



Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025

WELCOME TO ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH!

Founded by German immigrants in 1745, St. John's Lutheran Church is one of the oldest congregations in the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are part of a rich heritage that now spans 184 congregations and 45,000 Lutherans in North Carolina, nearly 3 million ELCA members across 65 synods in the United States, and a global communion of 78 million Lutherans through the Lutheran World Federation. From a humble meetinghouse in 1745 to our place in the global body of Christ, St. John's continues to share God's love far beyond our own walls, living into the promise of the communion of saints.

SERVICE NOTES

- ❖ A printed cross ✝ is an invitation to make the sign of the cross on your forehead or body. We make the sign of the cross to remember our Baptism and the promise: *"You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."*
 - ❖ **Bold print** indicates a speaking part for the whole assembly.
 - ❖ Restrooms are located in the Narthex to the right of the front door and through the doors behind the choir to the left.
 - ❖ A nursery is available for your use. Ask an usher for directions.
 - ❖ Today's liturgy is **Setting Four** from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.
 - ❖ Our 2025 Advent wreath lighting, confession, and offering prayer liturgy is courtesy of the Rev. Joshua Copeland of Grace Lutheran Church in Salisbury.
 - ❖ Have questions? Ask the pastor. He is happy to discuss the movements of our worship service and why we do what we do as Lutherans.
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

POINSETTIAS ON THE STAND

The poinsettias on the stand are given by Jim and Susan Hayes in praise and thanks to God, in honor of Donald and Audrey Nesbit, and in memory of Lloyd, Helen, and Lynn Nesbit on their December birthdays.

ADVENT WEDNESDAY MEAL AND SERVICE

Join us for a meal on Wednesday at 6pm in Goins Hall and a short service in the sanctuary.

PRESCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS

St. John's Preschool will host their annual Christmas programs next week. Please reach out to Tammy if you'd like additional details.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Members, of any age, who would like to be a part of the Christmas Program, please let Emily Hartsell or Ellen Goodman know. No practices involved, just show up at 4:30 on Sunday, December 21, upstairs.

*The altar flowers are given by the Shuping and Dorton families to the Glory of God,
in celebration of Anne Shuping's birthday, and in honor of Ariane Zinke's visit.*

✚ GATHERING ✚

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Joy: Rest Stops and Surprises

Long trips can wear you down. That's when a rest stop, a cool drink of water, or even an unexpected laugh can make all the difference. Advent joy shows up like that — in surprising places.

Isaiah imagines the desert bursting into bloom, the weak becoming strong, the ransomed returning home with singing. James urges patience like a farmer waiting for rain — trusting that joy is growing even when we can't yet see it. And in Matthew, Jesus points to the surprising work of God: the blind see, the lame walk, the poor hear good news. Joy doesn't erase our weariness, but it refreshes us for the road ahead.

"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom" (Isaiah 35:1). On this road of Advent, we light the candle of joy, for God gives refreshment and gladness along the way.

Joy meets us when we least expect it.

God refreshes us for the journey.

Today we light the candles of hope, peace, and joy, celebrating God's surprises along the way.

Christ is our light and our home.

The first three candles are lit.

PRELUDE

The Little Drummer Boy

Davis

Maria Casper, Charlotte Moorehead, & Sam Moorehead

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who makes a way in the wilderness, who walks with us on the road, who welcomes us home. **Amen.**

On the road of life, we often carry burdens too heavy to bear. We stumble, we wander, we lose our way. But God meets us with mercy and grace. Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

Merciful God, we confess that we have lost our way. We have traveled paths of selfishness and fear. We have carried baggage of anger and regret. We have failed to see the signs of your love along the way. Forgive us. Lighten our load. Guide our steps back to you, so that we may walk in hope, peace, joy, and love. **Amen.**

Hear the good news: God does not leave us wandering. Christ comes to meet us on the road and bring us home. In the name of Jesus, † you are forgiven, freed, and welcomed. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness

ELW #251



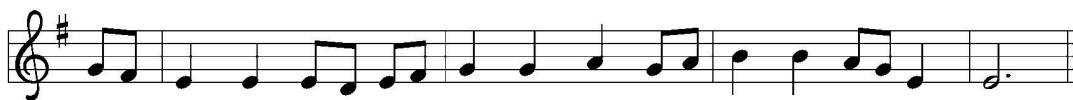
1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav - ior's praise!
2 To all who live in ho - ly fear your mer-cy ev - er flows.
3 To Is - ra - el, your ser - vant blest, your help is ev - er sure;



You looked up - on my low - li - ness, and I am full of grace.
With might - y arm you dash the proud, their schem-ing hearts ex - pose.
the prom - ise to our par - ents made their chil - dren will se - cure.



Now ev - 'ry land and ev - 'ry age this bless-ing shall pro - claim—
The ruth-less you have cast a - side, the low - ly throned in - stead;
Sing glo - ry to the Ho - ly One, give hon - or to the Word,



great won - ders you have done for me, and ho - ly is your name.
the hun - gry filled with all good things, the rich sent off un - fed.
and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all a - dored.

