

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
229 South Broad Street
Jersey Shore, PA 17740
570-398-1676

Sunday, December 31, 2023
First Sunday of Christmas

Installation of Council



Introduction to the day

The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity, to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

Installation of Council

Prelude

The assembly stands

GATHERING

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

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the Word made flesh,
our life and our salvation.

Amen.

Trusting the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God of life,

**you promise good news of great joy for all people,
and call us to be messengers of your peace.**

**We confess that too often we hoard our joy,
our resources, and our security.**

We nurture conflict and build barriers.

**We neglect the needs of our neighbors
and ignore the groaning of creation.**

Have mercy on us.

Where we are self-centered, open our hearts.

Where we are reluctant, give us courage.

**Where we are cynical, restore our trust.
Renew us with your grace
and give us again the hope of eternal life in you. Amen.**

Hear the good news:

We are children of God and heirs of God's promises
through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In † Jesus we are forgiven and redeemed.

Sing with joy, for all the ends of the earth
shall know the salvation of God. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG: *Once in Royal David's City* 269

GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also, with you.

GLORY BE TO GOD P.204

PRAYER OF THE DAY

**Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more
wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to
share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

WORD

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

L: A reading from Isaiah.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:10--62:3

*To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come
to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely
as the earth puts forth vegetation.*

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

^{62:1}For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,

until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.
²The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Let us read responsively by verse the Psalm.

Psalm : Psalm 148

¹Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise God in the heights.
²**Praise the LORD, all you angels;
sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**
³Praise the LORD, sun and moon;
sing praise, all you shining stars.
⁴**Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.**
⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD,
who commanded, and they were created,
⁶**who made them stand fast forever and ever,
giving them a law that shall not pass away.**
⁷Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps;
⁸**fire and hail, snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**
⁹mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars;
¹⁰**wild beasts and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds;**
¹¹sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the world;
¹²**young men and maidens,
old and young together.**
¹³Let them praise the name of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.
¹⁴**The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all faithful servants,
the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD. Hallelujah!**

L: A reading from Galatians

Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.

⁴When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

Gospel Acclamation p.205

Alleluia! Lord and Savior; open now your saving word.

Let it burn like fire within us; speak until our hearts are stirred.

Alleluia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

P: The holy gospel according to St. Luke the second chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 2:22-40

Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, [Joseph and Mary] brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night

and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

SERMON

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY: *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* 272

THE NICENE CREED p. 104 in the front of the hymnal

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A: Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

A brief silence.

You inspire faith in our hearts and call us to rejoice with our whole selves at the salvation you bring. Make our churches places of belonging for all people in the fullness of their being. Raise up the gifts and the witness of people who are neurodivergent, living with disability, or bearing invisible illness. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Your praise is sung throughout creation in all times and seasons. As the new year turns, ground us in your changeless and sustaining love. Keep us attentive to the rhythms of the cosmos and inspire us to live in harmony with all the earth. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Give hope and stamina to leaders who work tirelessly for the sake of the most vulnerable. We pray especially for organizations working on behalf of children to provide basic needs, to protect from abuse and neglect, to address trauma, and to rescue from trafficking. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Sustain all people who, like Simeon and Anna, have been waiting for salvation and wholeness (*especially*). We pray especially for anyone living with cancer or chronic illness, all people who are in physical rehabilitation or addiction recovery, and those experiencing complications from long COVID. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Let this community of faith be a joyful and welcome place for all ages and generations. Teach us to honor the wisdom of children, the inquisitiveness of youth, the thoughtfulness of adults, and the knowledge of elders. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: In these 12 days of Christmas, we uplift to you all of our international ministries especially our Young Adults in Global Mission. As they celebrate Christmas in another country and a new culture, may they be reassured that it is the same God who offer grace, love and mercy to all God's people here and around the world. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: We give thanks for all the beloved who lived with expectation and departed this life in peace (*especially*). Sustain us in joy until we join them around your throne. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

Amen.

The assembly is seated.

CHOIR ANTHEM *The Promise Comin*

A TIME OF SILENT MEDITATION

The assembly stands.

OFFERING PRAYER

A: God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered.

Join our hearts with the song of the angels,

and gather us at your table of celebration.

Strengthen us to share with all the world

the abundance of your grace upon grace,

poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. **Amen.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING *P.206 (in the beginning of the hymnal)*

Dialogue

Preface by the Pastor

Holy Holy Holy p. 207

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Words of Institution

THE LORD'S PRAYER *P 145 (in the beginning of the hymnal)*

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Glory to God in the highest!

Come to the table of peace.

