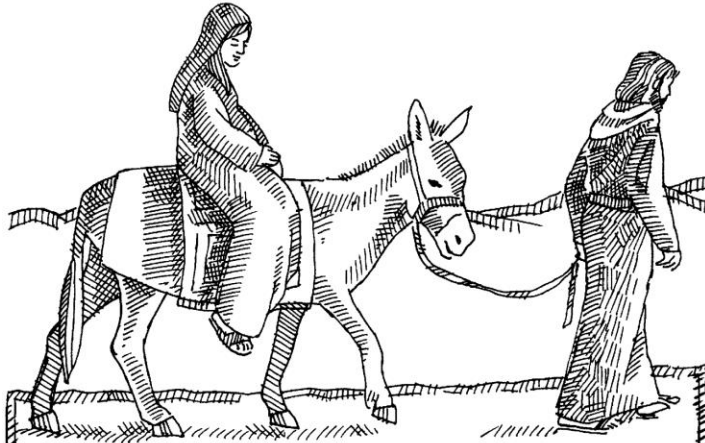


# WELCOME TO WORSHIP!



*Strengthen your hearts because the  
coming  
of the Lord is near.*

*James 5:8b*

Imminent Arrival of the Messiah

*Third Sunday in Advent*

December 14, 2025



## Welcome To Worship

If you are a visitor to our church, we extend you a warm welcome. We are happy you are here. Please fill out a Connect Card to let us know how we might continue to serve you.

It's encouraging to see parents bring their families to worship the Lord. If your child becomes restless, you can use the Family Room to calm them. Quiet bags and children's bulletins are also available to keep little ones busy. Restrooms are located in the hallways along either side of the worship space. For those with special needs, large print copies of the service folder and listening devices are available from the ushers. One of our ushers can help you find the restrooms or family room and answer any other questions.

## Service Notes For This Service



The Messiah is an important person. "Messiah" is the same word as "Christ" or "Anointed One." He is someone who has been anticipated for a long time. Now we look at a time when his arrival is imminent!

The historic Christian Church gave Latin titles to each Sunday. They titled the Third Sunday in Advent "Gaudete," which means "Rejoice!" As we reach the midway point of Advent, we ask Christ to empower us to do just that. We rejoice because God fulfills all his promises in Jesus.

## Those Serving in Worship

Pastor Peter Plagenz; Accompanist: Marilyn Foley; Special Music: Terri Dobratz, Rachel Provost, and the Church Choir

## Acknowledgements

Setting One from Christian Worship. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, Evangelical Heritage Version® (EHV®) © 2017 Wartburg Project. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Liturgical and musical settings of Scripture based on text from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.



*st.2 - All*

Ho - ly God. Ho - ly and  
might - y. Ho - ly im - mor - tal One, have  
mer - cy, have mer - cy on us.

*st.3 - All*

Ho - ly God. Ho - ly and  
might - y. Ho - ly im - mor - tal One, have  
mer - cy, have mer - cy, have mer - cy.  
Have mer - cy, have mer - cy on us.

Text: traditional; Public domain. Tune: Fernando Ortega, b. 1957; © 2011 Kachitower Music. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 719903

God's promise to Abraham and his descendants was fulfilled in the coming of his Son. Jesus Christ humbled himself by submitting to God's law. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death on a cross. God promises to lift up the humble and fill the hungry with good things because of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor,  
so that we through his poverty might become rich.**

*2 Corinthians 8:9*

Even as we await Christ's second coming, he comes to us here and now in the words he gives his messengers to speak: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## Lighting of the Advent Wreath

We light three Advent candles remembering Jesus, the Light of the world. He came to defeat the prince of darkness.

**We remember Jesus, who came in answer to his people's prayers. John proclaimed him the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.**

We hear his call to see the light.

**We light three Advent candles as a sign of our trust and confidence.**

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.

**Through your Word and Spirit may our souls be blessed.**

## The Word

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

## Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Hear our prayers, Lord Jesus Christ, and come with the good news of your mighty deliverance.

Drive the darkness from our hearts, and fill us with your light; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Be seated*

## First Reading

*Isaiah 35:1-10*

*Isaiah tells us that the coming of the Messiah would change everything.*

<sup>1</sup>The wilderness and the desert will be glad.

The wasteland of the Arabah will rejoice and blossom like a crocus.

<sup>2</sup>It will bloom lavishly,

and there will be great joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon will be given to it.

It will be excellent like Carmel and Sharon.

They will see the glory of the LORD,

the majesty of our God.

<sup>3</sup>Strengthen the weak hands,

and make the shaky knees steady.

<sup>4</sup>Tell those who have a fearful heart:

Be strong. Do not be afraid.

