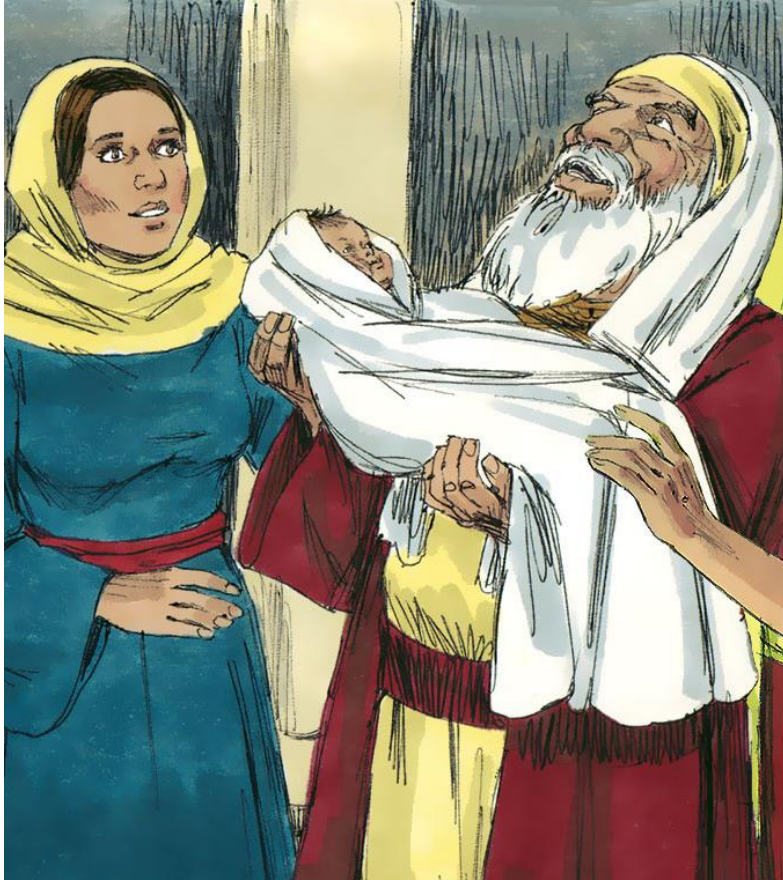


WELCOME TO WORSHIP!



The Gift of God:
God Gives Satisfaction to Those Who Patiently Wait

First Sunday after Christmas

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

December 29, 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

It is always hard to wait, but particularly if what you are waiting for is extremely important. If you must wait an hour for the waiter to bring your food, it is not a huge deal. But if you need to wait a week for an electrician to restore power to your home, that is more painful. Waiting is harder when we badly need what we're waiting for.



After the fall into sin, people of faith waited for God to provide the gift they needed most—a Savior. Century after century passed. “Where is he?” they wondered. People were powerless to save themselves from sin and death and hell. So, there was nothing to do but patiently wait. At the perfect time in history, the first Christmas occurred. The faithful rejoiced!

This week, we see that God works on the timetable he knows to be best for us. We also see that those who wait for God to act are never disappointed. For God gives satisfaction to those who patiently wait.

Those Serving in Worship

Retired Pastor Michael Plagenz; Liturgist Randy Pahl; Accompanist Hannah Cook

Acknowledgements

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The Service: Setting Three

Setting Three begins on page 188 of the hymnal.

Welcome

Hymn

346 Angels We Have Heard on High

Stand

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Confession

CW 188

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

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

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Lord, Have Mercy

CW 190

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

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

Lord, have mercy.

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 mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

Glory to God in the Highest

CW 191

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of seven staves of music with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "Glo - ry to God in the high - est, glo - ry to God, and peace to his peo - ple on earth, and peace to his peo - ple on earth. Lord God, heav - en - ly King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry. Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly".

Glo - ry to God in the high - est, glo - ry to
God, and peace to his peo - ple on earth,
and peace to his peo - ple on earth.
Lord God, heav - en - ly King, al - might - y God and
Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we
praise you for your glo - ry. Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly

Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God,
 you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on
 us. You are seat - ed at the right hand of the
 Fa - ther; re - ceive our prayer. For
 you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the
 Lord, you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus
 Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir - it in the
 glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.
 Glo - ry to God in the high - est, glo - ry to
 God, and peace to his peo - ple on earth,
 and peace to his peo - ple on earth.

The Word

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Almighty God, you have filled us with the new light of the Word who became flesh and lived among us. Let the light of our faith shine in all we do; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

Genesis 17:1–7

Abram had waited for God to keep his promise to make Abram into the father of many nations.

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty. Walk before me and be blameless. ²I will make my covenant between me and you, and I will make your descendants very numerous.”

³Abram fell on his face. God spoke with him. He said, ⁴“As for me, this is my covenant with you. You will be the father of many nations. ⁵Your name will not be Abram anymore, but your name will be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a large group of nations. ⁶I will make you extremely fruitful, and I will produce nations from you. Kings will come out of you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you as an everlasting covenant throughout their generations. I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you.” (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm of the Day

148D Alleluia! Praise the LORD

Refrain



Al - le - lu - ia! Praise the LORD!



