

WELCOME TO WORSHIP!



A Real Christmas Will Lift Up the Lowly

Fourth Sunday in Advent

St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church | Wisconsin Rapids, WI

December 22, 2024



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



By this time of the holiday season, people are often weighted down. They feel guilty about presents that are not perfect, or parties that did not go as planned, or year-end projects that did not get completed. To top it all off, now is when it dawns on people how little attention they have given to the spiritual preparation Advent invites.

If that is how we feel, perhaps the frenzy of December has done us a favor. We have been stretched to our limits. We have been made painfully aware of our shortcomings. We have been humbled. Perfect! For being made aware of our weakness does not disqualify us from God's care. It does the opposite. IT is what prepares us for the work he does best. He is a God who lifts up the lowly.

Those Serving in Worship

Pastor Peter Plagenz; Accompanist Sue Kulhanek; Offering Music, Rose Paul

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.

The Service: Setting One

After the gathering rite, the service continues with *The Word* on page 160 of the hymnal.

Welcome

Hymn

333 O Little Town of Bethlehem

Stand

In the name of the Father and of the \mathcal{T} Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Confession

God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

James 4:6,10

Dear friends, the season of Advent is a time of preparation as we await Christ's second coming on the Last Day. We prepare our hearts to meet him as we humbly seek his forgiveness.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness; therefore, you are feared.

Psalm 130:3,4

Response

956 Holy Is Your Name



1 My _____ soul is filled with joy as I
2 I am low - ly as a child, but I



sing to God, my Sav - ior. You have looked up - on your
know from this day for - ward that my name will be re -



ser - vant, you have vis - it - ed your peo - ple.
mem - bered, and the world will call me bless - ed.

Refrain



And ho - ly is your name through all gen - er -



a - tions! Ev - er - last - ing is your mer - cy to the



peo - ple you have cho - sen, and ho - ly is your name!

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Absolution

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 *T* and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Response

956 Holy Is Your Name



3 I pro - claim your pow'r, O God! You work
4 To the hun - gry you give food, send the



won - ders for your ser - vants; you have scat - tered the proud -
rich a - way with noth - ing. In your mer - cy you are



heart - ed, you have lift - ed up the low - ly.
mind - ful of the peo - ple you have cho - sen.

Refrain



And ho - ly is your name through all gen - er -



a - tions! Ev - er - last - ing is your mer - cy to the



peo - ple you have cho - sen, and ho - ly is your name!

Text: anonymous, alt. Tune: Scottish Text and tune: Public domain

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

We light four Advent candles remembering Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Mary. He came to share our humanity.

We remember Jesus, whose name means Savior. He came to save his people from their sins.

We hear his call to give him a place in our hearts.

We light four Advent candles as a sign of our joy and hope.

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.

Through your Word and Spirit may our souls be blessed.

While the candles are being lit, the congregation sings:

Response

956 Holy Is Your Name

5 In your love you now ful - fill all you
prom - ised to your peo - ple. I will praise you, God, my
Sav - ior, ev - er - last - ing is your mer - cy.
Refrain
And ho - ly is your name through all gen - er -
a - tions! Ev - er - last - ing is your mer - cy to the
peo - ple you have cho - sen, and ho - ly is your name!

Text: anonymous, alt. Tune: Scottish. Text and tune: Public domain

The Word

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the burden of our sins, and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

Micah 5:2–5a

The lowly little town of Bethlehem would be lifted up. There a special son would be born who would bring spiritual peace to the ends of the earth.

²But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
from you, will go out the one who will be the ruler for me in Israel.
His goings forth are from the beginning, from the days of eternity.

³Therefore the LORD will give them up,
until the time when the woman who is in labor bears a child.
Then the remaining survivors from his brothers will return to the people of Israel.

⁴He will stand and shepherd with the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

They will dwell securely, for at that time he will be great to the ends of the earth.

