



# St. John's

Second Sunday of Christmas  
January 4, 2026

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## WELCOME TO ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH!

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*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.*

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### SERVICE NOTES

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- ❖ A printed cross  $\dagger$  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*.
- ❖ 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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## A NOTE FROM PASTOR MATT

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*“With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” –Ephesians 1:10-11*

People of St. John's:

There's a phrase we often hear in tough times: “God has a plan.” While usually meant to be comforting, this phrase can sometimes sound like God is carefully managing every detail from a distance, orchestrating our lives (*and all the bad stuff that happens!*) like some project manager who doesn't appreciate human realities.



Our scriptures this Sunday point to a different story. Through Christmas, of course, we celebrate that God entered into our difficulties as a human being. And in our second reading this morning, we hear how God's plan is all about *gathering* us together, *healing* us, and *leading* us home. God does not stand over our lives; God – Emmanuel – walks with us through them. And, best of all, God redeems them.

Much like John the Baptist being a witness to the light (but not the true light himself), we bear a similar vocation. Witnesses don't have all the answers; they simply tell the truth about what they have seen. We bear witness to light in word and sacrament, where we encounter Christ Sunday after Sunday at 100 St. John's Church Road. But we also bear witness in completely ordinary, day-to-day acts of faithfulness. We don't need to be in church or have a theological degree to bear witness to the joy of Jesus, even when life feels unfinished or uncertain. We experience all these things in our daily walk with Christ. Thanks be to God!

May the joy of Christmas continue to be yours as you remember God walks with us through it all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt".

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### **GROWTH & OUTREACH/CHRISTMAS MARKET GROUPS MEET FOLLOWING WORSHIP**

The Growth & Outreach Committee, including those interested in being on the 2026 Christmas Market working group, will have a brief meeting following worship today in the conference room at the back of the church.

### **WORSHIP & MUSIC COMMITTEE MEETS AT 2 PM**

The Worship & Music Committee will meet today at 2 pm in the conference room at the back of the church. We will begin planning for Lent and Easter.

### **FINAL REMINDER**

Have you turned in any year-end report that you are responsible for and checked your information to make sure everything is correct for the 2026 directory? Final deadline is January 5.

### **CONFIRMATION CLASSES RESUME JANUARY 25**

We will gather above the sanctuary at 8:45am to kickstart our 2026 classes. Please join us!

### **JUDITH FLETCHER RETURNS NEXT SUNDAY**

Judith will be leading our service on January 11th while Pr. Matt is away on a clergy trip. For pastoral care emergencies while he is away, please contact the office.

### **THANK YOU!**

Dear St. John's Women, Pastor Matt, and all of the congregation,  
I would like to thank each and every one of you for the support you have given me the past four years while pursuing my undergraduate education at UNC Charlotte. The thoughtful gifts, kind words, and prayers have made it all possible. I appreciate each of you for keeping me in mind and always giving an extra "boost" to continue learning and studying. I would also like to thank you for the recognition I received during this exciting time as I have ended my academic career and begin pursuing my professional career. The thoughtful gifts are greatly appreciated as well. It means a lot to me that I have such an excellent support system within St. John's Lutheran Church. Thank you all and Happy New Year!  
*Sincerely, Layton C. Honeycutt*

### **THANK YOU!**

To my dear St. John's family. Thank you for all your calls, cards, and well wishes you have extended to me and my family. It seems that I just get out of one situation and jump into another. I am improving with your love and support. We hope to be back with you all soon. *Al Sundling*

### **THE FRANCES GOINS CIRCLE**

The circle will meet on January 6, 2026 at 7pm in Goins Hall. Please feel free to join us in the New Year.

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## † GATHERING †

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

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### PRELUDE

*Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God*

Mueller

### WELCOME

### CONFESSON & FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Savior, Prince of Peace. **Amen.**

Trusting in God's steadfast love and faithfulness, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God, 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.**

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! **Amen.**

# GATHERING HYMN

### *That Boy-Child of Mary*

ELW #293

*Refrain*

That boy - child of Mar - y was born in a sta - ble,  
a man - ger his cra - dle in Beth - le - hem.

1 What shall we call him, child of the man - ger?  
2 His name is Je - sus, God ev - er with us,  
3 How can he save us, how can he help us,  
4 Gift of the Fa - ther, to hu - man moth - er,

*Refrain*

What name is giv - en in Beth - le - hem?  
God giv - en for us in Beth - le - hem.  
born here a - mong us in Beth - le - hem?  
makes him our broth - er in Beth - le - hem.

5 One with the Father,  
he is our Savior,  
heaven-sent helper  
in Bethlehem.

6 Gladly we praise him,  
love and adore him,  
give ourselves to him  
in Bethlehem.

## 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.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Let us pray.* 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.**

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+ WORD +

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

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## TIME FOR OUR YOUNGEST DISCIPLES

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

### FIRST READING: JEREMIAH 31:7-14

A reading from Jeremiah.

<sup>7</sup> 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.”

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.”

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

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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.  
<sup>14</sup> I will give the priests their fill of fatness,  
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the LORD.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

## PSALM 147:12-20

*We read a portion of Psalm 147 responsively*

<sup>12</sup> Extol the Lord, O Jerusalem!  
Praise your God, O Zion!

<sup>13</sup> For he strengthens the bars of your gates;  
he blesses your children within you.

<sup>14</sup> He grants peace within your borders;  
he fills you with the finest of wheat.

<sup>15</sup> He sends out his command to the earth;  
his word runs swiftly.

<sup>16</sup> He gives snow like wool;  
he scatters frost like ashes.

<sup>17</sup> He hurls down hail like crumbs—  
who can stand before his cold?