GREETING

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.**

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Refrain
Assisting minister



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia.

All



1 Wor-thy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us



free to be peo-ple of God. Pow-er and rich-es and wis-dom and



strength, and hon-or and bless-ing and glo-ry are his.

Refrain



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia.

2 Sing with all the peo-ple of God and join in the



hymn of all cre-a-tion: Bless-ing and hon-or and glo-ry and



might be to God and the Lamb for-ev-er. A-men.

Final refrain



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God, for the Lamb who was slain



has be-gun his reign. Al-le-lu-ia. Al-le-lu-ia.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. 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.**

✝ WORD ✝

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

TIME FOR OUR YOUNGEST DISCIPLES

Children are invited to come forward for a conversation with the pastor.

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 35:1-10

A reading from Isaiah.

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;

⁷ 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.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 146:5-10

⁵ Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God,

⁶who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;

who keeps faith forever;

⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;

⁸ the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.

⁹The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰ The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the Lord!

SECOND READING: JAMES 5:7-10

A reading from James.

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.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 11:2-11

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **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? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This 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.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

The Rev. Matt Hansen

HYMN OF THE DAY

Prepare the Royal Highway

ELW #264



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!

INSTALLATION OF NEWLY ELECTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

The following people have been elected by our congregation to positions of leadership. We give thanks for their willingness to serve. In baptism we are welcomed into the body of Christ and sent to share in the mission of God; we rejoice now that these sisters and brothers will lead us in our common life and our mutual mission as the people of St. John's Lutheran Church.

Angela Ferguson, Patti Fletcher, Rathel Goodman & Annette Herring

A reading from Paul's first letter to the people of Corinth: There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

You have been elected to positions of leadership and trust in this congregation, and according to our congregation constitution:

a. To lead this congregation in stating its mission, to do long-range planning, to set goals and priorities, and to evaluate its activities in light of its mission and goals.

- b. To seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support.
- c. To oversee and provide for the administration of this congregation to enable it to fulfill its functions and perform its mission.
- d. To maintain supportive relationships with the rostered ministers and staff and help them annually to evaluate the fulfillment of their calling or employment.
- e. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized persons.
- f. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill and, as differences and conflicts arise, to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.
- g. To arrange for pastoral service during the sickness or absence of the pastor.
- h. To emphasize partnership with the synod and churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as cooperation with other congregations, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, subject to established policies of the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- i. To recommend and encourage the use of program resources produced or approved by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- j. To seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.

On behalf of your sisters and brothers in Christ, I ask you:

Will you accept and faithfully carry out the duties of the offices to which you have been elected?

Newly Elected Leaders: **I will, and I ask God to help me.**

The congregation stands.

People of God, I ask you:

Will you support these, your elected leaders, and will you share in the mutual ministry that Christ has given to all who are baptized?

Congregation: **We will, and we ask God to help us.**

I now declare you installed as council members of St. John's Lutheran Church in the name of the Father, and the ✠ Son, and the Holy Spirit. Almighty God bless you, and direct your days and your deeds in peace, that you may be faithful servants of Christ. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

✠ MEAL ✠

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING

You may give online, by visiting www.stjohnsconcord.com/give or by texting “give” to (704) 706-2115.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Mary, Did You Know?

Lowder/arr. Schrader

OFFERING SONG

Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow

ELW #885

The musical notation is written on three staves in G-clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the notes.

Praise God, from whom all bless - ings flow; praise God, all
crea - tures here be - low; praise God a - bove, ye
heav'n - ly host; praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. Gracious God, you provide signs of hope along our journey. **We bring our gifts with hope.**
You make peace where the world is restless. **We bring our gifts for peace.**
You surprise us with joy in unexpected places. **We bring our gifts with joy.**
Receive these offerings, O God, and use them to guide all people home to you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

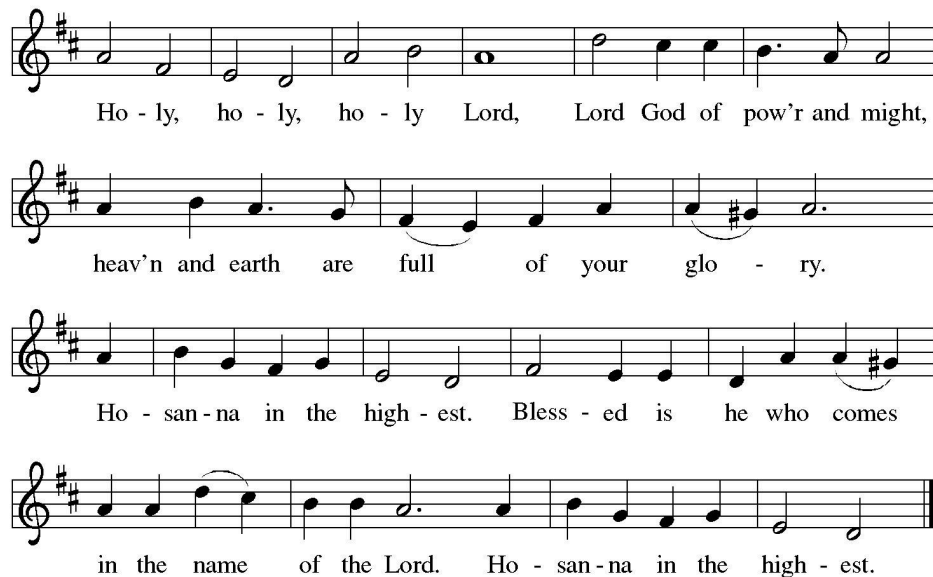
THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