1 Let the whole cre - a - tion cry, "Glo - ry
 2 Men and wom - en, young and old, raise the
 3 Praise the LORD, you hosts a - bove, ev - er
 4 From the north to south - ern pole let the



to the LORD on high." Heav'n and earth, a - wake and
 an - them man - i - fold. Join with chil - dren's songs of
 shin - ing forth in love. Sun and moon, up - lift your
 might - y cho - rus roll: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly



sing, "God is our e - ter - nal King."
 praise; wor - ship God through length of days.
 voice; night and stars, in God re - joice!
 One, glo - ry - ry be to God a - lone!"

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Second Reading

Galatians 4:4-7

The Old Testament believers waited for God to keep his promise to send a Savior. God kept his promise when the time had fully come. Those believers received the satisfaction of sonship.

⁴But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son to be born of a woman, so that he would be born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those under the law, so that we would be adopted as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to shout, "Abba, Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if you are a son, then you are also an heir of God through Christ. (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

Luke 2:30,31

Alleluia. My eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared before the face of all people. Alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 2:22–38

Having waited for God's timing, Simeon and Anna rejoiced in the child bringing salvation.

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. ²³(As it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male will be called holy to the Lord.”) ²⁴And they came to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, waiting for the comfort of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷Moved by the Spirit he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary according to the law, ²⁸Simeon took him into his arms and praised God. He said,

²⁹Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word,

³⁰because my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared before the face of all people,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.

³³Joseph and the child's mother were amazed at the things that were spoken about him.

³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Listen carefully, this child is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against, ³⁵so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

³⁶Anna, a prophetess, was there. She was a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old. She had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, ³⁷and then she was a widow of eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple complex, since she was worshipping with fasting and prayers night and day. ³⁸Standing nearby at that very hour, she gave thanks to the Lord. She kept speaking about the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. (EHV[®])

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Hymn of the Day

383 *The Only Son from Heaven*

Sermon

LET'S NOT BE HAUNTED BY THE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST

1. Christmas is past.

2. Christmas lives on.

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 and gracious Lord, in this holy season we rejoice with hearts and voices because you sent your one and only Son from his majestic glory to save us from the slavery of sin and the agonies of death. He took on our human flesh that he might reveal your divine glory.

He became our brother that we might become your children forever.

Give us quiet time during these busy days to reflect on your love and ponder the miracle of our Savior's incarnation. Help us look beyond our gift-giving and gift-receiving, and discover the greatest gift: the forgiveness of sins and life with you. Put the joys of Christmas into the perspective of our eternal celebration.

Let music and art lift our hearts to Christ who is truly the center of the season.

Keep in your loving care all whose Christmas joys are diminished by sickness and sadness, by unhappy recollections and uncertain hopes. Comfort those who sense this Christmas may be their last, and raise their eyes to the brilliant lights of heaven. Soothe consciences that are troubled by guilt and regret.

Show them the forgiving love of Christ.

We commend to your care all who proclaim the message of Christ during these holy days; all who care for people in hospitals, nursing homes, and prisons; and all who put themselves out to bring joy to others, especially children.

Let the light of your grace shine through all ministries of mercy.

Send us your Holy Spirit, gracious Lord, that the proclamation of the Christmas gospel may lighten the load of guilt and fear and lift our hearts to confident faith and holy living. By the power of your Word, bring your light to hearts struggling to understand you and searching to find you that they may know the joys of this season as we do.

Empower us to lead them to your love in our words and deeds.

Special prayers and intercession

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

All this we ask in the name of the newborn King, born in Bethlehem and now living and reigning forever in heaven.

Amen.

Special Prayers This Week

- † For Amy Kaehn & Fred Camacho – healing and recovery from cancer
- † For Linda Pollnow’s brothers, Roger & Neil Cafilisch, who are both having serious health issues.
- † For Grace Lutheran Church in Grenada as they call for a pastor.
- †
- †
- †
- †

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

Hymn

342 O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is

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.

Hymn

950 Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace



Take Home Questions

Genesis 17:1-7

1. Abraham was 75 years old when he first received the promise of many descendants. Twenty four years later, he's now 99 with no descendants. For what reasons would it have been so difficult for Abraham to still hold onto and believe in God's promise?
2. Yet, Abraham and Sarah also with this promise, sometimes took things into their own hands (Gen. 16). In what ways does that make God's promise and fulfillment that much greater?

Galatians 4:4-7

3. As we see God's perfect timing exemplified in the birth of our Savior, in what ways does that bring comfort to us individually?
4. What blessings are yours since you have been redeemed?
5. In what ways can you live in light of those blessings?

Luke 2:22-38

6. Jesus would be "light" and "glory" (32). Explain those words and how they were applied to the two main groups of people in the world, Jews and Gentiles.
7. What are the promises that *IT APPEARS* God is slow in keeping in your life? In what ways can you imitate the trust and patience of Abraham, Sarah, Simeon, and Anna in your life?

