

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

Sunday, November 30th, 2025
THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT / 8:30 & 10:00 AM

*** CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God, whose home is heaven and earth, whose salvation is sure. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Long-expected God,
we confess that we look to ourselves for the peace and security only you can provide.
We reach for swords and spears, reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war. We
become impatient while waiting and weary of keeping awake. Free us from self-
reliance, and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors. Increase our trust in
God's timing, and awaken us to your advent among us, that we may abound in the
hope you have promised. **Amen.**

God judges us not as we deserve, but according to God's own righteousness. ✠ You are
freed and forgiven, saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior. **Amen.**

*** OPENING SONG**

Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding!



1 Hark! a thrill - ing voice is sound - ing! "Christ is near," we
2 Wak - ened by the sol - emn warn - ing, from earth's bond - age
3 See the Lamb, so long ex - pect - ed, come with par - don
4 So, when next he comes in glo - ry and the world is
5 Hon - or, glo - ry, might, and bless - ing to the Fa - ther



hear it say. "Cast a - way the works of dark - ness,
let us rise; Christ, our sun, all sloth dis - pel - ling,
down from heav'n. Let us haste, with tears of sor - row,
wrapped in fear, he will shield us with his mer - cy
and the Son with the ev - er - last - ing Spir - it

...song continues...

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



all you chil - dren of the day!"
shines up - on the morn - ing skies.
one and all, to be for - giv' n;
and with words of love draw near.
while un - end - ing a - ges run!

Text: Latin hymn, 1632; tr. Edward Caswall, 1814–1878
Music: MERTON, William H. Monk, 1823–1889

* 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. By your merciful protection save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, and enlighten our walk in the way of your salvation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Isaiah 2:1-5

2 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

³ Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between the nations
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
neither shall they learn war any more.

⁵ O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 122

- ¹ I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”
- ² **Now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.**
- ³ Jerusalem is built as a city
that is at unity with itself;
- ⁴ **to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD,
the assembly of Israel, to praise the name of the LORD.**
- ⁵ For there are the thrones of judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.
- ⁶ **Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May they prosper who love you.**
- ⁷ Peace be within your walls
and quietness within your towers.
- ⁸ **For the sake of my kindred and companions,
I pray for your prosperity.**
- ⁹ Because of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek to do you good.”

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)

SECOND READING: Romans 13:11-14

¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:2

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

Reading:

And God said let there be light, and there was light. And God saw the light and it was good.. And God divided the light from darkness. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He that follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.” The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. The lighting of candles has been a part of worship for centuries. Candles are a symbol of joy. Light is symbolic of truth, while darkness has been the symbol of evil. For all ancient people, new light meant new life. “For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and His name shall be called Wonderful counselor, the Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

CONGREGATIONAL SONG – “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel”

Oh, come, oh, come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel.

That mourns in lowly exile here until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

P: The first candle symbolizes hope and is known as the prophecy candle because it represents the period of waiting with hope and expectation that preceded the birth of Christ. As the candle burns throughout the week and becomes smaller and smaller, it helps us remember that time continually passes and the return of Christ becomes nearer and nearer with each passing day.

Let us pray, Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. You call all nations to walk in your light and to seek your ways of justice and peace, for the night is past, and the dawn of your coming is near. Bless us as we light the first candle of this wreath. Rouse us from sleep, that we may be ready to greet our Lord when he comes and welcome him into our hearts and homes, for he is our light and our salvation. Blessed be God forever. **Amen.**

PREPARING FOR THE NATIVITY

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-12

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Reading:

One of the most heart-warming expressions of Christmas is the Nativity. It speaks of the mystery of God's wisdom. The Nativity scene has become a symbol of Divine-Human love. Why God chose to send his son into our world as a baby of humble birth, born in common surroundings, we do not know. What we do know is that God reached out to all people, including the poor and the wealthy, the simple and the wise, the powerless and the powerful. All who found him, knelt in humility before him. Knowing God is possible because he came to us at our level. Whenever we see a Nativity we find ourselves with Mary and Joseph; with the Shepherds, and with the Wise Men; bowing before the manger, overwhelmed by God's expression of love in coming to us. The Nativity scene tells the story of a God of love, who comes to us as an infant, the most loving and trusting of human beings, to invite us to a new life. Each Sunday of Advent, we will add to our nativity until we celebrate its completion with the birth of our Lord and Savior.

