

ST. JOHN CENTER LUTHERAN CHURCH
EAST EARL, PA



WE AWAIT OUR SAVIOR

First Sunday in Advent • November 29, 2020

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GATHERING

PRELUDE

“Veni, Veni, Emmanuel”

Plainsong

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING HYMN

LBW 30 - HUM VERSE 1

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus



1 Come, thou long-ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king-dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art,
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir-it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long-ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788
Music: JEFFERSON, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

INVOCATION and GREETING

- P: We gather in the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**
We come with great expectation to await the coming of the Messiah.
- C: **All creation waits with great longing for the Son of God.**
- P: As John the Baptist cried in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord.”
- C: **We are here to prepare a place in our hearts for his coming.**

BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

P: Blessed are you, God of our salvation; you promised to raise up a righteous branch, One who would bring justice and righteousness to the land, so that we might live in safety. As we light this candle, kindle in us the fire of your justice and righteousness, and make us blameless before you at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all the saints; let your face shine on us and bless us that we may be saved. **Amen**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you. **And also with you**
P: Let us pray together. **Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

WE CONFESS OUR NEED FOR THE CHRIST CHILD TOGETHER

C: God of Advent, we confess our excitement about this season has very little to do with Jesus. We surround ourselves with the ornaments of the season, yet we feel alone and lifeless. We confess that we find more pleasure in receiving than giving. Forgive the sins of our thoughts, words, and actions. In this Christmas season, allow us to know that forgiveness is possible only because of the Christ-child, Jesus.

GOD PROVIDES FOR OUR SALVATION

P: People of God, today we have good news to share together. Christ came into the world to save us from sin and to restore us to a right relationship with God and with each other. God came in human flesh to be one of us-to know our pain and to live among us. In this special season, God comes to us in the baby Jesus, born to give life and hope to all who are God's children. It is through that same Jesus and by his authority I declare to you, as minister of the Church of Christ that your sins are forgiven you, in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Fling Wide the Door

1 Fling wide the door, un - bar the gate; the King of glo - ry
 2 He is the rock of our be - lief, the heart of mer - cy's
 3 Oh, hap - py towns and bless - ed lands that live by their true
 4 Come, Lord, our Sav - ior, Je - sus Christ; our hearts are o - pen

comes in state; the Lord of lords and King of kings, the
 gen - tle self. His king - ly crown is ho - li - ness; his
 king's com - mands. And bless - ed be the hearts he rules, the
 wide in trust. Oh, show us now your love - ly grace, up -

Sav - ior of the world who brings his great sal - va - tion
 scep - ter is his love - li - ness; he brings our sor - rows
 hum - ble plac - es where he dwells. He is the right - ful
 on our sor - rows shine your face, and let your Ho - ly

to the earth. So raise a shout of ho - ly mirth and
 to an end. Now glad - ly praise our king and friend, and
 Son of bliss who fills our lives and makes us his, cre -
 Spir - it guide our jour - ney in your grace so wide. We

praise our God and Lord, Cre - a - tor, Spir - it, Word.
 wor - ship him with song for sav - ing us from wrong.
 a - tor of the world, our on - ly strength for good.
 praise your ho - ly name, from age to age the same!

Text: Georg Weissel, 1590–1635; tr. Gracia Grindal, b. 1943

Music: MACHT HOCH DIE TÜR, J. A. Freylinghausen, *Geistreiches Gesangbuch*, 1704; arr. hymnal versionText © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

Arr. © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.

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WORD

THE FIRST LESSON: *Isaiah 64:1-9*

A reading from Isaiah, the 64th chapter.

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
²as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
⁴From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
⁵You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
⁶We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
⁷There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

THE HOLY GOSPEL: *Mark 13:24-37*

The Holy Gospel according to Mark, the 13th chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:] ²⁴“In those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he
will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the

earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Wachet Auf, ruft uns die Stimme” Sleepers Awake!”

