

MIDWEEK ADVENT WORSHIP
Wednesday, December 14, 2022

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, WELCOME TO ST. PAUL'S!

7:00 p.m.



WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP (*stand*)

The Spirit and the Church cry out:
Come, Lord Jesus!

All those who await His appearance pray:
Come, Lord Jesus!

The whole creation pleads:
Come, Lord Jesus!

HYMN OF LIGHT LSB 891

O Light Whose Splendor

- 1 **O Light whose splendor thrills and gladdens
 With radiance brighter than the sun,
 Pure gleam of God's unending glory,
 O Jesus, blest Anointed One;**
- 2 **As twilight hovers near at sunset,
 And lamps are lit, and children nod,
 In evening hymns we lift our voices
 To Father, Spirit, Son: one God.**
- 3 **In all life's brilliant timeless moments,
 Let faithful voices sing Your praise,
 O Son of God, our Life-bestower,
 Whose glory lightens endless days.**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

We light the third candle on the Advent wreath as a bright light that reminds us of the guidance we have in God's Word and in our Savior Jesus, the Word made flesh. The prophet Isaiah spoke of a highway prepared by God, the Way of holiness: "The redeemed shall walk there" (Isaiah 35:8-9).

Holy Child of Bethlehem, be born in us today. You were born to redeem us. Through faith in your name we walk the Way of holiness.

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Holy Child of Bethlehem, be born in us today. You alone are the way of salvation. In the power of the Spirit, guide us according to the truth of your Word.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Because Advent is a season of preparation, let us prepare our hearts by confessing our sins.

We kneel

Almighty God,

you give us your Word to teach us the Way of salvation and guide us in lives of service to you. We confess that we often turn away from that guidance and follow sinful ways instead. We listen to the temptations of the world and do what seems right in our own eyes. Have mercy on us and forgive us.

In mercy, God sent his Son into the world to be our Savior. Jesus took our sins onto himself and carried them to the cross, where he suffered the penalty of death in our place. I therefore announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord God, guide our feet in the way of peace!

- 1 Arise, O Christian people!
Prepare yourselves today;
Prepare to greet the Savior,
Who takes your sins away.
To us by grace alone
The truth and light were given;
The promised Lord from heaven
To all the world is shown.
- 2 Prepare the way before Him;
Prepare for Him the best.
Cast out what would offend Him,
This great, this heav'nly guest.
Make straight, make plain the way:
The lowly valleys raising,
The heights of pride abasing,
His path all even lay.
- 3 The humble heart and lowly
God raises up on high;
Beneath His feet in terror
The haughty soul shall lie.
The heart sincere and right,
That heeds God's invitation
And makes true preparation—
It is the Lord's delight.
- 4 Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus;
Turn not from me aside,
And help me to receive You
This blessed Adventtide.
From stall and manger low
Come now to dwell within me;
I'll sing Your praises gladly
And forth Your glory show.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you have given us the gift of your holy Word. In its sacred pages we learn of your mighty acts of power and your promise of the Messiah as proclaimed through the prophets.

We see that promise fulfilled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ; the Word made flesh.

As we follow our Lord in faith, we find comfort, hope and guidance through the Holy Scriptures.

Help us by your Spirit to grow stronger in faith as we learn all that you have done for us. Guide us according to your will, hear our prayer and accept our praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING (Be seated)

Psalm 31:1-5

In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me!

Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily!
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me!

For you are my rock and my fortress;
and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;
you take me out of the net they have hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.

Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

NEW TESTAMENT READING

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from

life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL VERSE (Stand)

LSB 361

**O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Immanuel!**

GOSPEL READING

Luke 1:67-79

And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we should be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us;
to show the mercy promised to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people

in the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of
death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON (Be seated)

Dear friends in Christ:

I read a story this week about a pastor who went out into the mountains near his home to find the family Christmas tree. Perhaps he got a little spun up looking for just the right tree, because by the time he finally found it, he realized he no longer knew where he was.

After pulling the tree around for a long time trying to find some landmarks he remembered, he suddenly heard a voice: “Hey, pastor. You got a nice tree there.” Amazingly, it was a member of his church. And not only that, but the man knew the area quite well and easily led the pastor back to where he parked his car. The two had a big laugh about their reversed roles in leading someone along the right path.

In telling the story, the pastor quoted today’s Old Testament reading – Psalm 31. He told how his friend from church was “a rock and fortress” for him that day and how he trusted him to “lead and guide him” to safety. The Psalm tells us these things to remind us how God is always there to care for his people. The story about the pastor reminds us that sometimes we get to see that care and guidance from God in very direct ways.

