

*Fourth Sunday of Advent*  
*December 24, 2023*



## **WELCOME VISITORS**

*We invite you to pick up a Visitor's Packet as you leave the service today.  
Thank you for joining us this morning! We are blessed by your presence.*

*Children are always welcome in church,  
If desired, there is an unstaffed nursery for those age 4 and younger  
located downstairs past the elevator, across the hall from the bulletin board.*

*Large print bulletins for today's worship are available,  
please feel free to ask an usher if interested.*



## *Gathering*

*My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be  
removed ... Isaiah 54:10*

### **PRELUDE**

### **WELCOME**

*Please stand as you are able.*

# O Lord How Shall I Meet You (verses 1&3)

Text: Paul gerhardt, 1607-1676; tr. Composite Muisic: Johann Crüger, 1598-1662

1 O Lord, how shall I meet you, how wel - come you a - right?  
2 I lay in fet - ters, groan - ing; you came to set me free.  
3 Love caused your in - car - na - tion; love brought you down to me.  
4 Re - joice, then, you sad - heart - ed, who sit in deep - est gloom,

Your peo - ple long to greet you, my hope, my heart's de - light!  
I stood, my shame be - moan - ing; you came to hon - or me.  
Your thirst for my sal - va - tion pro - cured my lib - er - ty.  
who mourn your joys de - part - ed and trem - ble at your doom.

Oh, kin - dle, Lord most ho - ly, your lamp with - in my breast  
A glo - rious crown you give me, a trea - sure safe on high  
Oh, love be - yond all tell - ing, that led you to em - brace  
All hail the Lord's ap - pear - ing! O glo - rious Sun, now come,

to do in spir - it low - ly all that may please you best.  
that will not fail or leave me as earth - ly rich - es fly.  
in love, all love ex - cel - ling, our lost and fall - en race.  
send forth your beams so cheer - ing and guide us safe - ly home.

## 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.**

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

*(Four blue candles are lit on the Advent wreath.)*

Reader 1: Today we light the fourth candle on the Advent wreath, the candle that represents love. God had promised that his steadfast love would not depart from his people. He would remember his covenant promise. Now the time had come for his promise to be fulfilled.

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ...”**

Reader 2: In his grace, God chose Mary, a virgin in Nazareth of Galilee, to be the mother of our Lord. The virgin-born son would be the Son of God. He was to be named Jesus, which means “God saves.”

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ...”**

Reader 3: The apostle John writes, “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.”

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”**

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Let us confess our sins to God,  
asking him to remember his covenant love and forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

**Almighty God, your steadfast love endures forever.**

**Our love so often fails.**

**We do not always trust you as we should.**

**We know that you love us, but we do not always love others as we should.**

**We do not walk in love as Jesus our Savior did.**

**We follow our own selfish desires instead of looking to the needs of others.**

**Have mercy on us, and forgive our sins.**

God remembered his covenant promise  
and in his steadfast love he sent his Son to be our Savior.  
I announce to you that your sins are forgiven  
in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

**Almighty God, your steadfast love will not depart from us!**

## **AMAZING GRACE**

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come:  
Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**Almighty God, in your grace and steadfast love, you promised to send the Messiah, the Savior. Through the centuries your prophets proclaimed your promise to your people. Finally, it was time for the Savior to be born, and for the promise to be fulfilled. Just as Mary answered your call, help us to have willing and eager hearts to do your work as well. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

# God Loved The World

1 God loved the world so that he gave his on - ly  
 2 Christ Je - sus is the ground of faith, who was made  
 3 If you are ill, if death draws near, this truth your  
 4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son for - gives all  
 5 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly

Son the lost to save, that all who would in  
 flesh and suf - fered death; all who con - fide in  
 trou - bled heart can cheer: Christ Je - sus res - cues  
 sins that you have done, and jus - ti - fied by  
 Spir - it, Three in One! To you, O bless - ed

him be - lieve should ev - er - last - ing life re - ceive.  
 Christ a - lone are built on this chief cor - ner - stone.  
 us from death; that is the firm - est ground of faith.  
 Je - sus' blood, your bap - tism grants the high - est good.  
 Trin - i - ty, be praise now and e - ter - nal - ly!

*Please be seated.*

# WORD

## FIRST READING

Isaiah 54:7-10

<sup>7</sup>For a brief moment I abandoned you,  
but with great compassion I will gather you.

<sup>8</sup>In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you,  
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,  
says the LORD, your Redeemer.

<sup>9</sup>This is like the days of Noah to me:  
Just as I swore that the waters of Noah  
would never again go over the earth,  
so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you  
and will not rebuke you.

