



Monday, December 18, 2023

6:30 p.m.

Blue Christmas Service

St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, ELCA

Reverend Maggie Westaby

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CALL TO WORSHIP

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.
Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM, *by Reverend Maggie Westaby*

In the waters of baptism, we are united with Christ into his death.

In the waters of baptism, we are also united with Christ into his life.

Baptism promises that nothing can separate us from Christ.

And for this we give thanks.

Creator God, you are the fountain of living water,
and Your love flows through water,
love that we are invited into, and love that we share with one another.

Love that lives deep within us, so that when our loved ones' pass,
water comes forth as tears, and they flow from our eyes.

Like the tears that flowed from Jesus' eyes when Lazarus died.
For Jesus wept, and the Spirit moved deeply within him.

Tears that flow from our eyes, when we are sad, lonely, and in despair.
When we find ourselves joining in Jesus' cry of desperation,
my God, my God why have you forsaken me?!

Yet you have not forsaken us, even when we cannot feel your presence.
For you are like water, and are with us in all things, always.

Just like water is a part of us, from every cell,
to the water vapor in our every breath.
From the non-visible transpiration of trees,
to the water cycle which connects every living thing on earth.

You live, move, and breathe in ways we cannot see, yet you are with us still.
From the beginning, when your Spirit hovered over the deep,
to now, when your Spirit hovers over the depths of our lives.
In places that seem too heavy, empty, or vast to venture into,
You make Your presence known.

You lead us besides still waters.
You restore our soul.

For You, divine infinite eternal creator of the universe, are in all things.
You glow like bioluminescence, even in the darkest places of the ocean.
You thrive in all life, even on the bleakest and coldest days of the winter.
You are the wellspring of all hope.

You are the source of all mercy and the God of all consolation.
Teach us to grieve, and comfort us in our sorrows.

Till the day we meet you face to face, where you will wipe every tear from our eyes.



I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say



1 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "Come un - to me and rest;
2 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "Be - hold, I free - ly give
3 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "I am this dark world's light;



lay down, O wea - ry one, lay down your head up - on my breast."
the liv - ing wa - ter, thirst - y one; stoop down and drink and live."
look un - to me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright."



I came to Je - sus as I was, so wea - ry, worn, and sad;
I came to Je - sus, and I drank of that life - giv - ing stream;
I looked to Je - sus, and I found in him my star, my sun;



I found in him a rest - ing - place, and he has made me glad.
my thirst was quenched, my soul re - vived, and now I live in him.
and in that light of life I'll walk till trav - 'ling days are done.

Text: Horatius Bonar, 1808-1889
Music: KINGSFOLD, English folk tune

PRAYER

Eternal God,

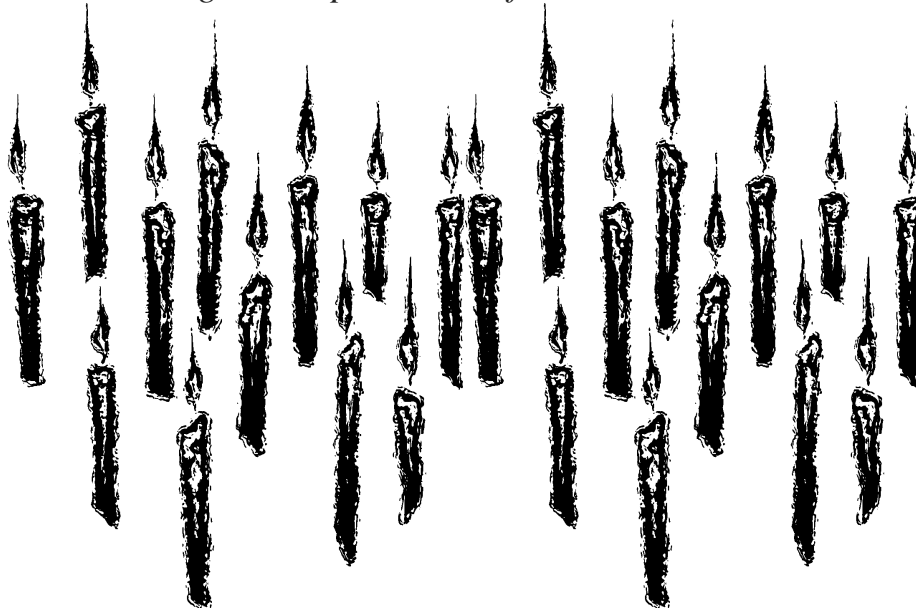
We are tired. We are worn. Our hearts are broken, shattered and torn.

Life seems to take its toll on all that is good, so we are left by carrying pieces of should. I should have done this, I should have done that, leaving our spirits flatter than dusty doormat.

Find us there in the ashes and dust, showing your love, despite all our rust. For you are making all things new, and your love has no limits for what you can do. Amen.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

This is a time for silent prayer and reflection. You are invited to come forward and light a candle for a loved one, or to light multiple candles for loved ones.



