.
 Music © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.



Now the Heavens Start to Whisper



1 Now the heav - ens start to whis - per, as the veil is grow - ing thin.
2 Heav - y clouds that block the moon - light now be - gin to drift a - way.
3 Christ, e - ter - nal Sun of jus - tice, Christ, the rose of wis - dom's seed,



Earth from slum - ber wakes to lis - ten to the stir - ring, faint with - in:
Dia - mond bril - liance through the dark - ness shines the hope of com - ing day.
come to bless with fire and fra - grance hours of yearn - ing, hurt, and need.



seed of prom - ise, deep - ly plant - ed, child to spring from Jes - se's stem!
Christ, the morn - ing star of splen - dor, gleams with - in a world grown dim.
In the lone - ly, in the strang - er, in the out - cast, hid from view;



Like the soil be - neath the frost - line, hearts grow soft to wel - come him.
Heav - en's em - ber fans to full - ness; hearts grow warm to wel - come him.
Child who comes to grace the man - ger, teach our hearts to wel - come you.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953

Music: SUO GÂN, Welsh melody

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After all have returned to their places, please stand, as you are able.

BLESSING AND PRAYER

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ
strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

Amen.

Let us pray.

Generous God, we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name.

Amen.

✠ **SENDING** ✠

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BENEDICTION

God of endings and beginnings, God in the darkness and the light,
God, our hope for the journey, † bless and keep you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG

Hark! The Glad Sound

ELW 239 (harmony)



1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come



prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
soul to cure, and with the trea - sures
shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal



pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

“Hail to the Lord’s Anointed”

arr. Garrett John Law

ES FLOG EIN KLEINS WALDVÖGELEIN

ASSISTING IN WORSHIP TODAY

Assisting Minister:	Jeanine Heath
Lector:	Henry Chisholm
Bread Provider:	Bob Weidman
Altar Guild:	Linda Radwick
Flower Guild:	Keith Tyson



The greens are given to the glory and praise of God
in loving memory of Kenneth and Shirley Bareham
by Mike Bareham and Jim Fitzpatrick.



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Hope Is a Star: A Candlelighting Ceremony for Advent reprinted with permission.

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I am sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you.

Matthew 11:10

ST. PAUL'S WEEKLY EPISTLE

IMPORTANT NEWS FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 15, 2024

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR C)

The arrival is fast approaching; the light from the Advent wreath is growing. How shall we prepare for God's coming among us? With joy! With resolute action! With prayer and thanksgiving! The Lord is near.

WEEKLY E-BLAST

We have made some changes to our weekly email blast. If you have not received any announcements, please contact Jerilynn Hinrichs, Office Administrator, at splcstaff@gmail.com so she can update your email address in our database.

ADULT FORUM

On Sunday, December 22, we wrap up our study of *New Sweden: The Only Lutheran Colony*, with a discussion titled, "Where did all the Lutherans Go? Colonial Ecumenism by Necessity." Join the Rev. Greg Johnson in the Blue Room starting at 8:30 AM.

LUNCH AND LEARN

LGBTQA+? Confused by all those letters? Join us after church this morning for lunch and to learn about the *Lutheran Introduction to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression* published by Reconciling Works. Winnie Hull will use the introduction to guide a conversation covering what all those letters mean, and to learn about lived experiences of people behind those labels and much more.

HILLTOP CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Next Sunday, December 22, is the day when we will collect and transport all of your generous Christmas gift donations to the Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center. Please take a last look at the SignUp Genius list for any remaining gift openings and consider fulfilling that dream for a child on Christmas morning. Here is the link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0C44A5A62CA20-53313339-hilltop#/>

Please bring your ***new, wrapped, and labeled*** gifts to church next Sunday morning by 10:00 AM for transport to Hilltop.

