

“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.”

Matthew 1:20,  
NRSV

St. David's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
**Sunday, December 22, 2019**

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Holy Communion

8:00 AM & 10:30 AM

ELW Setting 3

PASTOR: THE REVEREND FARON H. JOHNSON

MINISTER OF MUSIC: MICHAEL BUSIJA

Church: 479-4110; Fax: 479-2994

[www.stdavidslutheran.org](http://www.stdavidslutheran.org)

# ***Welcome to St. David's Lutheran Church!***

We are blessed by your presence and honored that you have chosen to worship with us today. Please take a moment to sign the friendship sheet that is located in the booklet at the end of each pew, near the center aisle. These sheets will be collected after the service.

**The Sacrament of Holy Communion** is offered to all who are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and who recognize the Sacrament as the true body and blood of our Lord. Baptized children are also welcome to receive the elements at the Lord's table at St. David's with the guidance and consent of their parents or guardians. Persons, who may not wish to receive the bread and wine of the communion, are still welcome to come to the table to receive a blessing. To do so please fold your hands and bow your head.

**Prayer Requests** may be made by placing the request in the small wooden box at the rear, near the doors through which you entered. The acolyte will collect the requests and they will be included during the prayers of the congregation.

**For your comfort** there is a restroom, equipped with a changing table and supplies and a water fountain located upstairs. Simply exit through the double doors back into the narthex. The restroom is straight ahead in the parlor, beside the grandfather clock, and the water fountain is to the right at the beginning of the hallway.

**Devotional** – The worship folder you are holding is also a weekly devotional booklet. The prayers and Scripture readings are appropriate for use at any time during the week. The liturgy itself is a Scripturally based order for daily prayer and devotion with Scriptural references noted where they apply. Even the hymns are appropriate tools for prayer and praise. Finally, there is a daily lectionary of Scripture readings for the rest of the week on the last printed page.

## **INTRODUCTION**

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.

## WELCOME

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## PRELUDE

*The assembly stands.*

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

In the name of the Father,  
and of the † Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*The assembly kneels or stands. Silence is kept for reflection.*

Gracious God,

**have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

**Amen.**

*The presiding minister announces God's forgiveness with these or similar words.*

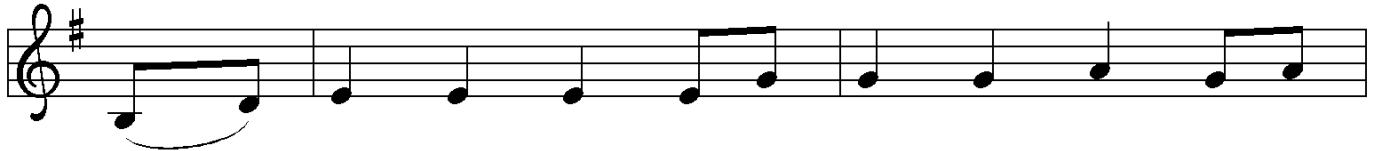
God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of † Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

**Amen.**

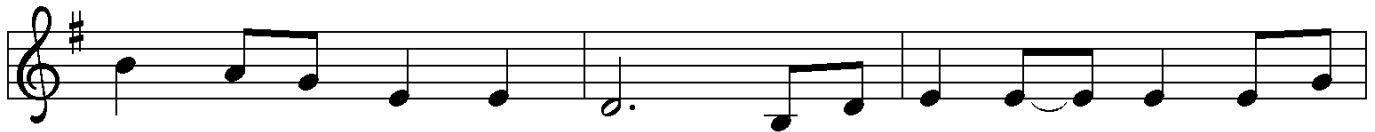
*The assembly stands.*

# GATHERING HYMN

## Canticle of the Turning



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the  
2 Though I am small, my . . . God, my all, you . . .  
3 From the halls of pow'r to the for - tress tow'r, not a  
4 Though the na - tions rage from . . . age to age, we re -



God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the  
work great . . . things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the  
stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your  
mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.  
depths of the past to the end of the age to be.  
jus - tice tears ev - 'ry ty - rant . . . from his throne.  
liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my  
Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to  
The hun - gry poor shall . . . weep no more, for the  
This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my  
those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the  
food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry  
prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be





name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?  
strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.  
mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.  
crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.



My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your jus - tice burn.



Wipe a - way all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

Text: Rory Cooney, b. 1952, based on the Magnificat

Music: STAR OF COUNTY DOWN, Irish traditional

Text © 1990 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358.