⁵This one will be their peace. (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm of the Day

85A LORD, in Your Mercy, Hear My Prayer

Refrain



LORD, in your mer - cy hear my prayer; your good-ness nev - er fails.

Tone



You, LORD, forgave the iniquity of your / people
and covered / all their sins.

**You set aside / all your wrath
and turned from your fierce / anger.**

Show us your unfailing / love, LORD,
and grant us your sal- / vation. *Refrain*

I will listen to what God the / LORD says;
he promises peace to his / people.
**Surely his salvation is near those who / fear him,
that his glory may dwell / in our land.**
Love and faithfulness meet to- / gether;
righteousness and peace kiss each / other.
**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. Refrain**

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Second Reading

Hebrews 10:5–10

We could not possibly raise ourselves up to God. So, the Son of God obeyed the law for us and by his sacrifice has made us holy. Christ has lifted up the lowly.

⁵Therefore when he entered the world, Christ said:

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but you prepared a body for me.

⁶You were not pleased
with burnt offerings and sin offerings.

⁷Then I said, “Here I am.

I have come to do your will, God.

In the scroll of the book it is written about me.”

⁸First he said:

Sacrifices and offerings that were offered according to the law,
both burnt offerings and sin offerings,
you did not desire,
and you were not pleased with them.

⁹Then he said:

Here I am.

I have come to do your will.

He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰By this will, we have been sanctified once and for all, through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ. (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

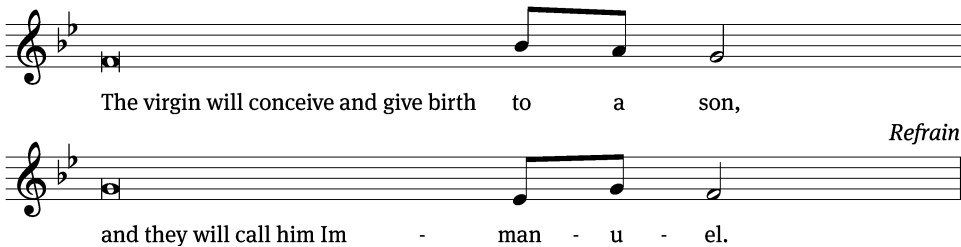
Matthew 1:23



Refrain



Tone



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Gospel

Luke 1:39–55

In Spirit-wrought humility, Mary knew she needed a Savior. God lifts her up, making her the mother of that Savior.

³⁹In those days Mary got up and hurried to the hill country, to a town of Judah. ⁴⁰She entered the home of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹Just as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²She called out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴In fact, just now, as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy! ⁴⁵Blessed is she who believed, because the promises spoken to her from the Lord will be fulfilled!"

⁴⁶Then Mary said,

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior,

⁴⁸because he has looked with favor on the humble state of his servant.

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

⁴⁹because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones.

He has lifted up the lowly.

⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent away empty.

⁵⁴He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy,

⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever. (EHV®)

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Children's Message

Hymn of the Day

327 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Sermon

Stand

Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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 into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Be seated

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.

Special Prayers This Week

† For Chris Williams, who is celebrating his 68th birthday

† For Kim Hamels's brother and his kids, as they go through a difficult family time.

† For those affected by the school shooting in Madison

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†

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.



Musical Offering

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Stand

Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, 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 \mathcal{T} give you peace.

Amen.

Be seated

Hymn

328 *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*



Take Home Questions

Micah 5:2-5a

1. Make a list of the things these verses say about Jesus and what he would do.
2. Which item on your list is the most impactful for you? Why?

Hebrews 10:5-10

1. If God is the one who established the Old Testament sacrificial system through Moses, how can these verses say, “sacrifices and offering you did not desire” (v. 5)? What was the true purpose behind the Old Testament sacrifices? (Hint: read Colossians 2:17)
2. In what ways are we now lifted up as a result of Christ’s once and for all sacrifice?