FISH COOKIES THIS WEEK

Our next FISH is Friday, December 20, so that means we'll be collecting cookies on Wednesday and Thursday of next week and packing into boxes on Thursday, December 19. If you're a "cookie baker" and you can make a few dozen extra, or if you're a "cookie buyer" and can pick up another tray, we'd love to have your contribution!

Drop off time is from 6 – 8 PM on both nights. Have questions or need a special drop off time? Call or email Keith Bart ([302-345-6107](tel:302-345-6107) / keith.m.bart@gmail.com).

And, as we do every month, we invite any and all members of the congregation to help with the other FISH activities. The Food Bank pickup is on Thursday, December 19, at 1 PM, followed by the re-boxing at 2 PM, and packing at 6:30 PM. Distribution is on Friday, December 20, starting at 2:30 PM. The latter three events all take place in Fellowship Hall.

HOLY HIKE

Outdoor adventurers of any age are invited to hike after worship today at the Judge Morris Estate. The 4.5 mile trail, located at 76 Polly Drummond Hill Road in Newark, is wooded and mostly flat. Questions? Contact hike leader Linda Grund at 302-824-5780 or lgrund923@gmail.com.

YOUTHERANS MOVE TO HOCKESSIN

The Young Lutherans of the Delmarva North Conference will have a Christmas Party and Gift Exchange on Sunday, December 22, at 5 PM at Grace Lutheran in Hockessin. They will make Christmas cookies and exchange gifts of \$10 value. Youth in grades 6–12 are invited to this evening of holiday fun. Questions? Contact Pastor Zachary Wright (pastorzach.blcne@gmail.com).

CHRISTMAS GIFT CARDS

Every Advent season we receive requests for Christmas gift cards from some of our neighbors to help them purchase gifts for their families. Please consider contributing a gift card or two from Walmart, Target, or other retail store of your choosing. Just put it in an envelope marked "Gift Cards" and place it in the Sunday offering plate, or make a donation through *Tithe.ly* using the QR Code found at the end of this bulletin.

GOOD GIFTS TREE

Choose an ornament from the Good Gifts Tree in the narthex, make your contribution to ELCA Good Gifts by check or phone (800-638-3522), and receive a greeting card to send to a friend or loved one, to tell them about your gift in their honor. Visit www.elca.org and click on the ELCA Good Gifts header for more information, as well as an order form with more giving options.

HERE AND BEYOND

We've just started a new church year and today we start a new chapter at St. Paul's as we welcome Pastor Cris, but the end of the calendar year and our fall pledging campaign is quickly approaching.

So far we've gone well "BEYOND" our original target of \$12,000 for the Endowment funds with pledges of \$15,870, which is really amazing.

As for the "HERE" part of the program, we now have 62 pledges for \$310,100, which is more than 90% of our goal of \$341,000 – we're almost there!

To everyone who has already pledged, thank you!

For those who have not yet pledged, we hope that you will grab a card from the Narthex on your way out this morning, or print it at home using the link below for the online pledge card. Fill it out and return it, either by mailing it in, putting it in the Offering Plate, or dropping it in the Gold Box at any time.

And, as Rich mentioned in his remarks last week, we are happy to take revised pledges from anyone who feels so inclined. In fact, we already have a few of those in hand!

https://stpaulsnewarkde.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Pledge-Card-Sept_2024-1-1.pdf

BOOKS AND BANTER

St. Paul's avid readers meet the fourth Wednesday of each month at 1 PM in the Youth Room. If you have a book that you would like to share with the group, please let us know. Please join us for conversation and fellowship.

Upcoming Books:

January 22 "I am Malala" by Malala Yousafzai (*Back to fourth Wednesday*)

BREWING THEOLOGY

For everyone 21 and older, please plan to join us on Wednesday January 8 at 7 PM at the Delaware Saengerbund for a tasty beverage, some snacks, and some hearty conversation as we plan our schedule for the upcoming year. If you have any questions please speak to coordinators Rudy Schock or Linda Grund.