* 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 24:36-44**

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

³⁶ “But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴² Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

CONGREGATIONAL SONG

Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning



1 Keep your lamps trimmed and burn - ing, keep your
2 Dark - er mid - night lies be - fore us, dark - er
3 Lo, the morn - ing soon is break - ing, lo, the
4 Keep your lamps trimmed and burn - ing, keep your



lamps trimmed and burn - ing, keep your lamps
mid - night lies be - fore us, dark - er mid - night
morn - ing soon is break - ing, lo, the morn - ing
lamps trimmed and burn - ing, keep your lamps



trimmed and burn - ing, for this work's al - most done.
lies be - fore us, for this work's al - most done.
soon is break - ing, for this work's al - most done.
trimmed and burn - ing, for this work's al - most done.



Chil-dren, don't grow wea - ry; chil-dren, don't grow wea - ry;



chil-dren, don't grow wea - ry, for this work's al - most done.

* 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**

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

God of the people, we come seeking wisdom and instruction. Uphold and strengthen lay leaders, teachers, deacons, pastors, and bishops. Teach us your ways and lead us in your paths. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God of the earth, we seek your goodness in the grandeur of creation. Empower us to care for forests and oceans, as we see you in the world around us. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God of the nations, grant wisdom to leaders, judges, and mediators. Cast out words of hate and transform them into words for building up community. Remake implements of war to sow peace. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God of healing, bring comfort and strength. We pray for our kindred and companions who are ill or despairing (*especially . . . and those affected by HIV and AIDS as we remember World AIDS Day*). Surround all with care and consolation. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God of new possibilities, when addiction wounds, jealousy tears down, and relationships fray, show us how to journey with one another. Nurture therapists, counselors, and sponsors in their care for others. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of all time, build up our lives that we would reflect your grace. At the last, bring us with all the saints (especially) to your holy city where peace and goodness make a home. God of grace,

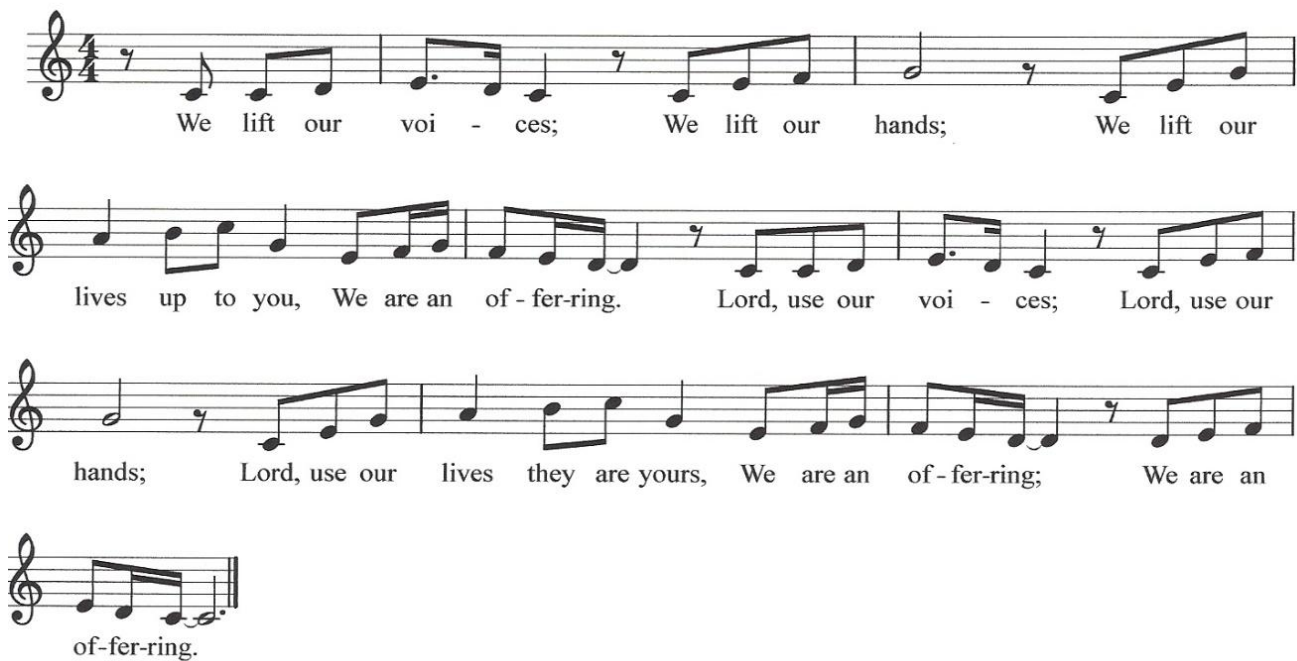
hear our prayer.