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.**

PREFACE

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. Long ago you set your people on a journey, guiding them through wilderness and exile, promising a home where justice and mercy would dwell. Through prophets and messengers you gave signs along the way, stirring hope, peace, joy, and love in waiting hearts. In these last days you have made your home with us in Jesus, the Word made flesh, the light that shines in our darkness, the road that leads us safely home to you. And so, with all travelers on the way, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
heav'n 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.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

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.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE *(continued)*

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

As our Savior Christ taught us, we are bold to say,

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

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

DISTRIBUTION

- ❖ *You are welcome to receive Holy Communion. If you would prefer to receive a blessing instead, please come forward during the distribution with your arms crossed.*
- ❖ ***Please note: The homemade communion bread is gluten, dairy, and nut free.*** *If you prefer a wafer, please indicate by raising a finger as you approach the pastor.*
- ❖ *Grape juice, instead of wine, is also available.*

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray together. Heavenly Father, 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. Amen.

✠ SENDING ✠

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

BLESSING

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. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG

Blessed Be the God of Israel

ELW #250



1 Blessed be the God of Is - ra - el who comes to set us free
2 With prom - ised mer - cy will God still the cov - e - nant re - call,
3 My child, as proph - et of the Lord you will pre - pare the way,



and rais - es up new hope for us: a Branch from Da - vid's tree.
the oath once sworn to A - bra - ham, from foes to save us all;
to tell God's peo - ple they are saved from sin's e - ter - nal sway.



So have the proph - ets long de - clared that with a might - y arm
that we might wor - ship with - out fear and of - fer lives of praise,
Then shall God's mer - cy from on high shine forth and nev - er cease



God would turn back our en - e - mies and all who wish us harm.
in ho - li - ness and righ - teous - ness to serve God all our days.
to drive a - way the gloom of death and lead us in - to peace.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. God is with you. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

Postlude on "Divinum Mysterium"
"Of the Father's Love Begotten"

Lehenbauer

PRAYER LIST

Immediate Prayer Concerns

Nathan Moose (Health condition)
Lori Jones (Kristin Rowland's Mom - Health condition)

Ongoing Prayer Concern

Bob Blackwelder (Health condition)
Catherine Carriker (Health condition)
Lisa Edwards (Health condition)
Judy Fisher (Health condition)
Susan Hayes (Health condition)
Sandy Hickman (Health condition)
Rick McRorie (Health condition)
Sandy Moldovan (Health condition)
Anne Moose (Health condition)
Stan Parnell (Health condition)
Roger Shoaf (Health condition)
Al Sundling (Health condition)
Lucy Thomas (Health condition)
King Walters (Health condition)
Pr. Bob Young (Health condition)

Residents in Care Facilities

Larry & Faye Cline (Trinity Oaks)
Pr. Don Deal (Trinity Oaks)
Betty Ritchie (Trinity Oaks)
Amelia Ritchie (Terra Bella)
Martha Suther (Brookdale Concord)
Joy Waddell (Mt. Pleasant House)
Kay Walker (Brookdale Concord)

Homebound

Pat Blackwelder
Nancy Deal
Elaine Petrea

SERVING TODAY

The Rev. Matt Hansen *Presiding Minister*

Catherine Ritch *Organist*

Patti Fletcher *Lector*

Ellen & Rathel Goodman, Gerald Cline *Communion Assistants*

Phillip Casper, Keith Cook, Jeff Culp and Phil Fisher *Ushers*

Rowland Family *Livestream Support*

Ryleigh, Raegan, Emily Hartsell *Nursery Attendants*

Ryleigh, Raegan, Emily Hartsell *Altar Guild*

Bob Cavalline *Teller Lead*

CONTACT US

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ONLINE

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ON-SITE

Address 100 St. John's Church Rd, Concord, NC 28025

Church Office Hours Mon–Thu, 8am–1:30pm; Fri, 8am–Noon

Pastor Matt's Office Hours Mon–Thu, *by appointment*.

↪ *Please note:* Pastor Matt observes Sabbath every Friday ↩

The mission of St. John's Lutheran Church is to share God's love through revitalization, community, and outreach.



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