The Healing That Comes, A Blessing by Jan Richardson

I know how long
you have been waiting
for your story to take
a different turn,
how far
you have gone in search
of what will mend you
and make you whole.
I bear no remedy,
no cure,
no miracle
for the easing
of your pain.

But I know the medicine
that lives in a story that has been broken open.

I know the healing that comes
in ceasing to hide ourselves away
with fingers clutched
around the fragments
we think are
none but ours.

See how they fit together,
these shards
we have been carrying—
how in their meeting
they make a way
we could not
find alone.

PSALMS OF LAMENT *taken from Psalms 3, 5, 6, 7*

O God, how numerous are my fears!

They rise up within me whispering there is no help for you.

My fears consume me and I live in my illusions.

Give ear to my words, O God; give heed to my groaning.

Listen to the sound of my cry.

My God, though I have turned from You,

continue to enfold me with your love.

Be gracious to me, Heart of my heart, for I am sad and weary.

Surround me with your healing Light,

that my body, mind, and soul might heal.

How long must I wait, O God?

For I am tired of so many fears; I cry myself to sleep at night.

While grief and feelings of guilt fill my eyes with tears.

All my doubts and my fears, are creating walls so that I know not love.

Depart from me, my fears and my doubts, for God is aware of my cry.

If I close my heart to love, God awaits by my side.

Love cultivates the soil of my heart, planting sacred seeds in its garden.

Even when I wander far from God's path,

though I err and walk on roads of illusions and darkness,

when I act out of fear and ignorance, falling into a pit of despair,

God will remain constant and sure.

And I shall dwell with God in love, gratitude, and joy;

for I am one with all of creation and one with the Creator.

For it is you, oh Creator who call us back home to love.

Amen.



Al - le-lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

GOSPELS: Matthew 11:28-29

The holy gospel according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said, come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

What Wondrous Love Is This

1 What won-drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What
 2 When I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when
 3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing; to
 4 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and

won - drous love is this, O my soul! What won-drous love is this
 I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when I was sink - ing down
 God and to the Lamb I will sing; to God and to the Lamb,
 when from death I'm free, I'll sing on; and when from death I'm free,

that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dread-ful curse for my
 be - neath God's righ-teous frown, Christ laid a - side his crown for my
 who is the great I AM, while mil - lions join the theme, I will
 I'll sing God's love for me, and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing

soul, for my soul, to bear the dread-ful curse for my soul?
 soul, for my soul, Christ laid a - side his crown for my soul.
 sing, I will sing, while mil - lions join the theme, I will sing.
 on, I'll sing on; and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on.

Text: North American folk hymn, 19th cent., alt.

Music: WONDROUS LOVE, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835; arr. Paul J. Christiansen, 1914-1997, alt.

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PRAYERS

In Christ Jesus we meet God who knows our weakness and bears the wounds of the world. God draws near to those in need. The Holy Spirit prays with us and through us, sometimes with sighs too deep for words.

GREAT THANKSGIVING DIALOGUE

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 our thanks and praise.

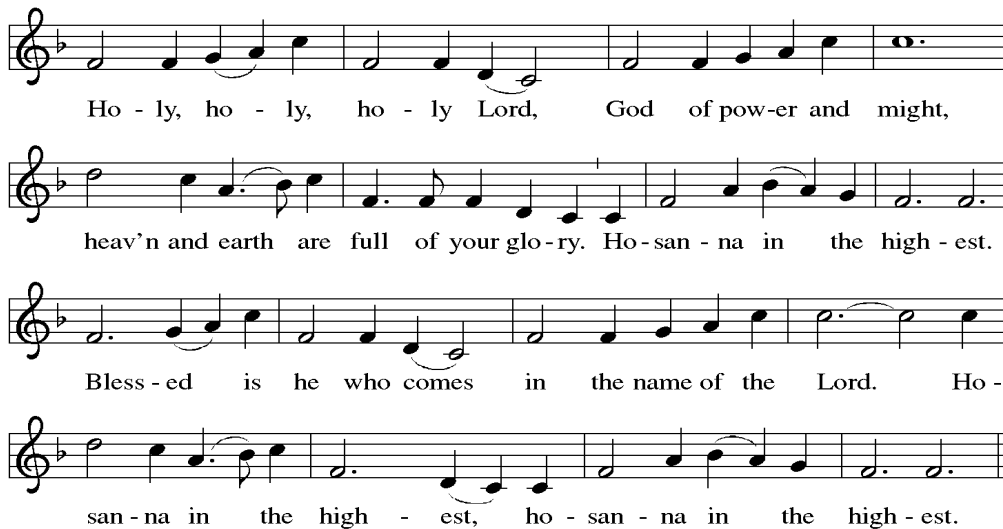
PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh

you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory,

that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.

And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er 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, ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal: you we praise and glorify, you we worship and adore.

You formed the earth from chaos; you encircled the globe with air; you created fire for warmth and light; you nourish the lands with water.

You molded us in your image, and with mercy higher than the mountains, with grace deeper than the seas, you blessed the Israelites and cherished them as your own. That also we, estranged and dying, might be adopted to live in your Spirit, you called to us through the life and death of Jesus.

