

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

Sunday, December 4th, 2022
THE SECOND 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.

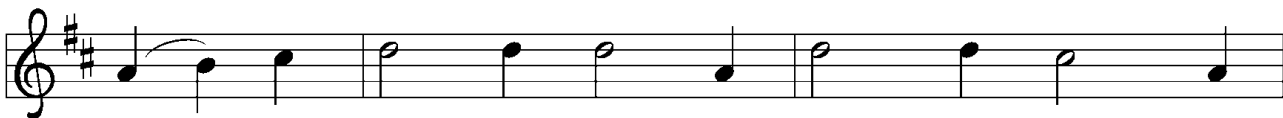
People of God, a new thing is growing in our midst, a tender branch, a living sign. By water and the Spirit you are joined to this wonder. You have put on ☩ Christ, and your sins have been washed away. Rejoice in the way of the Lord. **Amen.**

*** OPENING SONG**

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an - nounc - es
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; make straight the
3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our ref - uge



that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,
way for God with - in, and let us all our
and our great re - ward; with - out your grace we

... song continues...

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



for he brings glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter there.
waste a - way like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.

Text: Charles Coffin, 1676–1749; tr. composite

Music: PUER NOBIS, European tune, adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1571–1621

* 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 our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming nurture our growth as people of repentance and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Isaiah 11:1-10 (*see back of bulletin for text*)

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

¹Give the king your justice, O God,

and your righteousness to the king's son;

²**that he may rule your people righteously**

and the poor with justice;

³that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.

⁴**Let him defend the needy among the people,**
rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor.

⁵May he live as long as the sun and moon endure,
from one generation to another.

⁶**Let him come down like rain upon the mown field,**
like showers that water the earth.

⁷In his time may the righteous flourish;
and let there be an abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.

¹⁸**Blessed are you, LORD God, the God of Israel;**
you alone do wondrous deeds!

¹⁹And blessed be your glorious name forever,
and may all the earth be filled with your glory. Amen. Amen.

SECOND READING: Romans 15:4-13 (*see back of bulletin for text*)

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 60:13-14

The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress together, to adorn the place of My sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of My feet. The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Reading:

The most striking and the most universal feature of Christmas and Advent is the use of evergreens in churches and homes. The early Christians placed evergreens in their windows to indicate that Christ had entered the home. Holly and ivy, along with pine, mistletoe and fir are called evergreens because they never change color. They are ever-green, ever-alive, even in the midst of winter. They symbolize the unchanging nature of our God, and they remind us of the everlasting life that is ours through Christ Jesus. Green is a symbol of renewal, rebirth, new life, freshness and vitality. Holly became widely used in church celebrations. Even before the birth of Christ, the eternal green leaves of holly had a history of spirituality, reverence, mystery and awe. Holly was so revered in the early church for its ability to defy death, that it was said that wherever Jesus walked upon the earth, holly sprang up in his path.

CONGREGATIONAL SONG – “THE HOLLY AND THE IVY”

**The holly and the ivy
When they are full grown,
Of all the trees in the wood
The holly bears the crown.**

**The rising of the sun
The running of the deer,
The playing of the organ
Sweet singing in the choir.**

**The holly wears a blossom
As white as any flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To be our Saviour.**

**The rising of the sun,
The running of the deer,
The playing of the organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.**

Writer(s): Loreena McKennitt Copyright: Quinlan Road Music Ltd. CCLI 2931409

ROSE FOR MARY

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:26-28

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Reading:

Roses have long served as symbols of the Virgin Mary. Mary is known as the "mystic rose" or the "rose without thorns" because of her role as the mother of Jesus Christ, our savior. Mary played a vital role in God's plan to redeem the fallen world, as she "found favor with God" according to the angel Gabriel. Elizabeth called her "blessed among women" and "blessed is the fruit of your womb". Sin entered the world through Eve, and salvation for that sin, in the form of our savior Jesus, entered through Mary. She accepted her role: "I am the Lord's servant...May it be to me as you have said."

* 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.
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 3:1-12**

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

Comfort, Comfort Now My People



- 1 "Com - fort, com-fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!" So says our God.
- 2 For the her - ald's voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far and near,
- 3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain.



Com-fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn-ing un - der sor - row's load.
call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the reign of God is here.
Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be-fits God's ho - ly reign.



To God's peo - ple now pro-claim that God's par - don waits for them!
Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way.
For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their war is o - ver; God will reign in peace for-ev - er.
Val - leys, rise to greet the Sav - ior; hills, bow down in hum-ble fa - vor.
and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

Text: Johann G. Olearius, 1635–1711; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.
Music: FREU DICH SEHR, *Trente quatre pseauxes de David*, Geneva, 1551

*** 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, you renew the church in every age. We give thanks for hymn writers and theologians (*especially John of Damascus, whom we commemorate today*). Inspire teachers, writers, and musicians to delight and instruct your people. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You give us a vision of creation in harmony, when hurting and destruction will be no more. Teach us to be stewards of the earth and companions to its creatures. Restore to balance and wholeness what human greed has harmed. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You defend the cause of all who are poor and oppressed. Raise up leaders who will govern with equity and serve the common good. Guide judges, lawmakers, and public officials to protect the rights of those who cannot advocate for themselves. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You deliver those in need from suffering and fear. Come to the aid of any who are exploited or abused, especially children, elders, and victims of human trafficking. Provide safety and help to our neighbors without shelter, refugees, and those fleeing violence. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You urge your people to welcome one another as you have welcomed us. Nurture ministries of hospitality and care in this and every congregation (*local examples may be named*). We pray for people who are homebound, hospitalized, or separated from loved ones (*especially*). God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You embrace all who have died trusting in your promises, and we give thanks for their faithful witness. Sustain us in hope until we are united with them in the joy of your eternal presence.