J S Bach

SERMON

NICENE CREED

We believe in God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

OFFERING MOMENT

OFFERING PRAYER

- P:** Let us pray our offering prayer, to bless the gifts that we continue to give in response to God's gifts to us.
- C:** **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**

THE PRAYERS

God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

We pray for the ministry we share in Christ's name. Open our hearts to your call for justice, peace, and healing. Attune us to the needs of the world as you draw near.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for this planet in need of restoration: for devastated habitats, polluted waters, thawing ice, blazing fires, swelling floods, and long-lasting droughts. Renew the face of the earth and our relationship to it.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Fill them with compassion and the power to respond with justice for those who are oppressed, with welcome for those who are excluded, and with relief for those who suffer.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change: for those without homes facing severe weather, for those who are unemployed or underemployed, and for those in poverty or facing food insecurity. Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease their minds.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other invisible illnesses *especially Mahalia, Marie, Carine, Sally, Cindy, Doris, Bob, Carl, Judy, Deb, Elmo, Mary Jean, Anna, Mary, Catharine, Mimi, Bev, Jane, Maudie and those we name before you*. Ease their suffering and support them when they struggle.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We give thanks for the lives and witness of those who died while waiting for justice, peace, or healing, those whose names we know and those whose names are known only to you. Sustain all who still yearn for the completion of your redeeming work.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

THE LORD'S TABLE

- P: We come again to the table to be made new. The cup of love and the bread of life have been given for all of us to remember the very real presence of Christ with us.
- C: **Feed us with your heavenly food. Our spirits are hungry for the bread of life.**
- P: We come again, knowing as we confess our sin, God is faithful, and forgives our sin
- C: **Fill us with the cup of love. Our spirits are thirsty and we want to drink from the well giving us eternal life.**
- P: 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 in 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.

- C: **Jesus, we thank you for life and love, for grace and peace, for joy and contentment. May these gifts be ours as we celebrate your resurrection presence.**
- P: Remembering, therefore, his coming among us to welcome the outcast, feed the hungry, heal the sick, liberate those who were bound, and raise up the dead, we give thanks to you, O God, that you have raised him up for us and for our salvation. And we pray that you send your Holy Spirit on this your people and these your gifts of bread and wine, that we and all who share in the Body and Blood of your Son may be filled with heavenly peace and joy, receiving the forgiveness of sin and be raised up on the last day. Sanctify us completely that we may live forever in communion with all your saints.
- C: **All honor and glory are yours O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in your holy church, now and forever. Amen**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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 and BREAKING OF BREAD

P: This is the living Bread from Heaven

C: **Whoever eats this bread will live forever.**

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

At this time take the pre-sealed wafer and grape juice and open – PASTOR SAYS – “The body and blood of Christ given and shed for you. Take and Eat!!

THE COMMUNION BLESSING and PRAYER

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

P: 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

THE BENEDICTION

P: The God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus. **Amen**

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

P: The God of all grace + bless you now and forever. **Amen**

SENDING SONG

WOV 626 - HUM VERSE

People, Look East

1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing
2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is
3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the
4 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new

of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,
plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,
bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,
life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming

trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look
that in course the flow'r may flour - ish. Peo - ple, look
bright as sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo - ple, look
with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look

east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Rose, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Star, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965

Music: BESANÇON, French carol; arr. Barry Rose, b. 1934

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DISMISSAL

Go forth into the world to love and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God!

SERVICE PARTICIPANTS**Rev. Thomas E. Darr***Organist: Vickie Kissinger*

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING will take place following worship next Sunday, December 6 in the social hall. Please plan to attend this important meeting.

CAN YOU HELP? Someone is needed to take over responsibility for Social Hall reservations. If you are interested, please contact Alvin to discuss. Thank you.

LAST WEEK'S ATTENDANCE:

Viewed Online

43

Parking Lot Attendance

17

In Church Attendance

15

WHEN YOU COME

- Your temperature will be taken
- Masks are worn all the time – your hands will be sanitized as you arrive.
- Pick up your own bulletin and communion cup if a communion Sunday and go to your seat.
- Deposit your offering in the plate as you come in the sanctuary.
- Please sit in designated pews observing the 1-2-3 rule. 1 family per pew, 2 couples per pew or 3 individuals per pew.
- There will be no congregational singing at the in person service. The music listed is for the pre-recorded service only.
- There will be no sharing of the peace.
- Remain seated for entire service.
- We can accommodate no more than thirty people in the sanctuary. If you are planning on worshipping from home, or from the parking lot, please let me know. My email is revdrthms@gmail.com or call me at 717-320-3642.

