

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

Sunday, December 18, 2022
Fourth Sunday of Advent



Introduction to the day *Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.*

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

Prelude

GATHERING

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

CHILDREN'S PAGENT: THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Narration – Plug in Lights

Congregation sings *O Little Town of Bethlehem verse 1 279*

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
Yet in the dark streets shineth the everlasting light,
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

Narration

Children sing Away in the Manager

Narration – Star on the tree

Congregation sings

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night verse 1 ACS 913

**While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down, and glory shone around.**

Narration

Youth sings Angels We Have Heard on High"

Narration – bells on the tree

Congregation sings *Go Tell It On The Mountain 290 one verse*

**Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere,
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

**While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
Behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.**

**Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere,
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

Narrations – colored balls on tree

Congregation sings *Hark The Herald Angels Sing 270 one verse*

***Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all you nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies;
with an angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"***

Narrations – candy canes on tree

Kids sing - "Joy To The World!"

Narration

Kids sing Silent Night verse 1

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent Wreath. *One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting in the midst of growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is clearly an image of everlasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes, the family gathers for prayers around the wreath.*

The assembly stands.

Fourth Week of Advent

Use this blessing when lighting all four candles.

Blessed are you, God of hosts, for you promised to send a son, Emmanuel, who brought your presence among us; and you promise through your Son Jesus to save us from our sin.

As we light these candles, turn again to us in mercy; strengthen our faith in the word spoken by your prophets; restore us and give us life that we may be saved.

O house of David, come,
**let us rejoice, for the Son of God, Emmanuel,
comes to be with us. Amen.**

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah 240

Light four candles to watch for Messiah:

Let the light banish darkness.

He is coming, tell the glad tidings

Let your lights be shining!

On your slip of blue paper, in **ONE word**, write one thing that brings you love in the world.

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.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

**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.**

The assembly is seated.

WORD

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

L: A reading from Isaiah.

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-16

An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!

¹⁰The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹²But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put

the LORD to the test. ¹³Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore 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. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For 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.”

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

L: Let us read the Psalm responsively by verse.

PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

³Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

⁴**O LORD¹ God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**

⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

⁶**You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

¹⁷**Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

¹⁸And so will we never turn away from you;
give us life, that we may call upon your name.

¹⁹**Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

L: A reading from Romans

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.

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

⁷To 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.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION p.142

Alleluia Lord to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia, Alleluia.

P: The holy gospel according to St. Matthew

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

¹⁸Now 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 with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But 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. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

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

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

The assembly is seated.

Homily

Installation of Leaders in the Congregation

The following people have been *elected* [by the 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 a congregation.

A reading from First Corinthians: 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*)

The presiding minister continues.

You have been *elected* to positions of leadership and trust in this congregation. You are to see that the words and deeds of this household of faith bear witness to God, who gathers us into one together with the whole church.

You are to seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support, so that the mission of Christ is carried out in this congregation, in the wider church, in this community, and in the whole world.

You are to be faithful in your specific area of serving, that the Spirit who empowers you may be glorified.

You are to be examples of faith active in love, fostering peace, harmony, and mutual understanding in this congregation.

The presiding minister addresses those being installed.

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*?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

The assembly 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?

We will, and we ask God to help us.

I now declare you installed as *officers / council members* of this congregation.
Almighty God bless you, and direct your days and your deeds in peace,
that you may be faithful servants of Christ.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A: As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

A brief silence.