<sup>10</sup>For the mountains may depart  
and the hills be removed,  
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,  
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,  
says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## SECOND READING

Galatians 4:4-7

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

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Please stand as you are able.*

# The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came



1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,  
 2 "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,  
 3 Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly bowed her head;  
 4 Of her, Em - man - u - el, the Christ, was born



with wings as drift - ed snow, with eyes as flame:  
 all gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or thee;  
 "To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said.  
 in Beth - le - hem all on a Christ - mas morn,



"All hail to thee, O low - ly maid - en Mar - y,  
 thy son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,  
 "My soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy God's ho - ly name."  
 and Chris - tian folk through - out the world will ev - er say:



most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."  
 most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."  
 Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy,  
 "Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."  
 Glo - ri - a!

Text: Basque carol; para. Sabine Baring-Gould, 1834–1924

Music: GABRIEL'S MESSAGE, Basque carol



## GOSPEL

Luke 1:46-55

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup>His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

<sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

<sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup>according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Please be seated.*

## SERMON

*Silence for reflection follows the sermon.*

# Prepare The Royal Highway

Text: Frans Mikael Franzen


Music: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!  
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing; your own e - ter - nal king!  
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!  
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!  
Palm branch-es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!  
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.  
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:  
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!  
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:  
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



*Refrain*  
Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

## **APOSTLE CREED**

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

**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.**

**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.**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

**Our God and Savior, Your steadfast love endures forever.**

**MEAL**

## **GATHERING OF GIFTS**

*An offering is gathered for the mission of the church,  
including the care of those in need. Online giving is  
available at [felcc.org](http://felcc.org) or through this QR code*



## **ANTHEM**

*Please stand as you are able.*

## OFFERTORY



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the  
brim our cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the  
seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.  
Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the  
prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence,  
and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

## OFFERING PRAYER

**O God of Amazing Grace, by your merciful hand abundance springs up from the earth. Receive and bless these gifts we offer. May these gifts help to shine the light of your steadfast love and faithfulness for all people, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

## DIALOG

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.**

## 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.

## LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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

You are invited to the banquet of our Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

*Please be seated.*

## DISTRIBUTION

*All Christians who believe that Jesus is truly present in the bread (body of Christ) and in the wine (blood of Christ) are welcome at the Lord's Table.*

*To receive Holy Communion, please come down the center aisle, take a glass (the prefilled glasses contain grape juice), and gather at the altar.*

*Non-communing children and adults may come forward for a blessing.*

## LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on  
us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

## Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

Music and Text: Marty Haugen

1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for  
2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -  
3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when  
4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though  
an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for  
man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is  
all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so  
dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.  
qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;  
qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.  
crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -  
mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -  
Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in -  
Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and  
kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to  
won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and  
sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.  
shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.  
weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.  
bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

*Following Communion, please stand as you are able.*

## POST COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ  
strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

## BLESSING

The God of love fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in love. **Amen.**

# Soul Proclaims Your Greatness

Text: Magnificat

Music: KINGSFOLD, English folk tne; ar. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958

1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav - ior's praise!  
2 To all who live in ho - ly fear your mer-cy ev - er flows.  
3 To Is - ra - el, your ser - vant blest, your help is ev - er sure;

You looked up - on my low - li - ness, and I am full of grace.  
With might - y arm you dash the proud, their schem-ing hearts ex - pose.  
the prom - ise to our par - ents made their chil - dren will se - cure.

Now ev - 'ry land and ev - 'ry age this bless-ing shall pro - claim—  
The ruth-less you have cast a - side, the low - ly throned in - stead;  
Sing glo - ry to the Ho - ly One, give hon - or to the Word,

great won - ders you have done for me, and ho - ly is your name.  
the hun - gry filled with all good things, the rich sent off un - fed.  
and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all a - dored.



## DISMISSAL

Go in love, prepare the way of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE

*Sermon by Michael Hoy. Service by Carol Geisler. © 2023 Creative Communications for the Parish, a division of Bayard, Inc., 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026. 800-325-9414.  
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***Please remember in your prayers ...***



**Healing:** Bonnie (1/5),  
June Diehl (1/14),  
Joanne Fisher (1/14),  
Sarah Haschak (12/27),  
Denise Heinbaugh (12/28),  
Garry Shatzer (1/4) Connie Twedt (1/4), Marilyn Yaukey (1/4)

**Long Term Care:** Pat Dent, Charles Kampmeyer and Joe Pine

**Military:** Tawny & Brad Arnold, Rubens Paul, and Paul Whelan

**ATTENDANCE**      December 17                      78 in person                      11 on line

**CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP**— will be tonight at 7:00 p.m.

We will have Holy Communion and Special Music as we come together to hear the story of the Birth of our Lord in a stable and light our candles while singing glorious Christmas Carols of worship and praise. We hope you will be able to join us.



**HOMELESS MATTERS DONATIONS** will be collected until December 31.

There is a collection bin in Memorial Hall. Checks made out to Homeless Matters may be placed in the offering plate or dropped off at the church office.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL** There will be no Sunday School, Confirmation, or coffee and donuts on December 31.

**HOLIDAY CLOSING** Church office will be closed on Monday, December 25 and Monday, January 1. If you have a pastoral emergency during the Christmas Season, please call Pastor Nicholson at home. 717-753-3940.