Psalm 31 is a prayer credited to David – former shepherd, excellent songwriter, and great king of Israel. A possible setting for the psalm is the conspiracy during his kingship in which his son Absalom plotted to overthrow and assassinate him. Reading through the first five verses of the psalm, you catch the urgency of David’s situation.

David begins with a prayer for deliverance and rescue, asking God to be his “rock and fortress.” Then, still in prayer, he confesses that God is in fact these things for him already – his rock and fortress. The repetition shows that David trusts God to lead and guide him as God sees fit.

Note that David asks God to lead and guide “for your name’s sake.” David can expect this from God because this is what God does – he leads and guides. “For your name’s sake” is a way of acknowledging that God must be true to who he is.

We should not miss this tie here between prayer and trust. David was confident in prayer because he trusted in the Lord. He knew the Lord, and the Lord knew him. They had a track record together. David had learned that the name of the Lord could be trusted. “You have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God,” he prays.

In the same verse, David gives us another beautiful prayer of trust: “Into your hands I commit my spirit.” These words would become a cherished prayer spoken for centuries by Jewish children at bedtime. The prayer’s significance would be even more enhanced when Jesus spoke the prayer from the cross just before he died: “Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). On the cross, our Lord fell asleep in his Father’s arms trusting that he was safe.

The story of Advent is a story of God leading and guiding. We see this throughout the scriptures: from a fallen Eden where God promised one who would crush the serpent’s head... to Abraham, called by God to lead a chosen nation. From the redeeming exodus of God’s enslaved people... to the return of God’s people from exile in Babylon. From the prophets to the songwriters, from God choosing Mary to give birth to the world’s Savior... and to John the Baptist preparing his way. From Bethlehem to Nazareth to Capernaum to Jerusalem and back to the Father’s side. From the teaching to the healing, from the dying to the rising, from the apostles and martyrs... to the church today. Through it all, through every twist and turn in the amazing plot of our sacred story, God has been leading and guiding for his name’s sake.

You and I know the Lord too. And we trust him to lead and guide us because of this amazing rescue history – the great sacred story arching over all of human history.

We trust the Lord, too, because we have our own stories of his leading and guiding. All of us have had times, like David, when we were threatened. And all of us have had times too, like that pastor out in the woods, when we were lost or uncertain, struggling to decide which way to go. In those times we were often thinking the worst. And we may have even cried out like children in the night.

But then we turned to the Lord in faith – doing so through our prayer. We remembered that he was our rock and fortress, promising to lead and guide us.

And then we watched as God came through, once again, just like he always does. He may not have worked things in the way we wanted him to – but he showed his love and care just the same.

About that prayer in Psalm 31, I like the way it's paraphrased in the version known as *The Message*. There we say to God: "You're my cave to hide in, my cliff to climb. Be my safe leader, be my true mountain guide. Free me from hidden traps; I want to hide in you. I've put my life in your hands. You won't drop me, you'll never let me down" (Psalm 31:3-5). The paraphrase definitely takes some liberties, and thus is no substitute for a literal translation. But it speaks to us in plain and modern language, and paints a scene that is more reflective of our time today.

Many of you know the poet, Christina Rossetti. She wrote in the mid-19th century and her children's poetry and religious verse are still read and cherished today. She is probably best known as the poet who wrote the lyrics for the Christmas carol "In the Bleak Midwinter." In that poem, God's care amidst the threats of winter is clearly pictured and beautifully shown.

But God's care is taken to another level in a lesser-known poem by the same author. Rossetti's "Up-Hill" presents a dialogue between a trekker ascending toward an inn and a voice encouraging her along the way. The poem is structured very simply – the uphill traveler asks

questions, and the encouraging voice responds. Christians easily identify the responding voice as the voice of God, who clearly and lovingly responds to anxious questions and affirms his promises of safety and rest. The poem goes like this:

Does the road wind up-hill all the way? Yes, to the very end. Will the day's journey take the whole long day? From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place? A roof for when the slow dark hours begin. May not the darkness hide it from my face? You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night? Those who have gone before. Then must I knock, or call when just in sight? They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak? Of labour you shall find the sum. Will there be beds for me and all who seek? Yea, beds for all who come.

(Christina Rossetti, "Up-Hill," Goblin Market and Other Poems, Macmillan, 1862)

In all the uphill treks of our lives, God is with us to lead and guide us. He speaks words of hope and encouragement along the way. And most importantly, his promises are sure.