All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

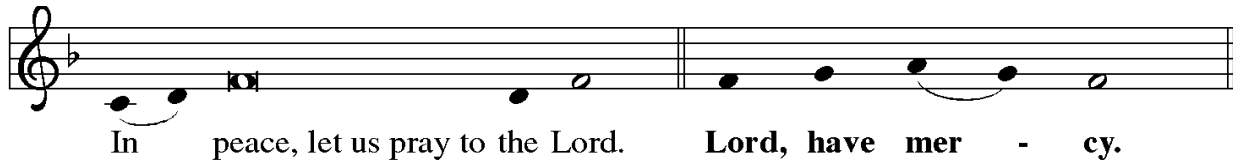
Hymns/Music Reprinted with permission under One License #A-712819.

## GREETING

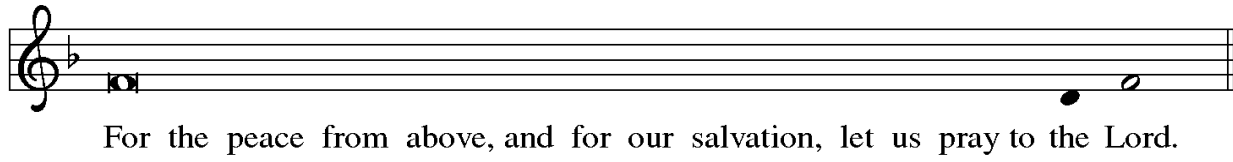
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

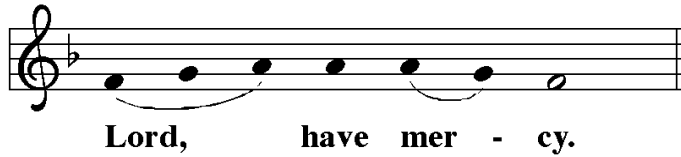
# KYRIE



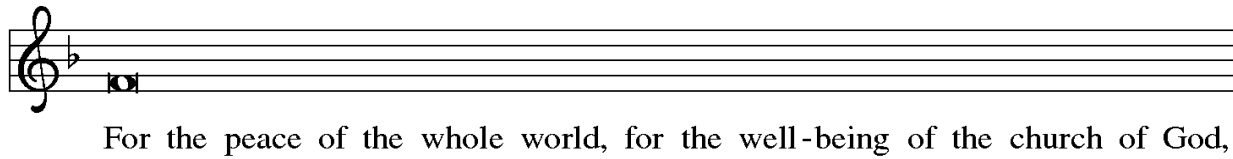
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.



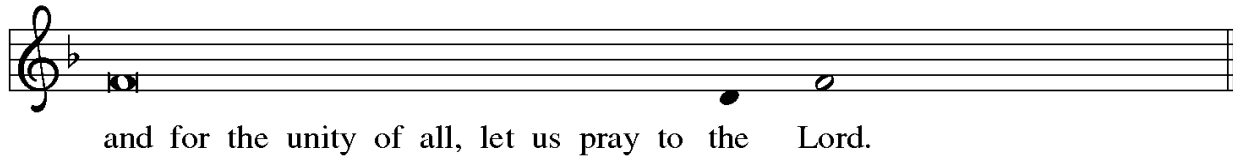
For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



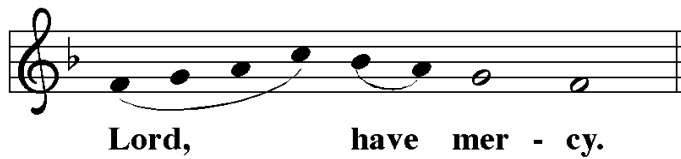
Lord, have mer - cy.



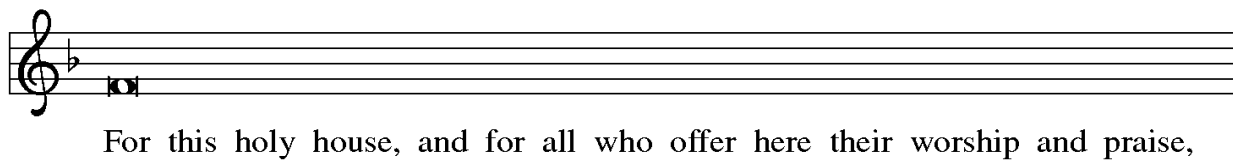
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