OLDER WISER LUTHERANS

For all those OWLS (Older Wiser LutheranS) in our community, please plan to join us on Wednesday January 8 at 11:30 AM for our annual planning session. Can't make that date? Please remit your outing suggestions to Linda Grund at lgrund923@gmail.com or Bill Saylor at bsaylor2@verizon.net.

Vital Signs

	Nov. 2024 Activity (\$)	YTD Balance (\$)	Budget YTD (\$)	Over/Under YTD + (-) (\$)	Nov. 2024 Avg. Sunday Attendance	YTD Average Sunday Attendance
TOTAL INCOME	48,529.62	334,068.89	345,720.00	(11,651.11)	107	84
TOTAL EXPENSES	27,342.36	297,614.65	340,828.00	(43,213.35)		
DIFFERENCE	21,187.26	36,454.24	4,892.00			

- **Income:** YTD is 3% (\$35,108.73) below YTD budget projections. Pledged Offerings are ahead of budget due to several families prepaying for the entire year, while unpledged offerings continue to lag budget forecast by 25%.
- **Personnel Expenses:** YTD are 22% (\$42,776.43) below budget due to the interim pastor continuing into the second half of 2024 and the office administrator position being unfilled in August.
- **Administrative Expenses:** YTD are 19% (\$2,590.34) above budget YTD due to the costs associated with exiting our copier contract and higher than anticipated telephone and internet access charges.
- **Property Maintenance Expenses:** YTD are 3% (\$1375.70) above budget YTD due to high weekly cleaning service fees and lawn maintenance charges.
- **All Other Expense Categories (Worship & Music, Faith Formation, Utilities, Committee, Mortgage and Benevolence):** All these categories are running at or under budget.

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO RICH WALLDEN

As we begin the new church year and 2024 draws to a close, the Church Council would like to extend a huge thank you to Rich Wallden for all the work he has done to restore St. Paul’s website following a “hack” that completely disabled it. Over many months, Rich has dedicated untold hours to rebuilding a functional website for our church. Despite a long string of challenges, he has persevered on behalf of the congregation, and we want him to know that we are deeply grateful. If you haven’t visited the website recently, please do (<https://stpaulsnewarkde.org/>). Are you aware that there is a link to access all the bulletins, sermons, and LiveStreams going back to last Easter? If you miss a Sunday or would like to revisit a service, the recording is easily available to view at your convenience. You can also access St. Paul’s Master Calendar, a listing of fellowship and service ministries, staff and council lists, and a password-protected Members Only section where you will find the newly updated Membership Directory.

CONNECTION WITH CREATION

“Gimli, lower your ax.” So says Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002), as he, Gimli, and Legolas are walking through the mysterious Fangorn Forest. “The trees have feelings, my friend,” Legolas adds. “The elves began it, waking up the trees, teaching them to speak.” “Talking trees!” Gimli exclaims. He can hardly believe how alive the natural world is. From the “brood of vipers” to the “stones to raise up children to Abraham” to the trees called to bear fruit under threat of an ax, how might we read this gospel text in light of a living creation?

COMMENTS FROM THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

What needs to be born in you, in us, this Christmas? Have we, as a community, given up on a noble mission because our courage or stamina failed? Has the fervor of our hope in the kingdom already arrived and is now cooling? “The Lord is at hand . . . the peace of God keep you.” There is no person frozen in destructive patterns that the Lord cannot free. Zephaniah’s prophecy commands us to hope: “The Lord is in your midst.” Have confidence. Look into the darkness for the light. It may not resemble the Easter sun; it might be the fragile, yet stable light of a star in the night sky. Christ is our hope even in the face of intimidating, paralyzing odds. He has baptized us in fire, as John prophesied in Luke. We, the holy people of God, can dream of new birth because God’s Spirit dwells in us, powering us to always try anew.