Look! Your God will come with vengeance.

With God's own retribution, he will come and save you.

<sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf will be unplugged.

<sup>6</sup>The crippled will leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy.  
Waters will flow in the wilderness,  
and streams in the wasteland.

<sup>7</sup>The burning sand will become a pool,  
and in the thirsty ground there will be springs of water.  
There will be grass, reeds, and rushes where the haunts of jackals once lay.

<sup>8</sup>A highway will be there,  
a road that will be called the holy way.  
The impure will not walk there.  
It will be reserved for those who walk in that holy way.  
Wicked fools will not wander onto it.

<sup>9</sup>No lion will be there,  
nor will any ferocious animal go up on it.  
They will not be found there,  
but only the redeemed will walk there.  
<sup>10</sup>Then those ransomed by the LORD will return.

They will enter Zion with a joyful shout,  
and everlasting joy will crown their heads.  
Happiness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away. (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Choir**

*O Come, Messiah King*

## **Second Reading**

*James 5:7–11*

*James points to Job as an example of perseverance in the face of suffering.*

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, brothers, be patient until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the valuable harvest from the ground, patiently waiting for it, until it receives the early and late rain. <sup>8</sup>You be patient too. Strengthen your hearts because the coming of the Lord is near.

<sup>9</sup>Do not complain about one another, brothers, so that you will not be judged. Look! The Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup>Brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering with patient endurance. <sup>11</sup>See, we consider those who endured to be blessed. You have heard of the patient endurance of Job and have seen what the Lord did in the end, because the Lord is especially compassionate and merciful. (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Stand*

## **Gospel Acclamation**

*Matthew 11:10*

Alleluia. I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
**who will prepare your way before you. Alleluia.**

## **Gospel**

*Matthew 11:2–11*

*John's disciples wanted to verify that Jesus was the Messiah.*

<sup>2</sup>While John was in prison, he heard about the things Christ was doing. He sent two of his disciples <sup>3</sup>to ask him, “Are you the Coming One or should we wait for someone else?”

<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered them, “Go, report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the gospel is preached to the poor. <sup>6</sup>Blessed is the one who does not take offense at me.”

<sup>7</sup>As these two were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the crowds about John. “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? <sup>8</sup>What did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? No, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. <sup>9</sup>So what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you! And he is much more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ <sup>11</sup>Amen I tell you: Among those born of women there has not appeared anyone greater than John the Baptist. Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (EHV®)

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

*Be seated*

## **Children's Message**

## **Hymn of the Day**

*307 When the King Shall Come Again*

## **Sermon**

*Stand*

## **Nicene Creed**

**We believe in one 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 from 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,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
and became truly human.  
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 the Son,  
who in unity with the Father and the Son  
is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy Christian 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.**

*Be seated*

## **Welcome of New Members**

*Our new members: Anna Christopher and her children, Eliana and Alexander;  
Maureen McFarlin; Donald Provost; Peter Rombca; and Mike & Sarah Schoenborn*

*The pastor speaks to the new members*

Friends in Christ,  
St. Paul described the unity that exists in Christ's church when he wrote, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." With sincere joy we welcome you to the fellowship of our congregation.

As you know, believers in Christ regularly gather around his Word and sacraments, encourage one another in faith and life, and carry out the work of his kingdom. The Scriptures encourage us: “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”

I ask you: Is it your desire to join us in worship and mission and support this work with your prayers and gifts?

*It is, and I ask God to help me.*

*The pastor speaks to the congregation:*

Brothers and sisters,

As we welcome these new members to our Christian family, I encourage you in the name of Jesus to keep them in your minds, hold them in your hearts, and pray for them again and again. Show them the face of friendship and offer them a hand of support. Encourage them with your “works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

The peace of Christ be with us all. Amen.

### **Special Prayers This Week**

† For Laurie Meister, who is having back surgery on Tuesday.

† For Marti Schiestle, who is being placed on hospice care

† For Tom’s Blaes’ mother, who was diagnosed with cancer

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### **Prayer of the Church**

Eternal Father, throughout the centuries you repeated and affirmed your promise to send the offspring of the woman to crush the serpent’s head. Through your prophets of old, you continually directed the eyes of your people to the advent of their Savior.

**We praise you, O Lord, for keeping your promise and sending your Son to destroy the works of the devil.**

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our King, use your mighty Word to shatter our pride and to rouse us from spiritual slumber and apathy.

**Move us to take to heart the words of John: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”**

You sent your Son to redeem us from sin. Let this good news be our joy and strength. Use it to cheer the lonely, encourage the fearful, and give hope to the despairing. In these days before Christmas, spare us from the stress of deadlines and the frenzy of commercialism.