God our shepherd, let your Spirit move with power throughout the church. Give discernment and wisdom to our bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders. Take away our fear, so that we serve and love, confident that you are guiding us. God, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: God our source, awaken us to the beauty of the earth and the marvelous variety of life. Unite humankind in repairing and caring for your creation. Protect creatures and habitats in peril due to rising seas and warming temperatures. God, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: God our vision, raise up leaders in every nation who dream of freedom and justice for all people. We pray for the work of international organizations that promote peace and human rights, especially Amnesty International (*others may be named*). God, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: God our helper, come to the aid of all who cry out to you. Shelter migrants, refugees, and those fleeing war and famine. Bring relief to individuals and families experiencing hunger, homelessness, or impoverishment. Comfort any who are isolated or lonely. God, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: God our Emmanuel, you are with us in our life together. We give you thanks for gathering us in worship and fellowship, and we remember those who cannot be present. Watch over those who travel. Heal the sick and speed their recovery (*especially*). God, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: God our protector, be with all the volunteers who work alongside our Young Adults in Global Mission as they serve in support of the ministries and projects of our global partners here and around the world. Keep all participants in your care. God in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: God our hope, you bring life out of death, and you promise to be our God forever. Shine upon the faithful who now rest in the fulfillment of your promise and bring us also into your blessed reign of peace. God, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Responding in Love

Our Offerings *This is our response to God's grace.*

CHOIR ANTHEM *Almost There*

The assembly stands.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Words of Institution

In the night in which he was betrayed,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,

and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore,

his life, death, and resurrection,

we await his coming again

in righteousness and peace.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,

Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,

in your holy Church,
both now and forever. **Amen**

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

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God, who has come to save you.

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.**

SONG AFTER COMMUNION *Jesus, Remember Me*

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A: Faithful God,
in this meal you have remembered your mercy,
bringing heaven to earth in the body and blood of Christ.
As we wait for the day when all your promises will be fulfilled,
sustain us and strengthen us by this holy mystery.
Guide us toward your promised future,
coming to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

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

BLESSING

God the eternal Word,
who dwells with us in Jesus,
and who holds us in the grace of the Holy Spirit,
✠ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel 257*

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Christ is near.
C: **Thanks be to God.**

We invite you to join us downstairs for the Christmas Dinner

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 Communion. We offer two choices for Holy Communion, wine or grape juice. Those worshippers 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, Dave Barner, Agnes Cryder, Don & Helen Delaney, Joanne Fisher, Joann Hall, Mick Miller, David Mitchell, the Snyder family, Charles and Candace Welshans, and all of our shut-ins.

We also remember in prayer Family Promise; Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton – ELCA; Bishop Craig A. Miller - USS; for our Companion Synods in Liberia and Ansbach-Wurzburg, Germany; and we pray for peace in Ukraine and an end to war.

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, Kenny Leitch, Steven Moore, Maddison Myers, Tyler O’Neal, Adam Shaffer, Richie Speicher, Aaron Stabley, Paul St. James, 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 week’s helpers: Lector –Shane Snyder; Assisting Ministers – Gary Johnson, Karen Aucker; Head Usher –Lon Myers; Teller –Bob Wehler; Bulletin Sponsor—Betty Allen; Children’s Church

Next week’s helper: Lector –Deb Heydrich; Assisting Ministers—Joyce Braucht, Carl Schaefer; Head Usher –Lon Myers; Teller –Bob Wehler; Bulletin Sponsor –John and Kathie Horne; Flowers – Dean, Theresa, and Margaret.

The altar flowers are in glory to God and the memory of loved ones by Gina and Gary Johnson.

The Sanctuary Candle is given to the glory of God by Cozette Stoltzfus.

The Memorial Service for Sarah Davidson will be held on Friday, December 30 at 11:00.

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

WOW !! The Bakers of St Johns **REALLY** came through with Christmas cookies for the Bazaar. We were very successful and busy! Thank you everyone!

Advent 4. December 18:

9:30 am Children’s Christmas Pageant

10:30 am Congregation Christmas Dinner.

Bring a covered dish, your own dishes and silverware. Meat and drinks will be provided.

Christmas Eve Worship Services

Invite your family, neighbors, and friends to join us!

Join us on Christmas Eve as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

4:00 p.m. Christmas Service at St. John Lutheran

7:00 p.m. at St. James Lutheran

10:00 p.m. Special Christmas Music at St. John Lutheran

10:30 p.m. Christmas Service at St. John Lutheran

Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25, Christmas Worship at St. John Lutheran 9:30 a.m.