COMMUNION

When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

and each person may respond **Amen.**

Communion Song *Lamb of God p. 208*

SONG AFTER COMMUNION *Jesus, Name Above All Names*

(repeat twice)

Jesus, name above all names, beautiful Savior, glorious Lord,

Emmanuel, God is with us, blessed Redeemer, living Word

The assembly stands.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A: God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

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

BLESSING

God bless you and keep you,
✠ Jesus grant you grace and truth,
and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts,
now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG: *Angels, from the Realms of Glory* 275

DISMISSAL

P: Christ the Savior is born!
Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.
C: Thanks be to God.

Announcements

We welcome our visitors and ask that you sign a Visitor Attendance and Holy Communion Card that is located in the pew rack. We ask that cards be returned via the offering plate during the receiving of the offering. We practice “open Communion” here at St. John meaning that all who believe in the “real presence” of Christ are welcomed to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We offer two choices for Holy Communion, wine or grape juice. Those worshipers desiring grape juice are asked at the communion rail to place their right hand over their heart after receiving “The Body of Christ.”

Remember in prayer: Rowan Aldridge, Jim Allen, Connie Barker, Christine and Dave Barner, Agnes Cryder, Don Delaney, Helen Delaney, Mary Ellen Dougherty, Joanne Fisher, Dawn Fryer, Margaret Gohl, Dawn Hauser, Myrtle Long, Mick Miller, Penny Parks-Dean, Cora Pelletier, and all of our shut-ins.

We also remember in prayer Family Promise; Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Rev. Michael Burk Presiding Bishop Pro Temp --ELCA; Bishop Craig A. Miller - USS; for our Companion Synods in Liberia and Ansbach-Wurzburg, Germany, and for peace in Ukraine and Israel.

We pray for the safety of our military troops around the world including Mark Baier, Isaac Boring, Jade Cordrey, Ben Cramer, Trevor and Nehemiah Eberhart, Patrick Hamlin, Paul Laidacker, Steven Moore, Maddison Myers, Tyler O’Neal, Adam Shaffer, Jeremy and Haley

Naugle Sorrell, Richie Speicher, Aaron Stabley, Paul St. James, Kevin Titus, and Jenna White. We also lift up in prayer their families who strive to keep a normalcy in the family and continue on often with added stress.

Special thanks to this weeks' helpers: Lector –Pam Wehler; Assisting Ministers --Karen Aucker and Cozette Stoltzfus; Head Usher –Lon Myers; Teller –Cozette Stoltzfus; Bulletin Sponsor – Joyce Hudson;

Next week's helpers: Lector –Kathy Brundick; Assisting Ministers--Deb Heydrich and Ron Brundick; Head Usher –Christine Barner; Teller–Shane Snyder; Bulletin Sponsor-- Auckers; Children's Church --Molly Hollick; Flowers.

The flowers are to the glory of God.

The Sanctuary Candle in December is in memory of my parents and husband by Joyce Hudson.

The Lutheran Church Women's **Prayer Chain** is a vital ministry of St. John Lutheran. Anyone in need of prayers is asked to contact any of the following persons Gloria Ely – 570-873-3597 Joyce Braucht - 570-398-2852. We are working on **updating the prayer chain**. Please fill out a **blue flyer** and put in the offering plate in you wish to participate. All are welcome!

This bulletin and more can be found on our church website: www.stjl.org.

Youth are collecting gloves and socks for Care Closet. Please bring them and hang them on the clothes line!

Advent/Christmas Offering. Each year the Advent/Christmas Offering is received during the Advent/Christmas season and given to two mission projects that will benefit people in need. This year ¼ of offerings received will go to United Churches of Lycoming County which helps a lot of local people and ¾ will go to Mission Support to help spread the love of Jesus Christ to people around the world. Your gifts are greatly appreciated. Advent/Christmas envelopes are in the pews.

Youth desiring to go to Camp Mt. Luther for the annual Grow in the Snow Synod Youth Event March 8 & 9, see Pastor Aucker to register. This is for Middle School and High School Youth. **Registration deadline is February 4.**

Thank you to the congregation, council, and mutual ministry of St. John Lutheran for the Christmas gift. It was very appreciated.

May each of you have a joyous Christmas as we celebrate our Savior's birth.

Pastor Aucker

Thank you to St John council, congregation and many members for your thoughtful Christmas cards and gifts. Kaye H. Long

I wish to thank Pastor Aucker, council, and the congregation for your very kind and generous Christmas gift. Also I wish you all a very safe, healthy, and blessed 2024!! Thank you....Carl Schaefer

Calendar

Sunday, December 31, 2023 1st Sunday of Christmas

8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School

9:30 a.m. Worship Service

Tuesday, January 2, 2024

1:30 p.m. Communion at JS Rehabilitation

6:00 p.m, Council Meeting

Wednesday, January 3, 2024 6:30 p.m. Choir

Saturday, January 6, 2024

6:00 pm Epiphany Service at St. James Lutheran

Sunday, January 7, 2024 Baptism of our Lord

8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School

9:30 a.m. Worship Service with Children's Church