**Fill our lives with the message of your peace and the music of your grace.**

Direct our eyes not only to the manger but also to the skies, where we will see your Son coming again, not as a lowly child but as the Lord of lords.

**Lift up our hearts in joyful anticipation of that day.**

Hold in your care, Lord, those who are experiencing physical and emotional pain and all who are afflicted by disease or facing death. Pour out your compassion on the grieving and comfort the mourners who miss someone they loved.

**Move us to pray for these brothers and sisters and to help when we can.**

*Special prayers and intercession*

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

*Silent prayer*

Come quickly, Lord Jesus, in your grace, in your power, and in your glory.

**Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.**

## **Connect Card and Offering**

*Please take a moment to fill out a Connect Card. After a few moments, the ushers will come forward to collect the offering. You may place your Connect Card and any offering you brought in the plate as it is passed. Moved by God's love in Christ, we offer him our first and best gifts, purely out of thanks to him. If the gospel message has moved you to give and you would like an electronic option, you can scan this QR code with your mobile phone. It will connect you with our website's giving page.*



## **WELS Connection**

*WELS Long-Range Strategic Plan: Commission*

*Stand*

Blessed Lord, you have given us your Holy Scriptures for our learning. May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart that, being strengthened and comforted by your holy Word, we may cling to the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

## Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

**Amen.**

Be seated

## Hymn

*313 Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes*



# Take Home Questions

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## Isaiah 35:1-10

1. Isaiah paints a picture of deserts blooming and weak hands strengthened. What does this imagery reveal about the nature of the Messiah's work? In what ways is this encouraging for struggling believers waiting today?
2. The passage ends with God's redeemed entering Zion with singing. When the church gathers for worship, in what ways is that a small foretaste of the joy promised in this reading when the Messiah comes again?

## James 5:7-11

3. James urges believers to "be patient until the coming of the Lord." For what reasons is waiting for Jesus' return difficult for believers today?
4. James highlights the perseverance of the prophets and Job. In what ways do their examples of suffering and steadfastness help anchor you when waiting feels long or painful?

## Matthew 11:2-11

5. John the Baptist sends messengers asking, "Are you the one who is to come?" What does this moment teach us about doubt—even among strong believers—and how Jesus addresses it?
6. Jesus' answer points to the works fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy (the First Reading). For what reasons is it important that Jesus grounds assurance not in feelings, but in the objective fulfillment of Scripture?

## Bonus

7. In what ways does the promised restoration (*Isaiah*), patient waiting (*James*), and reassurance from Jesus (*Matthew*) work together to shape our Advent hope?
8. Our service theme is ***Imminent Arrival of the Messiah***. What would change in your week if you lived as though Christ might come today? What would stay the same because you're already living in that hope?

# News & Announcements

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## **This Sunday's Bible Study Hour: Fellowship in Practice**

Join us in the cafeteria at 10:30 AM

## **School Christmas Service**

Dec. 20 | 4:00 pm

Our school children will lead a special Christmas worship service next Saturday, Dec. 20 at 4:00 pm. In addition to narration and recitations by the students, the congregation will join in singing many familiar Christmas carols. A cookie social will follow the service. Everyone is welcome to attend.

**Come for the Dress Rehearsal** – If you cannot make it on Saturday, consider being part of the audience for the dress rehearsal. The students need to perform before a real audience to help them get used to that situation and to overcome some of their nervousness. The dress rehearsal is this Friday, Dec. 19 at 10:00 am.



## **Christmas Concerts This Weekend**

The Christmas Concert at Northland Lutheran High School (NLHS) is this Sunday, Dec. 14 at 3:00 pm. Invite a friend to join you in traveling to NLHS for the concert.

Martin Luther College's Christmas Concert was presented yesterday, but you can watch it on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/@martinluthercollege1197](http://www.youtube.com/@martinluthercollege1197).

The Seminary Chorus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will present their Christmas concert twice this Sunday, Dec. 14. The concert will be livestreamed at [www.youtube.com/@WLS\\_Live](http://www.youtube.com/@WLS_Live).

## **The Last Advent Supper This Wednesday**

Dec. 17 | 5:00-6:15 pm

Sisters on a Mission will be serving the Advent meal this Wednesday, Dec. 17. Shredded Chicken Sandwiches are on the menu. Come to the cafeteria between 5:00 and 6:15 pm. Your freewill offering will go to home and world missions.

## **Order Scrip for the Holidays**

Northland Scrip Users, remember that today is the last day before Christmas to place an order for Northland scrip. Next Sunday, Dec. 21, we will sell from what we have in stock, but will not be able to order anything extra. We will not be selling on Dec. 28. Orders will resume as usual on Jan. 4. Thank you for supporting Northland by buying scrip!