God, in your mercy,

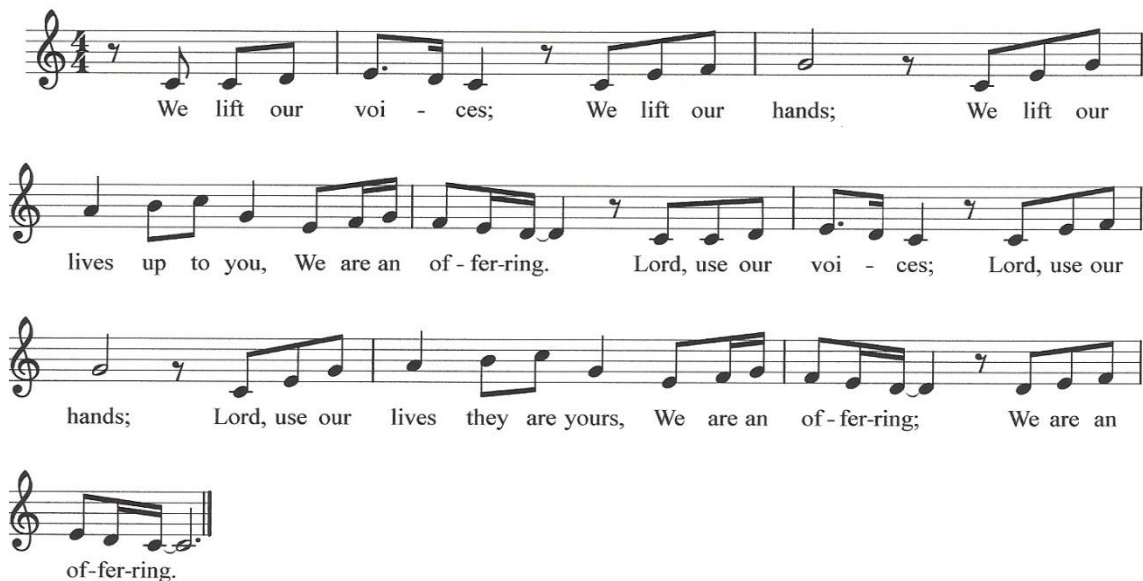
hear our prayer.

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"



* 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.

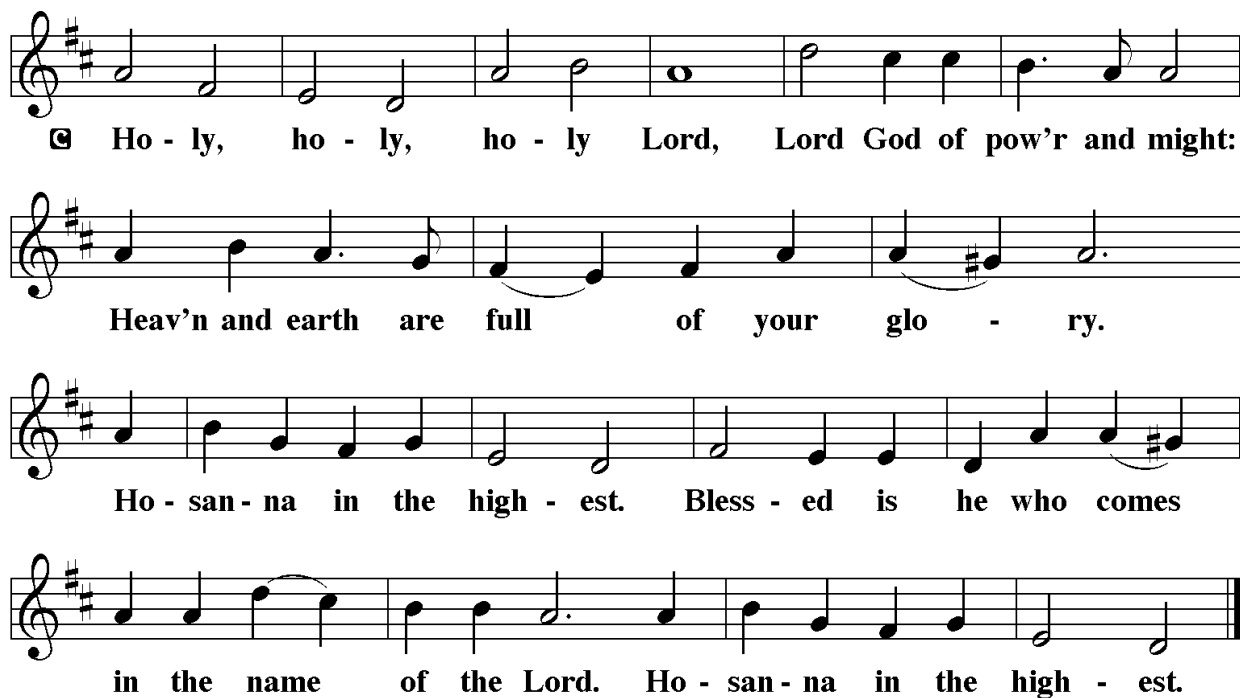
Lift up your hearts.

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

Prepare the Royal Highway



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

Refrain



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
Music: BEREDEN VÅG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.
Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress

* SENDING

Go in peace. Christ is near.

Thanks be to God.