**THANK YOU** We are grateful to the decorating committee for their work of preparing our sanctuary for Christmas. Our gratitude is extended to the Palmer family for the beautiful tree that we will be able to use for many years to come. This tree was given in loving memory of Bob Palmer who enjoyed and cherished the tree every year in the sanctuary. We would also like to thank Julie and Dalton Paul for purchasing the beautiful trees that Bob (and the rest of us) came to love throughout the last 40 years. May God's gift of everlasting love (evergreens) and light (Tree lights) remind us of God's call to love and be light in our world.

**STATEMENTS FOR 2023** Contributions that you wish to be credited to 2023 must be received in the church office NO LATER THAN December 25, 2023. Any contributions that are received after December 25th will be credited to 2024. Any questions, please contact Carol McCoy.

**YEAR-END APPEAL** We are very fortunate to have members who have faithfully contributed this year. Unfortunately, our anticipated giving levels are below what we budgeted for the year. We as a congregation are blessed to have built a "nest egg" from the benevolence of members past; however, it will not last if we continue to draw from it to cover operational costs. Please prayerfully consider supporting YOUR church. (Contributions made by December 25 will be credited to 2023.) Sally Herritt Treasurer

**REMINDER:** If you are a Thrivent member, chances are you have Thrivent Choice Dollars to designate. At the end of the year, please consider designating those dollars to First Lutheran ASAP. The dollars that are not designated from this year are lost. You can designate your dollars by going to [www.thrivent.com](http://www.thrivent.com) or calling 1-800-847-4836 and say "Choice Dollars".



**NEWSLETTER** We are working on being good stewards of the resources that have been entrusted to the church. With this in mind, we are requesting that you consider receiving the church newsletter via e-mail. For others, the newsletters will be in printed form and distributed at Sunday worship, choir practice, quilting, etc. To those who have not received it in person, the newsletter will be mailed to your home address the Monday following Sunday worship. Thank you for responding and working with us to try new avenues of communication.  
[felccoffice@gmail.com](mailto:felccoffice@gmail.com)



**HATS, SCARVES AND MITTEN/GLOVES COLLECTION** is in full swing for the January 13-15 fence hanging at First. There is a donation bin marked for items in Memorial Hall.

**HELP NEEDED** the congregation marveled at the gorgeous display of quilts on Sunday, October 8. We would like to continue this wonderful Lutheran World Relief project and would appreciate more help. Please join us for an hour or two every Wednesday morning. You can plan quilt tops, sew squares together, help construct the quilt "sandwich", tie knots, iron sheets. Everyone is welcome, male or female, young or old. Call Janet Friend (717 360 1977) or Nancy Fricke (717 267 5097) for more information.



**CONGREGATION ANNUAL MEETING** will be held on Sunday, January 21 following worship. This meeting will provide us with the opportunity to review the highlights of the past year and approve a ministry spending plan for 2024. We hope you will be able to join us.



**WOMEN OF THE ELCA** The January Bible Study will be held on Thursday January 11 at 1:30 p.m. in Meeting Room 1. We will continue our study of Max Lucado's book, He Choose the Nails, with Nancy Fricke as leader for the chapter "I Forgive You". All women of the church are welcome.



**VARIETY SHOW** Sunday, February 25 after worship. Lunch will be provided. Fundraiser for Youth Events. If you would be willing to be part of the "Show" please talk with Kristy Nienstedt.

## **WORSHIP ASSISTANTS**

	<u><b>December 24</b></u> <u><b>10:45 Service</b></u>	<u><b>December 24</b></u> <u><b>7:00 p.m. Service</b></u>	<u><b>December 25</b></u> <u><b>9:30 a.m. Service</b></u>
Lector:	Ralph Burdick	Becki Hoover	Karen Sloan
Soundboard:	Rose Wilson	Martha Carbaugh	Scott Carbaugh
Communion Assistants:	Karen Maclay Marlin Maclay Karen Sloan	Karen Maclay Marlin Maclay Karen Sloan	Karen Sloan
Greeters:	Nancy Hamilton Kathy Shoop	Nancy Hamilton Kathy Shoop	Nancy Hamilton Kathy Shoop
Altar Guild:	Barb Evans Karin Woods	Barb Evans Karin Woods	Barb Evans Karin Woods
Ushers:	Gary Fleegal Rick Gates Nicki Johnson Dennis Love Mark Nicholson	Gary Fleegal Rick Gates Nicki Johnson Dennis Love Mark Nicholson	Gary Fleegal Rick Gates Nicki Johnson Dennis Love Mark Nicholson

### **THIS WEEK AT FIRST** **December 24 – December 31**

<b>Sunday</b>	10:45 a.m.	Worship w/Holy Communion
	7:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Service
<b>Monday</b>	9:30 a.m.	Christmas Service w/Holy Communion Office Closed
<b>Wednesday</b>	9:30 a.m.	Quilting
<b>Sunday</b>	10:45 a.m.	Worship – Lessons and Carols