Christian Education is seeking volunteers to lead Children's Church once a month. If interested please see Cathy Eisner. The 4th and 5th Sundays are open.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO RESUME NURSERY. We are in need of adult and teen volunteers to supervise toddlers/babies in the nursery during church. Please contact Molly Hollick, or Ken Dougherty if you would be willing to help out or have any questions. Our hope is to get enough volunteers to have a monthly rotation cycle.

Annual Reports - A reminder to the chairs of all ministries of St. John Lutheran – your annual reports must be submitted to the office **by January 12** to be included in the annual report to the congregation at the annual congregation meeting on February 6, 2022.

Your 2023 Offering Envelopes are available in the Tower of the Church. Please pick up yours and any of your relatives. Only a small number of people use envelopes but it is an important stewardship tool. If there are no envelopes with your name on, please contact Laurel Gottschall for envelopes. It costs us \$3.60 to mail one box of \$1.30 envelopes. Please save us money and pick up your envelopes or give electronically. Forms are available from the office or you can give on-line via the Vanco app.

There are **Advent/Christmas Envelopes** in each pew. Of this year's Advent/Christmas offerings, half will go to Mission Support of the ELCA and half will go to United Churches of Lycoming County. Only a small number of people use offering envelopes so these envelopes are available for those who wish to donate to the Missions of our Church.

THIS WEEK'S EVENTS

Sunday, December 18, 2023

Advent 4

8:30 a.m. Adult Sunday School Class

9:30 a.m. Children's Christmas Pageant

9:30 a.m. Nave Worship Service.

10:30 a.m. Congregation Christmas Dinner attended by Santa Claus !!!

Bring a covered dish, your own dishes and silverware. Meat and drinks will be provided.

Wednesday, December 21, 2022

10:00 a.m. Trinity Episcopal Worship. You are invited to attend.

11:30 a.m. Fellowship Time at Restless Oaks

6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal

Thursday, December 22, 2023

5:00 p.m. Youth Caroling

Saturday, December 24, 2022

4:00 p.m. Christmas Service at St. John Lutheran

7:00 p.m. at St. James Lutheran

10:00 p.m. Special Christmas Music at St. John Lutheran

10:30 p.m. Christmas Service at St. John Lutheran

Sunday, December 25, 2022

Christmas Day

9:30 a.m. Nave Worship Service.

Some of you remember a guitar-playing singer and Methodist pastor, Woody Wolfe, who came to St. John Lutheran many years ago. For most of his life Woody has traveled to various children's hospitals from his home in Danville playing for children and inspiring them with music. Woody also works with Pastor Aucker as a flex chaplain at Geisinger. In addition to his ministry with children, he has traveled 16 times over the years to the country of Ukraine and inspired children in orphanages in that country before the war began.

He can go on for hours speaking about the friendly people and the volunteer doctors and nurses from the United States who have traveled to Ukraine to provide medical care and have adopted children from Ukraine. He has also provided hospitality to some of the Ukrainian children and their parents who have come to Geisinger for surgeries that could not be done in Ukraine. Despite the war and the trepidation of his family, Woody is traveling to Ukraine on January 6 to return to some of those orphanages who are now packed with children whose parents died during the war to minister to them with song.

On previous trips they have purchased food for the orphanages with monetary donations from people here in the United States. In the past, the cost of food in Ukraine was quite inexpensive as the American dollar was worth much more than Ukrainian money.

I know this is a difficult time of the year as many struggle to pay for oil, Christmas gifts, food, etc., but if the Spirit moves you and you wish to make a direct impact upon the children of Ukraine, checks may be made out to "**Raising Hope – Ukraine**" a non-profit in Lancaster or place **cash in a sealed envelope with your name and address** and I will hand them directly to Woody on January 1.

Pastor Aucker