



Fourth Sunday of Advent
Chancel Choir Cantata
December 21, 2025

Have you ever heard a whisper?

“Hello!”

Can you all whisper back to me?

Whispers are quiet, gentle, almost like a secret. You have to lean in close to hear them. And I wonder if it's possible for the heavens to whisper at Christmas?

One silent night, far away, in a town called Bethlehem, the stars twinkled brighter than ever. And the angels were there, too. It was as if the whole sky was whispering: “Something wonderful is happening ...”

Let's all look up at the ceiling like we're looking at the stars.

Can you twinkle your fingers like stars?

Now let's whisper together, “Something wonderful is happening ...”

The heavens weren't shouting. They weren't making a big noise. They were whispering, because whispers make us stop, listen and pay attention.

And what was the whispering about? A baby. A tiny baby lying in a manger.

His name was Jesus.

Can you pretend to rock a baby in your arms?

The night Jesus was born, the shepherds heard the whisper in the sky when the angels sang. The Wise Men sensed the whisper in the star that guided them. And Mary and Joseph felt the whisper in their hearts: “This child is special. This child is God's gift.”

Sometimes we think God only speaks in loud voices or through big miracles. But Christmas reminds us that God often whispers. God whispers love and kindness and peace.

Can you think of one kind thing you could whisper to someone this week?

So, this Christmas, listen closely. The heavens are still whispering: “Jesus is here. God loves you. Share that love with the world.”

Let's all whisper together: “Jesus is here.”

Now say “God loves us” in a joyful voice!

Amen.



The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

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.
 - ❖ 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

NEWLY ELECTED LEADERS

Congratulations to our newly elected Congregation Council Officers: Vera Drye, *President*; Carl Walker, *Vice President*; Patti Fletcher, *Treasurer*; and Connor Rowland, *Secretary*.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Our family Christmas program is tonight at 5 pm followed by a pizza meal in Goins Hall.

CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Our candlelight Christmas Eve service will be Wednesday, December 24th at 8 pm. Please note: There will not be a nursery available for this service. All families are welcome to join us in the sanctuary!

THANK YOU

To all members of St. John's. Thank you for the cards, flowers, prayers and thoughts. Your concern has been a great help in my recovery. May God Bless each of you. - *Lucy Thomas*

THANK YOU

Many thanks to the Christmas Market Committee members: Vera Drye, Hailey Fletcher, Ellen and Rathel Goodman, Emily Hartsell, Susan Hayes, Angela Ferguson, Karen Miller, and Pastor Matt. Additional thanks goes to the David Ferguson and Will Herring who directed parking for the event along with Emily and John Hartsell. Davis Dorton and Yury Shuping provided assistance to many vendors in setting up tents and tables and chairs for the eating area. Gerald Cline, Larry Allman, Jim Hayes, Kevin Edwards, Connor Rowland, and David Johnson gave of their time to help with set up/break down of the event. Much appreciation to Annette Herring and Deane Moorehead for their work in the Heritage Center and Bonnie Shoaf for her assistance with the sanctuary performances. Also, much thanks to the members of St. John's who came to the event and encouraged their friends and neighbors to attend. – *Susan Shuping*

THANK YOU

To our wonderful Church family, thank you thank you for especially the prayers which have been so powerful in Bob's fight against an awful infection in his knee. We received word Tuesday that it has "cleared" and he is infection free and can have a new knee put in soon. Thanks for all the beautiful cards and your acts of kindness. Love, *Bob and Cindy Blackwelder*

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MOST RECENT GRADUATE

On December 12, **Layton Honeycutt** graduated *Summa Cum Laude* from UNC Charlotte with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. Prior to graduation he successfully passed the first step toward licensure by completing the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) Exam during the summer of 2025. Layton was also an active member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, where he participated and placed in the regional and international concrete canoe rowing competitions. During his final semester, Layton received the "Distinguished Student" award amongst his graduating class to recognize outstanding achievement and academic excellence.

For the past three summers and during his final semester of college, Layton worked as an intern with ARCO Design/Build in Charlotte. He will continue his career with ARCO as a Design/Build Manager on January 5, 2025. Layton will focus primarily on overseeing/managing self-storage construction projects, from preconstruction, design, buyout, construction, to project closeout.