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

Together as the body of Christ, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup we remember your Son, the first-born of your new creation. We remember his life lived for others, and his death and resurrection, which renews the face of the earth. We await his coming, when, with the world made perfect through your wisdom, all our sins and sorrows will be no more.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, holy and merciful one, holy and compassionate, send upon us and this meal your Holy Spirit, whose breath revives us for life, whose fire rouses us to love. Enfold in your arms all who share this holy food.

Nurture in us the fruits of the Spirit, that we may be a living tree, sharing your bounty with all the world.

Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.

Holy and benevolent God, receive our praise and petitions, as Jesus received the cry of the needy, and fill us with your blessing, until, needy no longer and bound to you in love, we feast forever in the triumph of the Lamb:

through whom all glory and honor is yours, O God, O Living One,
with the Holy Spirit, in your holy church, now and forever.

Amen.

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

In the night in which he was betrayed, Christ poured out his love for his disciples. He poured out water, and washed their feet. He poured out wine, and forgave their sins. He poured out his breath, and gave his love. Come to that table now. A table that knows no bounds, but love. Love that has been given and shed for you. Amen.

BLESSING

May you feel God's presence in all of your sorrows.

May the Holy Spirit provide you comfort, peace, and love.

And may Christ bring you hope, hope birthed in His resurrection.

In the name of the Father, ✠ the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

1 A - maz - ing grace! — how sweet the sound — that
 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and
 3 Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares I
 4 The Lord has prom - ised good to me; his
 5 When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright

saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved; how pre - cious did that
 have al - read - y come; 'tis grace has brought me
 word my hope se - cures; he will my shield and
 shin - ing as the sun, we've no less days to

now am found; was blind, but now I see.
 grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved!
 safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
 por - tion be as long as life en - dures.
 sing God's praise than when we'd first be - gun.

Text: John Newton, 1725–1807, alt., sts. 1–4; anonymous, st. 5

Music: NEW BRITAIN, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835; arr. Edwin O. Excell, 1851–1921, alt.

If you would like to leave an offering, please do so in the offering plate on your way out of the sanctuary.

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Thank You, Louie Reissman for the beautiful Christmas Tree! 

Please remember to silence pagers and cell phones during services.

To those who are visiting: Welcome to St. John and thank you for joining us! You are welcome to sign our registry in the narthex. May God bless you today and all days.

Reminder! If you are in need of Pastoral care, please contact St. John's at (715) 675-6950

Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday. All are welcome to the Lord's Supper.

Food Basket. Each week you are invited to bring non-perishable grocery items to be given to a local food pantry. Place your gift in the *Food Basket* next to the main entrance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2024 Time & Talent sheet is ready for you to select area(s) that you would like to help share your time and talent with your church! There are so many options, and the wonderful thing is that most have very little time investment for you, but the benefit is great to our church! Please take a moment to look over the Time & Talent sheet, it is divided into different areas of service, with the council chairperson's contact info listed, for you to reach out to with any questions you may have. Please fill out and return your sheet in the offering plate on any Sunday, leave in Mary's (secretaries) mailbox, or even call / email me and we'll get you signed up! Please take time to fill out a Time & Talent sheet, even if you already serve in areas of the church. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lane Bahr.

St. John Quilting Wishlist. Left over fabric or never used fabric, light weight denim, cotton or flannel sheets, pillow cases, cotton curtains (unlined), cotton shower curtains. If you are interested, come join us! You can also sew a quilt top from home. Size needed is 60 x 80. They do not need to be fancy. Thank you!

Advent Resources Available. ELCA Advent Devotionals & Advent Calendars are in the Narthex. If you are interested in Kate Bowler's Advent Devotional, see Pastor Maggie.

Men's Breakfast. Pastor Will from Trinity in Stettin and St. Peter's in Marathon has invited all men from St. John to meet the second Saturday of the month at 9 a.m. At LC Restaurant, in Marathon (Formerly the Village Inn).

Sunday, December 24. Christmas Eve Worship will be at 4:00 & 6:30 only. We will not have a 9:00 a.m. Worship Service.

Wednesday, December 27 at 6:00 p.m. Christmas Pizza & PJ Party. Pizza served at 6, "Mickey's Christmas Carol" and "A Muppet Family Christmas" from 6:30-8. Kids are welcome to bring a friend! The event is free, please sign up in the Narthex so we have a head count for dinner.

Tuesday, January 16 at 6:30 p.m. Adult Study on the Gospel of Mark. This first session will focus on Mark 1 through Mark 8:26.

Monday, January 23 at 6:30 p.m. Pastor Maggie's Book Club will discuss, *The Book of Lost Friends* by Lisa Wingate.

Live Streaming and Photography Notice. When you enter a St. John Lutheran Church service or event, you will be entering an area where photography, video and audio recording or live streaming may occur. If you prefer not to be recognized on camera, the back row inside the church is not within viewing distance of a camera and communion will typically be only on a wide shot where it may be difficult to recognize congregants. Parents, please note our children's sermons are being recorded and live streamed. If you do not want your child to be recognized on camera, please refrain from having them participate.