Luke 1:39-55

1. List all the ways in Mary’s song that God upends expectations.
2. What other truths or accounts in Scripture can you think of where God upends expectations?

News & Announcements



This Sunday's Bible Study Hour: 1 Peter

Join us in the cafeteria from 9:15 to 10:15 AM

Make Our Visitors Feel Welcome

The Outreach Team would like to serve treats after the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. You can bring your donations of cookies and bars to the church through Christmas morning. This will hopefully lead visitors to linger and get to know some of the people from our church before they leave, making it more likely that they will return.

A Pie for the Holidays

If you are looking for a dessert to add to your holiday menu, consider picking up a pie. We still have over a dozen frozen take-and-bake apple pies from the bake sale. Keep one in your freezer for unexpected visitors or to give as a gift. Pies cost \$12, and are available from the office.

Pick Up Your 2025 Envelopes

Offering envelopes for 2025 were placed in mailslots earlier this week. **Please do not use them until 2025.** Most people have different envelope numbers for next year. If you use them early, someone else may get credit for your gift. If you have multiple envelope holders in your family, the extra boxes can be found on the table across from the mailslots. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Anderson, our Financial Secretary, at 715-321-3541.

Related to this, if you would like to give an end-of-the-year gift, legally we must receive it by Dec. 31 to count as a gift for 2024. Gifts received after Dec. 31 will be counted as 2025 gifts, even if your check is dated 2024.

Help Us Meet Our Goal

We have a goal of filling 50% of our appointment slots for the church directory by Dec. 31. We currently are at 38%. If we meet our signup goals, we receive free directories for future members plus a cash back incentive. Photography sessions are Feb. 6-8 & 10-12. There is no cost to you, and you will receive a free 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 for participating. To book your photo session, use the QR code, visit <https://book.usession.com/s/MotFamuJJ->, use the link on our website, or call the church office. Thank you for participating.



Sunday	8:00 AM	Worship
	9:15 AM	Bible Study in the cafeteria
	9:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Worship
Monday	4:30 PM	Choir Practice in the Balcony
	5:30 PM	Men's Devotional Basketball in the gym
Tuesday	6:30 PM	Christmas Eve Worship Service
Wednesday	9:30 AM	Christmas Morning Worship Service
Thursday	7:00 AM	Men's Small Group at From the Ground Up Coffee Shop
Sunday	8:00 AM	Worship
	10:30 AM	Worship

A Note on Christmas Eve Worship

We will not be lighting candles during the Christmas Eve Service this year. There are concerns that wax dripped from candles may damage the fabric on our news pew cushions.

Holiday Schedule

The office will be open limited hours between now and New Year's Day. If you have a family emergency, please contact Pastor Plagenz directly at 920-689-3036.

Attendance Report

Last Week's Attendance: 212

Next Sunday

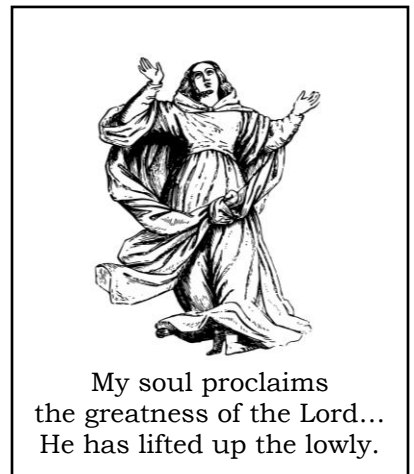
Theme: The Gift of God:

God Gives Satisfaction to Those Who Patiently Wait

Readings: Genesis 17:1-17; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22,25-40

Upcoming Events

- Dec. 31 New Year's Eve Service at 6:30 pm
- Jan. 15 Evening Compline Service
- Jan. 19 Congregational Meeting
- Jan. 26 125th Anniversary Celebration
- Feb. 6 Photo Sessions for Church Directory Begin



My soul proclaims
the greatness of the Lord...
He has lifted up the lowly.



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