PRAYER CONCERNS

For those serving in the military... Conner Allen (Darr's). Christopher Buch (Susie Welsh's grandson), Trinity Gilkey (Bauer's), Jeremy Reifsnyder (J Reifsnyder), Jon Shorr (Darr's), Richard Witwer (Maudie Witwer's grandson)

For those with ongoing illness... Cindy Petersheim

For the homebound... Mary Martin

For those afflicted with cancer... Sandra Bair (M Nuessle), Ritch Bedell (Bauer's), Doris Bewley, Ed Carvell (J Oatman), Jeff Donahue (P Wallace), Robert Freeman (Mary Hafer), Connie Howe (V Haug), Harold Kring, Nate Mohler (Mary Hafer's son-in-law), Matt Sanger (T Wentzel), T Simmons, Jr. (Simmons'), Robyn Wiley (K Wallace)

For those facing or recovering from a hospitalization...

For those in need of strength and comfort.. Mahalia Williams, Richard Burkhart, Steve Cammauf (J Kring), Dan Carpenter (B Wallace), Michael Clause, Sierra Cortez (T Wentzel), the Craven family, Amy DeFalco (J Kring), Sally Dettra, Bernice Dietrich (J Kring), Bob Dettra, Sister Phyllis Enck (D Lorah), Darlene Ganse (J Kring), Scott Gockley (C Doman), Norma Good, Don Griffith (Raffauf's), Mary Hafer, Vickie Haug, Allen Kimball (W Kimball), Judy Kring, Deb Lorah, Elmo Lorah, Mary Jean Ludwig, Marie Paul (T Good), Wanda Lutz (T Raffauf), Anna McComsey, Catharine Messner, Israel Newswanger (L Burns), Carolyn Seddon (J Kring), Carine Shorr (Darr's), Bev Simmons, Shaun Sitkowski, Tim Stanley (T Wentzel), Tammy Stiffler (Haug's), Lance Stoudt, Jane Sweigart, Carlos Terres (T Weaver), Tammy Weaver, Darlene Wentzel (T Wentzel), Maudie Witwer, Steve Young (T Weaver)

*Underlined indicates names of members of the congregation. **Bold** indicates names added since last week.*

IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF PASTORAL CARE please contact Pastor Darr at 717-320-3642 or Alvin McCoy at 610-286-9647.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Learn from the Figs

Fig trees mature slowly. They don't require much maintenance, but they do require plenty of time to grow. Some fig trees take years to start producing fruit. It may be tempting to give up on a fig too soon, but the patient gardener knows to wait and watch for the subtle signs that the fig tree is about to produce.

"From the fig tree learn its lesson," Jesus says in today's gospel (Mark 13:28). Just as the gardener watches for indications that a bud is about to unfold, so should believers watch for where God's presence is emerging in the world.

Jesus' words in this passage paint a picture of God's arrival as unsettling and fearsome, with darkening skies and shaking celestial orbs. It is hard to imagine how anyone could miss such an arrival, yet Jesus warns his listeners that those who are not vigilant will be caught unaware. We must watch with care and patience for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man, like the gardener who watches for the ripening fig. If you think such signs can be ignored, you will miss the surprising, gentle cry of the incarnate God come as a tiny, vulnerable baby.

Today, at the beginning of Advent, we enter a season of waiting and watching as we anticipate with hope the coming of Christ's light into the world. Yet, even as we wait, there are active signs of God's presence all around us now—in water and word, in bread and wine, in the assembly gathered for worship. These signs remind us of God's gracious love toward us. At the same time, the lesson of the fig tree reminds us to stay curious and attentive, open to what might surprise us. God is always up to something new.