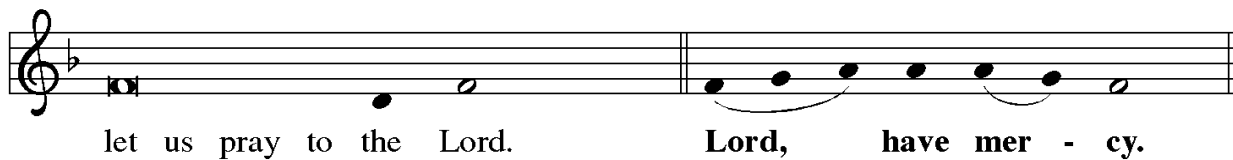
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



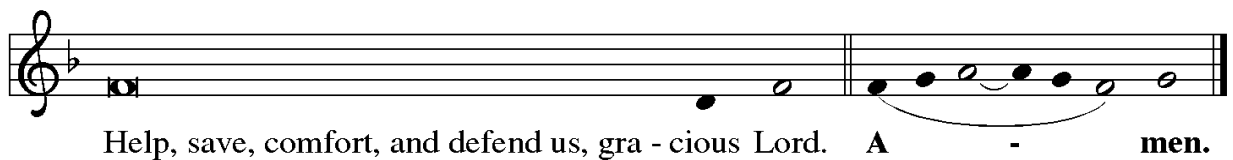
Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray. . . .

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

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 WITH CHILDREN**

### **LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH**

*Use this blessing when lighting all four candles.*

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe.

In your Son, Emmanuel,

you have shown us your light

and saved us from the power of sin.

Bless us as we light the candles on this wreath.

Increase our longing for your presence,

that at the celebration of your Son's birth

his Spirit might dwell anew in our midst,

for he is our light and our salvation.

Blessed be God forever.

**Amen.**

## **FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10-16**

A reading from Isaiah the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter.

*{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!}*

<sup>10</sup>The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup>Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. <sup>12</sup>But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. <sup>13</sup>Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup>Therefore 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. <sup>15</sup>He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup>For 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."

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**







## **GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25**

The holy gospel according to Matthew the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*{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."}*

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

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

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

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*The assembly is seated.*

## **HOMILY**

*Silence for reflection may follow.*

*The assembly stands.*

# HYMN OF THE DAY

## The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came



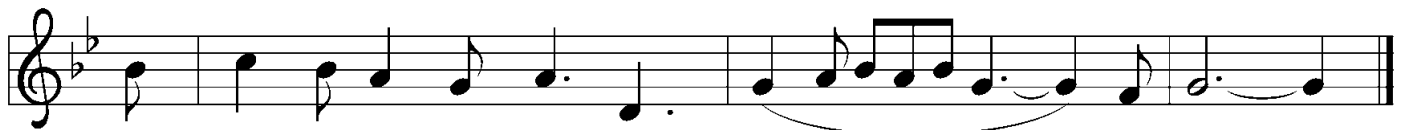
1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,  
2 "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,  
3 Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly bowed her head;  
4 Of her, Em - man - u - el, the Christ, was born



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

Text: Basque carol; para. Sabine Baring-Gould, 1834-1924  
Music: GABRIEL'S MESSAGE, Basque carol

Together we confess our faith:

## **APOSTLE'S 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**

Keeping awake as we watch for Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Hear your church, O God, as we pray for all who belong to Jesus Christ. Where the church is scorned, preserve it; where the church is privileged, grant it humility. Lord, in your mercy, hear **our prayer**.

Hear your earth, O God, as we pray for its healing and care. Protect the grapevine and the mighty cedar, the mountains and seas and all that is in them. Give life, that all life may call on your name. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Hear the nations, O God, as we pray for those who hold power and authority over people and lands. Help those who create and uphold good laws and those working to reform what is unjust, that the world might better reflect your grace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear those in need, O God, as we pray for all who face uncertainty: refugees and immigrants, those who are imprisoned, and those without work, housing, food, or health care. Bring good news to all in need of hope. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear this community of faith, O God, as we pray for families and friends who gather in this season, for travelers and hosts, and for those who will work or serve others this Christmas. Let the peace of Emmanuel, God-with-us, shine in every heart. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Hear all who mourn, O God, as we remember the lives of our beloved dead. Encourage the living to learn from our ancestors in faith as we follow your call. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You hear the cries of our hearts, O Lord. Fill us with hopeful expectation, that in each day and hour we may love and serve our neighbors, in Jesus' name.  
**Amen.**

## **PEACE**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*The ministers and congregation may greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

Peace be with you.