<sup>18</sup> He sends out his word and melts them;  
he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow.

<sup>19</sup> He declares his word to Jacob,  
his statutes and ordinances to Israel.

<sup>20</sup> He has not dealt thus with any other nation;  
they do not know his ordinances.  
Praise the Lord!

## SECOND READING: EPHESIANS 1:3-14

A reading from Ephesians.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. <sup>5</sup> He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup> In 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, <sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In 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; <sup>14</sup> this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL: JOHN 1:1-18

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

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

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

<sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him.

<sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> (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.'") <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> 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.

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

**SERMON**

The Rev. Matt Hansen

## HYMN OF THE DAY

*Word of God, Come Down on Earth*

ELW #510

1 Word of God, come down on earth, living rain from  
2 Word e - ter - nal, throned on high, Word that brought to  
3 Word that speaks God's ten - der love, one with God be -

heav'n de - scand - ing; touch our hearts and bring to birth  
life cre - a - tion, Word that came from heav'n to die,  
yond all tell - ing, Word that sends us from a - bove

faith and hope and love un - end - ing. Word al - might - y,  
cru - ci - fied for our sal - va - tion, sav - ing Word, the  
God the Spir - it, with us dwell - ing, Word of truth, to

we re - vere you; Word made flesh, we long to hear you.  
world re - stor - ing, speak to us, your love out - pour - ing.  
all truth lead us; Word of life, with one bread feed us.

## AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM & RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

*Let us pray.* Merciful God, we thank you for the Markley family, whom you have made your own by water and the Word in baptism. You have called them to yourself, enlightened them with the gifts of your Spirit, and nourished them in the community of faith. Uphold your servants in the gifts and promises of baptism, and unite the hearts of all whom you have brought to new birth. We ask this in the name of Christ.

**Amen.**

*Introduction to Eric, Abbey, Tyson, and Faith Markley*

I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church.

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God? *If so, say we renounce them.*

Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God? *If so, say we renounce them.*

Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God? *If so, say we renounce them.*

People of God, Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?  
**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

You have made a public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism: to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus *If so, say we do and we ask God to help and guide us.*

People of God, do you promise to support these sisters and brothers and pray for them in their life in Christ? **We do, and we ask God to help and guide us.**

*Let us pray.* We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give us new birth, cleanse us from sin, and raise us to eternal life. Stir up in Eric, Abbey, Tyson, and Faith, the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. **Amen.**

Let us rejoice with these sisters and brothers in Christ. **We rejoice with you in the life of baptism.** Together we will give thanks and praise to God and proclaim the good news to all the world.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

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

## **PEACE**

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

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## † MEAL †

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

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### OFFERTORY

*Children, Go Where I Send Thee*

arr. Hayes

### OFFERING

*You may give online, by visiting [www.stjohnsconcord.com/give](http://www.stjohnsconcord.com/give) or by texting "give" to (704) 706-2115.*

### OFFERING HYMN

*Love Has Come*

ELW #292



1 Love has come—a light in the dark - ness! Love shines forth in the  
2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der. Love is God now a -  
3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us! Love is life ev - er -



Beth - le - hem skies. See, all heav-en has come to pro - claim it;  
sleep in the hay. See the glow in the eyes of his moth - er;  
last - ing and free. Love is Je - sus with - in and a - mong us.



hear how their song of joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to  
what is the name her heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the  
Love is the peace our hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the



you, a Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.  
name she whis - pers; Love! Love! Je - sus, Im - man - u - el.  
gift of Christ-mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

### OFFERING PRAYER

*Let us pray. 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. 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. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see. 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:

## 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, Creator of all and Source of life, at the birth of time your word brought light into the world. In the fullness of time, you sent your Word, born of Mary, to shine in our darkness and to make us your daughters and sons.

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

## THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE *(continued)*

Remembering, therefore, his birth and life among us, his death and resurrection, we await his coming again when all things will be restored in him. By your Spirit bless us and this bread and cup, that, held and nourished by you, we may live as your children, shining with the light 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

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

## 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.* 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. Amen.

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## ⊕ SENDING ⊕

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

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### BLESSING

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ Child. Almighty God, Father, ⊕ Son, and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

### SENDING HYMN

*God's Word Is Our Great Heritage*

ELW #509



God's word is our great her - i - tage and shall be ours for - ev - er;  
to spread its light from age to age shall be our chief en - deav - or.  
Through life it guides our way; in death it is our stay. Lord, grant while  
time shall last your church may hold it fast through-out all gen - er - a - tions.

### DISMISSAL

Go in peace; the Word of God dwells within you richly. **Thanks be to God.**

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## SERVING TODAY

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**The Rev. Matt Hansen** *Presiding Minister*

**Catherine Ritch** *Organist*

**Sandy Hickman** *Lector*

**Anne Shuping, Rathel & Ellen Goodman** *Communion Assistants*

**Stan Parnell, Larry Allman, Bob Blackwelder & Gerald Cline** *Ushers*

**Shuping Family** *Livestream Support*

**Patti & Hailey Fletchert** *Nursery Attendants*

**Diane Miller, Anne Shuping** *Altar Guild*

**Carl Walker** *Teller Lead*

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## CONTACT US

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### BY PHONE

**Melinda Redding, Church Office** (704) 436-6081

**Admin Assistant's Mobile** (704) 213-0784

**Pastor Matt's Mobile** (612) 704-2828

### ONLINE

**Office Email** [office@stjohnsconcord.com](mailto:office@stjohnsconcord.com)

**Pastor Matt's Email** [matt@stjohnsconcord.com](mailto:matt@stjohnsconcord.com)

### 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 ←

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



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