News & Announcements



NEW YEAR'S EVE SERVICE **This Tuesday, Dec. 31 at 6:30 pm**



You Are an Ambassador for Christ

Begins Jan. 25

Here is your opportunity to be a part of what brings someone to heaven one day! Think about your circle of friends, relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors. Who needs to hear about the gospel or grow closer to him through his Word? We have a workshop-style Bible Information Class (BIC) beginning Jan. 25. We will be sharing what the Bible teaches about God and our relationship to Him. There are four Saturday morning sessions - Jan. 25, Feb. 8, Feb. 22 and Mar. 8 - from 8:30-12:30. Invite someone! Bring someone! Need more encouragement? Contact Pastor Plagenz at pastorplagenz@stpaulswr.org ~ 920-689-3036.

Event Coordinator Needed

Having someone to organize logistics ahead of and during events like our BIC workshops would be extremely helpful. Please reach out to Pastor Plagenz, if you are able to support him and the gospel ministry in this way (pastorplagenz@stpaulswr.org ~ 920-689-3036).

Family Pricing for Anniversary Luncheon

The Anniversary Committee realized they had not considered children when pricing the catered meal on Jan. 26. They are pleased to announce that children 5 and under are free and that children ages 6-12 are \$9.00. They hope this family pricing encourages more families to participate. Just a reminder that reservations are due by Jan. 12.

Pick Up Your Offering Envelopes

Members, your 2025 contribution envelopes are in your mailslots. Please do not start to use them until next Sunday, Jan. 3, 2025. If for some reason you did not receive a box of envelopes and you would like some, please contact the church office.

K for a Day

Jan. 15 | 8:30 am

If your child will be in Kindergarten next year, we encourage you to bring them to "K for a Day" on Wednesday, Jan. 15. They can experience the classroom and meet the teacher. Activities begin at 8:30 am and finish up at 11:30 am.



Have You Signed up Yet?

The holidays kept everyone extra busy. Now that things are settling down, here are a couple of items you may have overlooked:

Church Directory Signup: We are scheduling photo sessions for our new church directory. Professional photographers will be here Feb. 6-8 & 10-12. You can book a session using the link on our website, calling the church office, or scanning the QR code on posters in the building.



Anniversary RSVP: We need to know by Jan. 12, whether you will be attending the catered meal for the 125th Anniversary. If you have misplaced the RSVP card, there are extras on the ministry Table. You can also email or call the church office (churchoffice@stpaulswr.org or 715-421-3634).

Serve with Eagerness, as for The Lord and Not for People (Eph. 6:7).

There are always tasks around the church that need to be taken care of, all requiring different skills and talents. Here are a few coming up soon.

Schedule Photo Sessions: Call church members who have not yet signed up for church directory photos. Schedule appointments for them online. This work can be done at home or use the church's phone and computer. Contact Judy Stensberg at 715-421-3634.

Check-in People for Their Sessions: Greet people as they arrive and ensure that all of their paperwork is in order for the photographer. Contact Judy Stensberg at 715-421-3634.

Referee Basketball Games: Referee for home games on either Tuesday, Jan. 21 at 5:00 pm or Friday, Feb. 7 at 5:00 pm. Contact Micah Biesterfeld at 414-828-5264.

Judge Forensics for Northland Lutheran High School: Complete an online training program (paid for by NLHS) and judge up to three Forensics meets in February, March, and early April. Contact Jennifer Heisinger at jheisinger@nlhs.org or 715-409-6022.



ONGOING TASKS -

Worship Technology: Operate the PowerPoint, or learn to run the sound board. Make DVDs of the service, or learn how to livestream. Work in rotation with other volunteers. Contact Veronica Klish at 715-421-3607.

Set Up for Communion: Prepare the bread and wine when communion is offered and clean up afterwards. Serve one month at a time. You may need to change paraments, display baptismal banner, or take care of other tasks in the chancel area. Training provided. Contact Veronica Klish at 715-421-3607.

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|---|
| 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 |
| | 6:00 PM | Men's Devotional Basketball in the gym |
| Tuesday | 6:30 PM | New Year's Eve Worship Service |
| Thursday | 7:00 AM | Men's Small Group at From the Ground Up Coffee Shop |
| Sunday | 8:00 AM | Worship |
| | 9:15 AM | Bible Study in the cafeteria |
| | 9:15 AM | Sunday School |
| | 10:30 AM | Worship |

Attendance Report

Last Week's Attendance: 184

Christmas Eve: 241

Christmas Day: 115

Next Sunday

Theme: The Gift of God:

The Gift of God is for All People

Readings: 1 Kings 10:1-9; Acts 13:46-49; Matthew 2:1-12

Upcoming Events

- Jan. 2 Classes resume at St. Paul's Lutheran School
- Jan. 7 Parent Teacher Organization Meeting
- Jan. 15 K for a Day
- Jan. 19 Congregational Meeting
- Jan. 25 BIC Workshop
- Jan. 26 125th Church Anniversary Celebration
- Feb. 6 Photo Sessions for New Directory Begin





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