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

Amen.

OFFERING / SPECIAL MUSIC

* OFFERING SONG



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: Nourishing God, you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come. **Amen.**

* THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

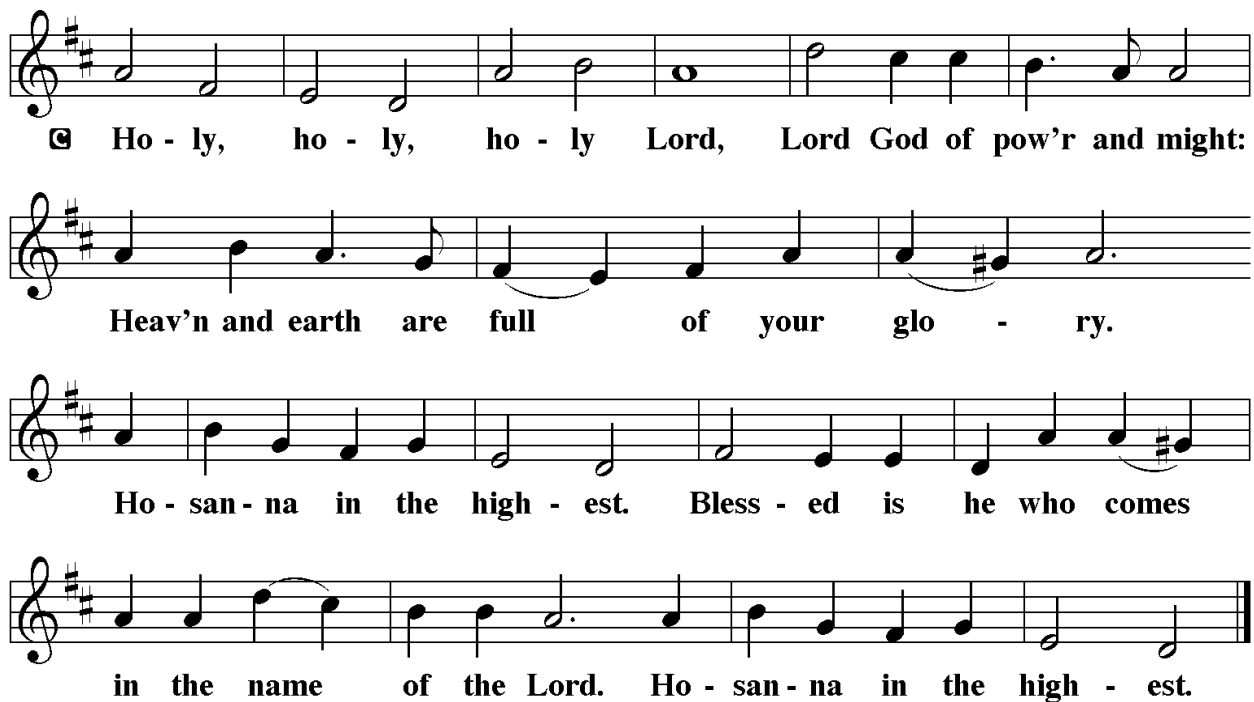
Lift up your hearts.

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:



* WORDS OF INSTITUTION

With Thanksgiving, we remember that in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying: "Take and eat; this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me."

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Amen.

* 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

Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised.

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

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* PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray: God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

* BLESSING

And now a blessing: May God who comes among us, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always. **Amen.**

* CELEBRATIONS!!!

* CLOSING SONG

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers



- 1 Re - joice, re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;
- 2 The watch - ers on the moun - tain pro - claim the bride - groom near;
- 3 The saints, who here in pa - tience their cross and suf - f'ings bore,
- 4 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;



the eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing, and dark - er night is near.
go forth as he ap - proach - es with al - le - lu - ias clear.
shall live and reign for - ev - er when sor - row is no more.
a - rise, O Sun so longed for, o'er this be - night - ed sphere.



The bride - groom is a - ris - ing and soon is draw - ing nigh.
The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; the gates wide o - pen stand.
A - round the throne of glo - ry the Lamb they shall be - hold;
With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, we plead, O Lord, to see



Up, pray and watch and wres - tle; at mid - night comes the cry.
A - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; the bride - groom is at hand.
in tri - umph cast be - fore him their di - a - dems of gold.
the day of earth's re - demp - tion that sets your peo - ple free!

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, 1660–1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823–1907
Music: HAF TRONES LAMPA FÄRDIG, Swedish folk tune

* SENDING

Go in peace. Keep awake!
Thanks be to God.

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