**Peace be with you.**

*Please be seated after the Peace is shared.*

## **OFFERING**

## **OFFERTORY**

# OFFERTORY HYMN

## My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness



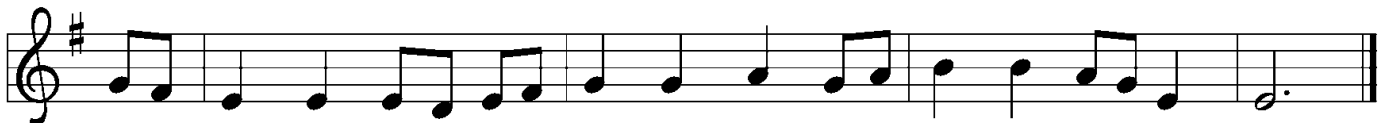
1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav - ior's praise!  
2 To all who live in ho - ly fear your mer - cy ev - er flows.  
3 To Is - ra - el, your ser - vant blest, your help is ev - er sure;



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.

Text: *With One Voice*, 1995, based on the Magnificat

Music: KINGSFOLD, English folk tune

Text © 1995 Augsburg Fortress

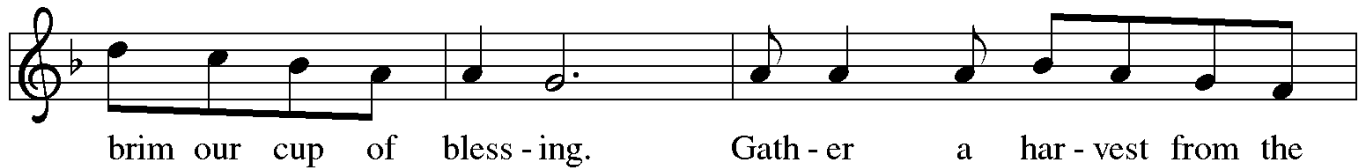
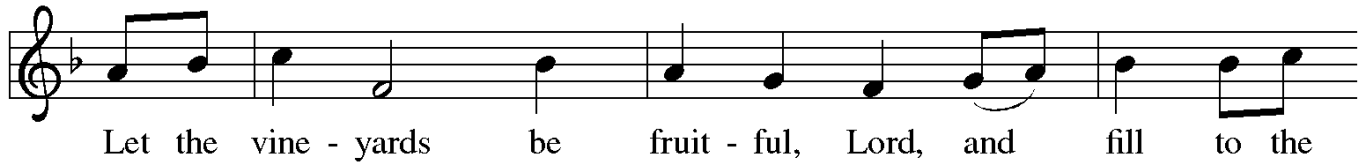
Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

Hymns/Music Reprinted with permission under One License #A-712819.

# OFFERTORY RESPONSE

*The assembly stands.*

## Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful *Offering Song*



Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980

Music: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress and music © 2004 Augsburg Fortress.

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

Hymns/Music Reprinted with permission under One License #A-712819, CCLI #1718591 & Licensing #608020.



## **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray.

God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

## **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.

You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer,  
through whom you will also make all things new  
in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

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, God of pow'r and might,



heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -



san-na. 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.

## EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:

Blessed are you for the birth of creation.

Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.

Blessed are you for your promise to your people.

Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.

Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.

Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,  
the Word made flesh.

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.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

With this bread and cup  
we remember your Word dwelling among us,  
full of grace and truth.

We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.

We look with hope for his coming.

**Come, Lord Jesus.**

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.

Come among us.

Bless this meal.

May your Word take flesh in us.

Awaken your people.

Fill us with your light.

Bring the gift of peace on earth.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

All praise and glory are yours,

Holy One of Israel,

Word of God incarnate,

Power of the Most High,

one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## THE 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,**

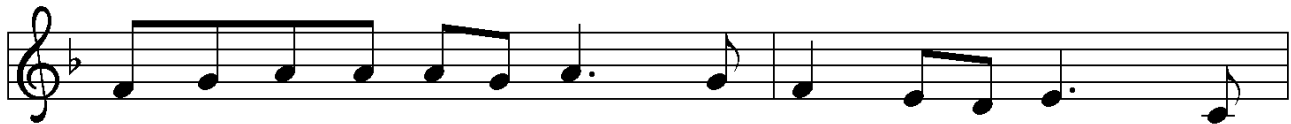
**but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,**

**and the power, and the glory,**

**forever and ever. Amen.**

## 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.

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

**Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.**

*The assembly is seated.*

**The Sacrament of Holy Communion** is offered to all who are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and who recognize the Sacrament as the true body and blood of our Lord. Baptized children are also welcome to the Lord's table at St. David's with the guidance and consent of their parents or guardians.