—Lawrence Madden, S.J., in *Homilies for the Christian People*, 374-375

NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL

Lutherans looking for gospel may hear John the Baptizer’s preaching as primarily law. It can be difficult to reconcile his fire-and-brimstone style with the joy that traditionally belongs to the third Sunday of Advent. Yet despite John’s harsh words for the crowds, the people seem eager for his teaching—“What then should we do?” They keep asking questions fervently, even when the answers call them to higher expectations of moral and selfless living.

It’s the kind of teaching that people associate with the Messiah: good news that business as usual is on the way out and something new is on its way in. The status quo of greed, selfishness, scarcity, and complacency no longer has power. A new day of mutual sharing and justice is almost here. Images of the winnowing fork and the ax at the root of the tree suggest clearing out old habits and fears to make room for something new. In calling people to repentance, John invites them to turn away from the old life and turn toward God’s new life.

John has even better news: The Messiah is indeed coming, one who will not only call people to high expectations, but also enable that faithful living. Because the Messiah is coming to baptize “with the Holy Spirit and fire,” life will never be the same. Through baptism business as usual will be replaced by a fruit-bearing, joy-yielding, grace-filled relationship with God. It’s an excellent reason to “rejoice always” (1 Thess. 5:16): The Lord is near!





The New Ark Chorale Presents:

Joyful NOISE

Featuring a performance with
"Joyful Noise"

*a choir for those with physical and neurological challenges
and acquired brain injuries.*

Saturday, December 21, 2024 at 3:00 PM

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
701 South College Avenue, Newark, DE 19713

Tickets are \$20.00

*To purchase tickets ahead, go to [brownpapertickets.com](https://www.brownpapertickets.com)
or purchase at the door with cash, check or Venmo*



Join the Ministry of Music
of
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
for

Sounds of the Season

Sunday, January 5, 2025
Four o'clock in the afternoon

Sanctuary Choir and Chamber Orchestra present
Mark Hayes' INTERNATIONAL CAROL SUITES
*with guest singers and instrumentalists from the
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (UD).*

This annual holiday concert is free and open to the public.
A freewill offering will benefit St. Paul's Friends of Music Fund.

ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
701 S. College Avenue, Newark, Delaware 19713

Phone: 302-368-0064 Website: www.stpaulsnewarkde.org

Growing in faith. Growing in community. Welcoming all in Jesus' name.



**WORSHIP WITH US THIS CHRISTMAS
AT ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**

The Nativity of Our Lord

Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24

4 PM FAMILY SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

Special children's message by Pastor Cris Frigm

**7 PM CANDLELIGHT CAROL SERVICE
OF HOLY COMMUNION**

Preceded by a half hour of music for handbells, harp & organ at 6:30 PM

First Sunday of Christmas

Sunday, December 29—10:00 AM

LESSONS AND CAROLS WITH HOLY COMMUNION

Second Sunday of Christmas

Sunday, January 5—10:00 AM

CAROL SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

Sounds of the Season Concert—4:00 PM

Presented by St. Paul's Ministry of Music and Chamber Orchestra
with guests from the Chorus of the Osber Lifelong Learning Institute



St. Paul's Lutheran Church Welcomes All in Jesus' Name

Phone/Fax: 302-368-0064 Website: www.stpaulsnewarkde.org

Together in Jesus Christ we are freed by grace to live faithfully, witness boldly, and serve joyfully.



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Anne Sullivan, *President*

Barb Rhodes, *Vice President*

Heidi Burch, *Secretary*

Mary Collins, *Treasurer*

Kristine Cassar, Winnie Hull, Greg Johnson,

Susie Olson, Emily Pierce

St. Paul's Online Prayer Ministry

Send prayer requests to:

prayonstpauls@gmail.com

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Weekly Epistle/E-mail Blast

Articles due by Wednesday morning at 10 AM. Late submissions will be shared the following week. Please send articles to the church office at splcstaff@gmail.com.

**WISH TO SUPPORT THE MINISTRIES
OF ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH?
THEN SCAN THIS QR CODE**

