

**REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Serving Absecon - Galloway Township**  
**Rev. Heidi Link – Pastor**  
**Brian Conover - Music Director**

**Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT / 10:00 AM**

**\* CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.  
**Blessed be God's name forever. Amen.**

Beloved, now is the time to wake from sleep. Let us confront our sins, and confess them to the one who is merciful and just.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

God of new beginnings,

**we confess that we have not welcomed your holy reign. We have strayed from your paths. We prepare for war instead of peace. We dishonor one another and your creation. Purify us with your refining fire and set us again on your way of love, that we may bear fruit worthy of repentance, and welcome your coming among us. Amen.**

People of God, a new thing is growing in our midst, a tender branch, a living sign. By water and the Spirit you are joined to this wonder. You have put on † Christ, and your sins have been washed away. Rejoice in the way of the Lord. **Amen.**

**\* OPENING SONG**

**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 -

*... song continues...*

\* - Congregation Stands (If for any reason you are unable to stand during the service, please remain seated.)



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

### \* GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.**

Let us pray: 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.**

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10-16** (*see back of bulletin for text*)

### RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

<sup>1</sup>Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;  
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

<sup>2</sup>**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,  
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

<sup>3</sup>Restore us, O God;  
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

<sup>4</sup>**O LORD God of hosts,  
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**

*(psalm continues...)*

<sup>5</sup>You have fed them with the bread of tears;  
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

<sup>6</sup>**You have made us the derision of our neighbors,  
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

<sup>7</sup>Restore us, O God of hosts;  
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

<sup>17</sup>**Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,  
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

<sup>18</sup>And so will we never turn away from you;  
give us life, that we may call upon your name.

<sup>19</sup>**Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;  
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

**SECOND READING: Romans 1:1-7** (*see back of bulletin for text*)

### **MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE OFFERING**

*Refrain: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! (Repeat)*

**Oh, how right it is to give thanks to Him, our creator and our king;  
We sing out our praise to the holy one; We rejoice, we rejoice in our God!** (*Repeat Refrain*)

### **LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH**

**The Chrismon Trees (on the Alter Wall)**

#### **Scripture Reading – Revelation 22:12-14, 17**

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

#### **Reading:**

The Chrismon tree becomes a symbol of our Lord inside our church sanctuary. The evergreen trees has been the symbol of Christmas and the center of holiday festivals for centuries. The word Chrismon is a combination of the words Christ and monogram. Therefore, it is a monogram or symbol of Christ. Designs are centuries old, often as old as the Bible itself. They represent, in symbolic form, the heritage of all Christians. Each are made with two symbolic colors: white, showing Jesus' purity and Gold, symbolizing His Royal Majesty. The lights on the tree will represent each person who is in the body of Christ here in our church and around the world. German legend says that Martin Luther introduced the idea of the Christmas tree when he was so taken by the sight of

stars over a beautiful fir tree one evening that he cut down a tree, brought it home and decorated it with candles to remind his family of Christ's birth.

**CONGREGATIONAL SONG – “O CHRISTMAS TREE” (verses 1 & 4)**

- 1) **O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree! Your leaves are so unchanging;  
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree! Your leaves are so unchanging;  
Not only green when summer's here, But also when it's cold and drear.  
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree! Your leaves are so unchanging!**
  
- 4) **O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree! How richly God has decked thee!  
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree! How richly God has decked thee!  
You bid us true and faithful be, And trust in God unchangingly.  
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree! How richly God has decked thee!**

**POINSETTIAS**

**Scripture Reading – John 3:16-17**

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

**Reading:**

Most Christmas greenery reflects European traditions. But one colorful plant, which looks like a flaming star, the poinsettia, is native to the American continent. The Poinsettia is a many-pointed star that has become a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem. The beautiful poinsettia is symbolic of the many images of the nativity of Jesus. The star-shaped leaves tell of the star that announced the Savior's birth. The crimson red foretells of the blood that Jesus will shed on the cross for the sake of a new covenant with God. The plant is a vivid reminder that the babe of Bethlehem became the Savior of the world, giving his life that we may be set free from sin and death. We now place the Poinsettia plants in church, where we share in the body and blood of our Risen Christ Jesus.