Please come forward by the center aisle. Pick up a communion glass from the trays at the end of the center aisle. Then move to the altar where you may kneel or stand. After receiving the elements the empty glass can be returned to the tray for empty glasses as you return to your pew by the side aisles. Be sure to fill out the pew pad.

# COMMUNION HYMN

## O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive  
2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things  
3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on  
4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
far - and nigh: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;  
Si - nai's height in an - cient times you gave the law  
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
teach us your will and guide our way. Re-joyce! Re-joyce!  
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.  
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

- 5 O come, O 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, O Dayspring, come and cheer;  
O Sun of justice, now draw near.  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*
- 7 O come, O King of nations, come,  
O Cornerstone that binds in one:  
refresh the hearts that long for you;  
restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*
- 8 O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*

Text: *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. composite  
Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.  
Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

Hymns/Music Reprinted with permission under One License #A-712819.

*The assembly stands.*

*After all have returned to their places, the minister may say these or similar words.*

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

### **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Let us pray.

God for whom we wait, in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when the hungry will be fed with good things. Send us forth to make known your deeds and to proclaim the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

### **SENDING OF COMMUNION**

Gracious God, loving all your family with a mother's tender care:

As you sent the angel to feed Elijah with heavenly bread, assist those who set forth to share your word and sacrament with those who are *sick, homebound, and imprisoned.*

In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those who will receive this sacrament, and give us all the comfort of your abiding presence through the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **BLESSING**

Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **QUIET MEDITATION**

# SENDING HYMN

## Joy to the World



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -  
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their  
3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -  
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the



ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him  
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and  
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings  
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -



room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture  
plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing  
flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is  
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his



sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.  
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.  
found, far as, far as the curse is found.  
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748

Music: ANTIOCH, English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792–1872

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE



## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**December 22, 2019**

### **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

#### **Where Mercy Is Courage**

There is a starched-spine courage in what Joseph did—courage that risks public derision. There is tender courage needed for Joseph to be gentle with an abrasive truth, to face shame for the sake of another's honor. There is a willing-to-be-wrong courage revealed by Joseph, who dares to believe an improbable dream.

Before any innkeepers' doors shuttered along Bethlehem's still streets, before a cattle stall doubled for a nursery or shepherds abandoned their flocks to a sky full of angels, before silent night broke into something joyful and triumphant and herald angels sang glory, there was quiet, courageous mercy in Nazareth.

To be merciful to Mary, who Joseph must have believed had betrayed him; to be merciful to a community that, of course, would ridicule him; to be merciful in the face of a future that appeared forever spoiled—this demanded courage. Mercy will forever require courage. All Joseph had to proceed with was the mind-boggling gift of the phrase "Do not be afraid."

Many are the regrets that harrow us, not for what we have done but for what we have failed to do; not for where we wandered but for where we refused to venture; not for what we chanced but for what we guarded, all because we have been afraid. Fear binds us from acting with mercy and courage.

"Do not be afraid" is God's constant refrain, beginning with scripture's earliest stories in Genesis and continuing until the Bible closes in Revelation: "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last" (Rev. 1:17). God's empowering litany gives merciful courage to Joseph in a dream and to shepherds in the fields. It is found in the miracle of Bethlehem, the merciful Word born in Emmanuel, God with us. Do not be afraid.

## *Daily Readings for the Week December 22-28*

Sunday:	<p style="text-align: center;">Fourth Sunday of Advent          Isaiah 7:10-16          Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19          Romans 1:1-7          Matthew 1:18-25</p>
Monday:	<p style="text-align: center;">1 Samuel 2:1-10          Genesis 17:15-22          Galatians 4:8-20</p>
Tuesday:	<p style="text-align: center;">1 Samuel 2:1-10          Genesis 21:1-21          Galatians 4:21—5:1</p>
Wednesday:	<p style="text-align: center;">Nativity of Our Lord III          Isaiah 52:7-10          Psalm 98          Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]          John 1:1-14</p>
Thursday:	<p style="text-align: center;">Psalm 148          Wisdom 4:7-15          Acts 7:59—8:8</p>
Friday:	<p style="text-align: center;">Psalm 148          Proverbs 8:22-31          1 John 5:1-12</p>
Saturday:	<p style="text-align: center;">Psalm 148          Isaiah 49:13-23          Matthew 18:1-14</p>

Copyright © 2019 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS006303.

New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.