## Security & Safety Update

Our leaders have approved Phase 1 of a security overhaul for our shared church and school building, this is the same project that was presented at our last congregational meeting. This is a proactive step to better protect everyone who uses our facilities. Installation is planned for the week between Christmas and New Year's to minimize disruption.

### What this means for members:

- Expect fewer unlocked doors; please use designated main entrances.
- The school wing and certain areas may stay locked when not in use.
- Please do not prop doors open or let unknown individuals in.

Please check your church mailbox for a full written overview of new policies and project details.

## Help Still Needed for Sunday Refreshments

Thank you to everyone who has baked or purchased treats to share or has volunteered to serve on Sunday mornings. Your help is greatly appreciated! We are grateful Al Verjinsky is back and serving, as this is his very nature. As it will take some time for his complete recovery, we are encouraging those able to continue to volunteer for Sunday Refreshments to lighten the load. You can sign up at the Ministry Table or sign up online at [stpaulswr.org/serve](http://stpaulswr.org/serve). Please direct any questions to Al Verjinsky, Kayla Mallek, or Laurie Meister.

## Thank You, Thrivent Members

Our church recently received a gift of \$323 from Thrivent Financial through their Thrivent Choice program. We thank the congregation members who took time to designate St. Paul's as the recipient of their Thrivent Choice allotment. If you have a Thrivent product, we encourage you to check into whether you qualify to direct Choice Dollars to St. Paul's. Thank you, Thrivent!

## Help with Funeral Meals

We need more people on our calling list to help with funeral meals. Although we usually have about a dozen funerals a year, not all funerals include a meal at church, and you are not obligated to serve at every funeral, just when you are available. We would divide duties between set up, serving, clean up, and take down. If you are willing to be on the list, please contact Mike Anderson (715-321-3541) or the church office (715-421-3634).



## HOLIDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve Service at 6:30 PM

Christmas Morning Service at 9:00 AM

New Year's Eve Service at 6:30 PM

Sunday	9:00 AM	Sunday Worship
	10:30 AM	Bible Study in the cafeteria
	10:30 AM	Sunday School (Grades 3K-5 <sup>th</sup> )
	3:00 PM	<b>Christmas Concert at Northland Lutheran High School</b>
Monday	1:30 PM	Spiritual Health Group in the chapel at Wisc Rapids Health Services
	6:00 PM	Choir Practice in the balcony
Tuesday	6:45 AM	Men's Bible Study at From the Ground Up Coffee Shop
	9:45 AM	Women Walking in the Word in the Resource Center
	6:30 PM	Leadership Council in the Resource Center
Wednesday	8:45 AM	School Chapel Service
	5:00 PM	<b>Advent Fellowship Meal</b> ( <i>served by Sisters on a Mission</i> )
	6:00 PM	Catechism Class in room 110
	6:30 PM	<b>Midweek Advent Worship</b>
Thursday	7:00 AM	Men's Small Group at From the Ground Up Coffee Shop
	1:00 PM	Newsletter Assembly in the Volunteer Work Room
	2:50 PM	Principal's Bible Study in the Welcome Center
Friday	10:00 AM	Dress Rehearsal for the School Christmas Service
Saturday	4:00 PM	<b>School Christmas Service</b>
Sunday	9:00 AM	Sunday Worship
	10:30 AM	Bible Study in the cafeteria
	10:30 AM	Sunday School

## Attendance Report

Last Week's Attendance: 179

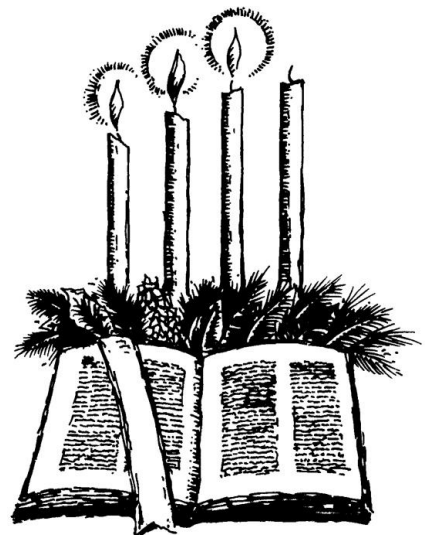
## Next Sunday

Theme: Imminent Arrival of Immanuel

Readings: Isaiah 7:10-14, Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-25

## Upcoming Events

- Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Service at 6:30 PM
- Dec. 25 Christmas Morning Service at 9:00 AM
- Dec. 31 New Year's Eve Service at 6:30 PM





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

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