**\* HYMN OF PRAISE**



Come, Thou long— ex - pect - ed Je - sus, Born to  
set Thy peo - ple free; From our fears— and sins re -  
lease— us; Let us find our rest— in Thee.

*... song continues ...*



In - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, Hope of  
al the earth Thou art; Dear de - sire of  
ev - 'ry na - tion, Joy of ev - 'ry long - ing heart.

**\* THE WORD OF GOD: Matthew 1:18-25**

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

*(see back of bulletin for text)*

Word of God, Word of Life.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SERMON**

**CONGREGATIONAL SONG**

**Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel**



- 1 Oh, come, oh, come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
- 2 Oh, come, oh, come, great Lord of might, who to your tribes on
- 3 Oh, come, strong Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's
- 4 Oh, come, blest Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by your
- 5 Oh, come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
Si - nai's height in an - cient times once gave the law  
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save  
ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,  
heav'n - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.  
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave. Re - joyce! Re - joyce!  
and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.  
and close the path to mis - er - y.

*... song continues ...*



Text: *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. John M. Neale, 1818–1866, alt.  
Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.

### \* 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; 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 the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped 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**

### \* PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

*A brief silence.*

God our shepherd, let your Spirit move with power throughout the church. Give discernment and wisdom to our bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders. Take away our fear, so that we serve and love, confident that you are guiding us. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our source, awaken us to the beauty of the earth and the marvelous variety of life. Unite humankind in repairing and caring for your creation. Protect creatures and habitats in peril due to rising seas and warming temperatures. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our vision, raise up leaders in every nation who dream of freedom and justice for all people. We pray for the work of international organizations that promote peace and human rights, especially Amnesty International (*others may be named*). God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our helper, come to the aid of all who cry out to you. Shelter migrants, refugees, and those fleeing war and famine. Bring relief to individuals and families experiencing hunger, homelessness, or impoverishment. Comfort any who are isolated or lonely. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

*(prayers continue...)*

God our Emmanuel, you are with us in our life together. We give you thanks for gathering us in worship and fellowship, and we remember those who cannot be present. Watch over those who travel. Heal the sick and speed their recovery (*especially*). God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

God our hope, you bring life out of death, and you promise to be our God forever. Shine upon the faithful who now rest in the fulfillment of your promise and bring us also into your blessed reign of peace. God, in your mercy,