The altar flowers are given by Mike, Doug, Dan and William to the glory of God and in loving memory of Linda Herring. It's hard to believe she has been gone for two years, and she is truly missed.

✠ GATHERING ✠

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

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Love: Welcome Home

"The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory...full of grace and truth" (John 1:14)

On this road of Advent, we light the candle of love, for Christ has made a home with us,
Love is the doorway, open wide to welcome us in.

God's love makes a home with us.

Today we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, giving thanks that Christ is our home.

Christ is our light and our home.

Light all four candles.

PRELUDE

Pat-a-Pan

Traditional French Carol

Carol Hinson, *Flute* & Pam Walker, *Drum*

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.**



- 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.

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 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.**

✝ 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 7:10-16

A reading from Isaiah.

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

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

PSALM 80:1-7,17-19

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim,
shine forth

² before Ephraim and Benjamin and
Manasseh.

Stir up your might,
and come to save us!

³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

⁴ **O Lord God of hosts,**
how long will you be angry with your
people’s prayers?

⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears

and given them tears to drink in full
measure.

⁶ **You make us the scorn of our neighbors;**
our enemies laugh among themselves.

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

¹⁷ **But let your hand be upon the one at your**
right hand,
the one whom you made strong for
yourself.

¹⁸ Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.

¹⁹ **Restore us, O Lord God of hosts;**
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

SECOND READING: ROMANS 1:1-7

A reading from Romans.

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL: MATTHEW 1:18-25

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

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

A TREASURY OF CAROLS

by Joseph M. Martin, Mark Hayes and Pepper Choplin

Joy to the World

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella

How Far Is It to Bethlehem?

Masters in This Hall

O Holy Night

Gesu Bambino

Ding Dong! Merrily on High!

Silent Night, Holy Night

Ensemble:

Catherine Ritch, Director

St. John's Chancel Choir



THE NICENE CREED

With the whole Church, we 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 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 THE PEOPLE

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

PEACE

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

✚ THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD ✚

In response to the word and promise of God, we give thanks as a community.

OFFERING

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

OFFERTORY

As with Gladness, Men of Old

Kocher

OFFERING SONG

Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow

ELW #885

The musical notation is written on three staves in G major (one sharp). The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the song. The second staff contains the melody for the second line. The third staff contains the melody for the third line, ending with a double bar line. 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.**
You welcome us home with love beyond measure. **We bring our gifts with love**
Receive these offerings, O God, and use them to guide all people home to you through Jesus
Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

Holy God, the Beginning and the Ending, our Hope as we wait,
we praise you for joining us to your people of old.

We bless you for your prophets who call us to righteousness
and promise a new earth with peace for all.

For the Word of your covenant, we thank you, O God.

We thank you, O God.

We praise you for the coming of Jesus our Lord,
who lifts up the lowly, heals the suffering world,
and proclaims your way of mercy and truth.

For your Word who is Christ, we magnify you, O God.

We magnify you, O God.

Send your Spirit on all who receive your Word.

Nurture our faith with your grace,

accompany us with your might,

and empower our zeal for your justice and joy.

For your Word through the church, we praise you, O God.

We praise you, O God.

All praise to you, holy God,

today, tomorrow, and forever. **Amen.**

✠ SENDING ✠

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

DISMISSAL

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

POSTLUDE

Hallelujah from the Messiah

Handel

PRAYER LIST

Immediate Prayer Concern

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)
Rick McRorie (Health condition)
Sandy Moldovan (Health condition)
Anne Moose (Health condition)
Stan Parnell (Health condition)
Roger Shoaf (Health condition)
Al Sundling (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
Lucy Thomas

SERVING TODAY

The Rev. Matt Hansen *Presiding Minister*
Catherine Ritch *Organist*
Sandy Hickman *Lector*
Phillip Casper, Keith Cook, Jeff Culp, Phil Fisher *Ushers*
Rowland Family *Livestream Support*
Ryleigh, Raegan, Emily Hartsell *Nursery Attendants*
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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