Others, too, have gone up the hills we face. They witness to us of God's help. We hear their voices in the scriptures. We hear them, too, in the church and through the poets.

Most of all, our trust and confidence come because of the one who journeyed to the cross. In his uphill trek, Jesus trusted the love of the Father and found rest in his dying breath. God then raised him from the dead. And he will do the same with us.

That journey of our Lord and Savior Jesus began at the manger. And for us, the journey can begin any time we pray to the Lord in faith.

So let us then pray, at Christmas time and always: “Lord Christ, be born in us today.” That birth will bring blessing, renewal and guidance... all the way to life eternal.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

MAGNIFICAT (Stand) LSB 933

My Soul Rejoices

1 My soul rejoices,
My spirit voices—
Sing the greatness of the
Lord!
For God my Savior
Has shown me favor—
Sing the greatness of the
Lord!
With praise and blessing,
Join in confessing
God, who is solely
Mighty and holy—
O sing the greatness of God
the Lord!
His mercy surely
Shall rest securely
On all who fear Him,
Love and revere Him—
O sing the greatness of God
the Lord!

2 His arm now baring,
His strength declaring—
Sing the greatness of the
Lord!
The proud He scatters,
Their rule He shatters—
Sing the greatness of the
Lord!
Oppression halted;
The meek exalted.
Full are the hungry;
Empty, the wealthy—
O sing the greatness of God
the Lord!
Here is the token
All that was spoken
To Abr’ham’s offspring
God is fulfilling—
O sing the greatness of God
the Lord!

THE PRAYERS AND CONCLUDING LITURGY (Kneel)

p. 249-252

- 1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

- 2 O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who ord'rst all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go. *Refrain*
- 3 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the Law
In cloud and majesty and awe. *Refrain*
- 4 O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's tree,
Free them from Satan's tyranny
That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save,
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain*
- 5 O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery. *Refrain*
- 6 O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight. *Refrain*
- 7 O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace. *Refrain*

THOSE SERVING:

Greeter: Steve Berg

Lay Reader: Dan Buuck

MIDWEEK ADVENT SERVICES

December 14, 21 at 7:00 p.m.



Christmas Eve Worship - Saturday December 24

5:00 p.m. Candlelight service for families

8:00 p.m. Candlelight service with Holy Communion

Christmas Day Worship - Sunday, December 25

10:00 a.m. Celebration of Christ's Birth
with Holy Communion

Worship Notes

Thank you for worshipping with us at St. Paul's! In worship Christ is present among His gathered people and the Holy Spirit is poured out through Word and Sacrament.

If you have a need or concern that you would like us to lift up in prayer, you may fill out a yellow **Prayer Request Card** and give it to the greeter or pastor.

Restrooms can be found both downstairs and near the parking lot entrance.

Parents can take their children to the **Cry Room** as needed, but we love to have them with us in worship. Before you leave, we ask that you fill out a **Fellowship Card** and place it in the offering box at the sanctuary entrance.

In **the Lord's Supper**, Jesus gives us his true body and blood. This meal forgives our sins and strengthens our faith. The Supper is for baptized Christians who have been taught the faith, examined themselves and share with us in confession. If you are not communing, you may still come forward for a blessing (bow your head or cross your arms). If you're not sure whether you should commune, please speak first to one of our pastors.

We pray that God's love and care be evident to you in our gathering, and that He gladden your heart and give peace to you this day!

Acknowledgements

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Arise, O Christian People Text: Valentin Thilo, 1607–62; tr. Arthur T. Russell, 1806–74, alt. Tune: New Catechismus Gesangbüchlein, 1598, Hamburg, alt. Text and tune: Public domain

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel Text: Latin, c. 12th cent.; Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum, 1710, Köln; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–66, alt.

Tune: French, 15th cent. Text & Tune: Public domain

**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
7426 IDYLWOOD ROAD
FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA 22043**

A member congregation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRIES

Leadership Officers, Working Boards, Chinese Ministry, The Preschool,
Sunday School, LWML, Youth Group, Altar Guild, Choirs,
Caring Ministry, Safety Ministry, Leisure Group
Other seasonal and occasional working groups

CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Mark Shaltanis, Pastor

The Rev. Xinhong "Chris" Yang, Associate and Chinese Pastor

The. Rev. Wayne Lehrer, Pastor Emeritus

Kantor Aaron Jansen, Dir. Parish Music Jill Cha, Preschool Director

Tawni Harrell, Director of Youth

John Bean, Business Manager

Linda Fekete, Parish Secretary

Richard Irwin, Custodian

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