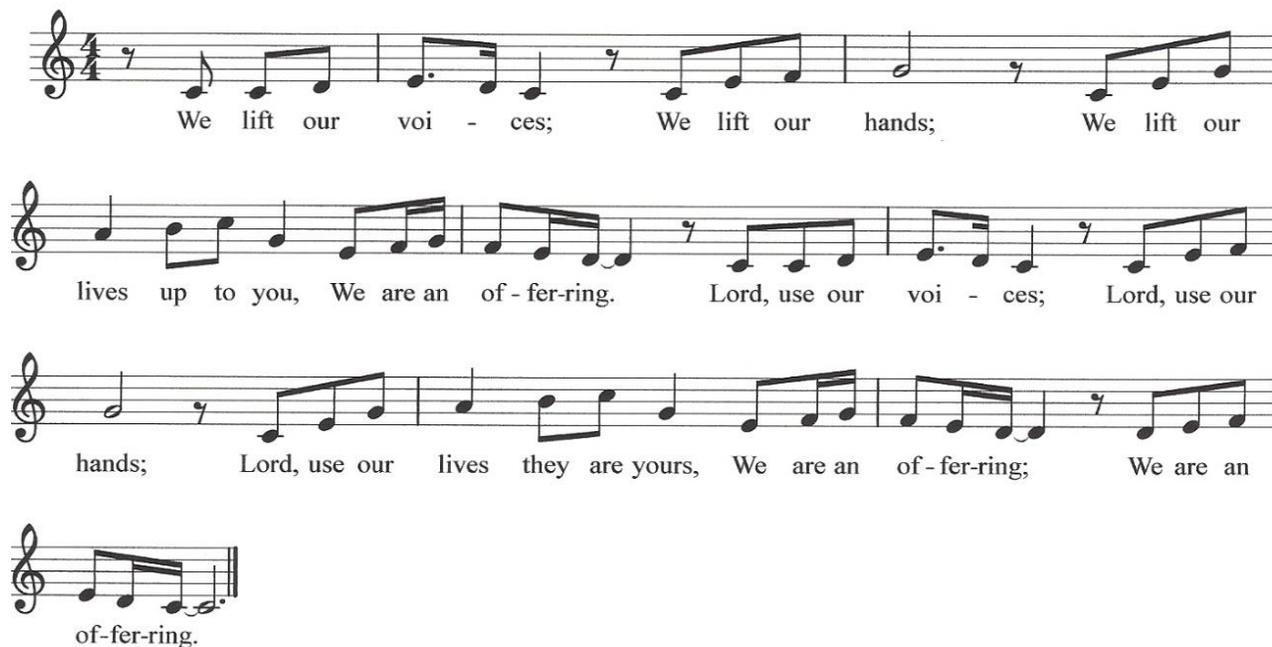
**hear our prayer.**

God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray.

**Amen.**

## OFFERING / SPECIAL MUSIC

### \* OFFERING SONG - "WE ARE AN OFFERING"



We lift our voi - ces; We lift our hands; We lift our  
lives up to you, We are an of - fer-ring. Lord, use our voi - ces; Lord, use our  
hands; Lord, use our lives they are yours, We are an of - fer-ring; We are an  
of-fer-ring.

**\* OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us pray: Eternal God, you make the desert bloom and send springs of water to thirsty ground. Receive these simple gifts of bread, wine, and money, and make us messengers of your mercy and love for all in need of your healing and justice. We ask this through Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

**\* THE 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 him thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right and salutary...*(Here the minister continues with the preface appropriate to the*

*day or season, concluding:)* we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might:

Heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.

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.

**\* WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

**\* 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 TO COMMUNION**

Be strong, do not fear! Come! Here is your God, who has come to save you.

**We come.**

## DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*(BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS who believe that the risen Christ is present in the Eucharist to forgive sin and renew life are invited to either come to the altar area for communion as directed or share at your pew. If you come forward, you will receive bread and a pre-filled cup of wine. If you choose to receive at your seat, please remain there, kneel as you are able, and receive the elements using the communion packets available from the ushers. If there are other special needs, please speak to an usher.)*

### \*POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

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

### \* POST COMMUNION HYMN

#### Soon and Very Soon



1 Soon and ver - y soon  
2 No more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King,  
3 No more dy - in' there,  
4 Soon and ver - y soon



soon and ver - y soon  
no more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King,  
no more dy - in' there,  
soon and ver - y soon



soon and ver - y soon  
no more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King.  
no more dy - in' there,  
soon and ver - y soon



Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, we're goin' to see the King!

Text: Andraé Crouch, b. 1945  
Music: VERY SOON, Andraé Crouch  
Text and music © 1976 Bud John Songs, Inc./Crouch Music, admin. EMI Christian Music Publishing

### \* PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray: Faithful God, in this meal you have remembered your mercy, bringing heaven to earth in the body and blood of Christ. As we wait for the day when all your promises will be fulfilled, sustain us and strengthen us by this holy mystery. Guide us toward your promised future, coming to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**\* BLESSING**

And now a blessing: God the eternal Word, who dwells with us in Jesus, and who holds us in the grace of the Holy Spirit, ✠ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

**\* CLOSING SONG**

## 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 its 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, George F. Handel, 1685–1759, adapt.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792–1872

**\* SENDING**

Go in peace. Christ is near.

**Thanks be to God.**