

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 13, 2020 - 10:00 AM

Living Springs Lutheran Church

4224 Hard Scrabble Road, Columbia, SC 29223
www.livingspringscolumbia.org



"Rejoice always," begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. "All God's children got a robe," go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God's party.



Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen... since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus... (Hebrews 11:1-3, 12:1-2)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

GENEROSITY MISSION MOMENT

*We give thee but thine own,
whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone,
a trust, O Lord, from thee.*

Text: William W. How

We stand as able

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Pastor: Blessed be God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever.

People: Amen.

Pastor: Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

(Silence for reflection - we kneel as able)

Pastor: Loving and forgiving God,

People: **we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.**

Pastor: People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free—free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, † comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

We focus on the cross as it enters the sanctuary.

GATHERING SONG

"Christ, Be Our Light"



1 Long - ing for light, we wait in dark - ness. Long - ing for
5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.

Refrain



Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

*Christ, Be Our Light; Text: Bernadette Farrell; Music: CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT, Bernadette Farrell
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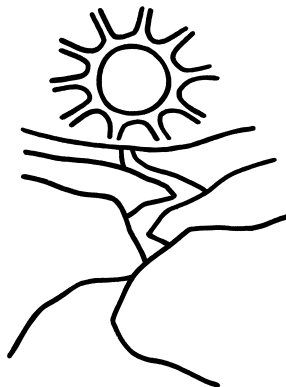
APOSTOLIC GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that,
anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: **Amen.**



+ ADVENT CANDLE #3 – FORWARD IN JOY +

All are invited to gather around the Advent Wreath in your home, whatever form it may be.

Pastor: As people called to prepare the way of the Lord in this world, we celebrate and live the truth that the Holy Spirit moves us forward in faith, God's love is never-ending, and Christ's light shines in our lives for others.

People: **Come, Lord Jesus! In this Advent Season, move us Forward in Joy!**

Pastor: Let us pray:

People: **We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord's coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.**

As the three Advent candles are lit in the sanctuary and in our homes, we sing:

Light three candles to watch for Messiah:

let the light banish darkness.

*Lift your heads and lift high the gateway
for the King of glory.*

Pastor: The Spirit and the Church cry out:

People: Come, Lord Jesus!

Pastor: All who await Christ's appearance pray:

People: Come, Lord Jesus!

Pastor: The whole creation pleads:

People: Come, Lord Jesus!

We are seated

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Ashley Ramsey

Children, youth, and young at heart are invited for a special message. You may collect your coins or dollars at home for the bucket collection and bring them to in-person worship, to the Parking Lot Communion Distributions, or drop them off at the church office. Current collection is for the Disaster Response Fund.

For-ward in faith! (clap-clap-clap)

For-ward in faith! (clap-clap-clap)

With our eyes on Jesus

WE'RE RUNNIN' THE RACE!



FIRST READING

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

Lector: A reading from Isaiah.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. (Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11)

Lector: Word of God, Word of life.

People: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 126

Lector: When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.

**People: Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.
Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."**

Lector: The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are glad indeed.

**People: Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses of the Negeb.**

Lector: Those who sowed with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

**People: Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

SECOND READING

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

Lector: A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-24)

Lector: Word of God, Word of life.

People: Thanks be to God.

We stand for the reading of the Gospel

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

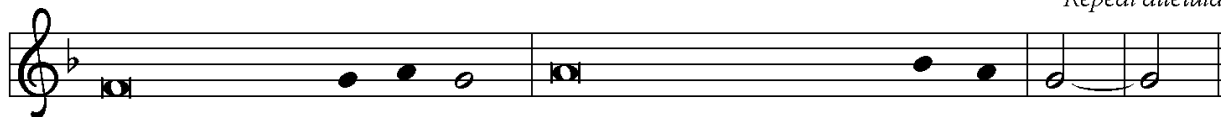


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia



Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

GOSPEL LESSON

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to John.

People: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing. (John 1:6-8, 19-28)

Pastor: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

We are seated

MESSAGE

Rev. Eric Fink



HYMN OF THE DAY

"On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry"



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an - nounc - es
5 All praise to you, e - ter - nal Son, whose ad - vent



that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,
has our free - dom won, whom with the Fa - ther



for he brings glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
we a - dore, and Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er - more.

On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry; Text: Charles Coffin; Music: PUER NOBIS, European tune, adapt. Michael Praetorius

We stand as able **NICENE CREED**

People: 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, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. 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, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who 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

Assist: God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

+ A brief silence +

Assist: God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship. Embed your word in their hearts. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: God of every living creature, you announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: God of all peoples and nations, you plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy is revealed through their actions. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: God of the powerful and helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. We pray especially for: *Dolores Harmon; Rhea Pye; Wendy McKenzie; Gregory Collins; Karl Schmidt; Elizabeth Maddox; Henrietta Kaiser; Debbie Smith; Ed Brennan; Margaret Blank; Charles Kauffman; Bunie Talbert; Christopher/Ellen Girardeau; Anne McDonell; Bev/Betty Neal; Holley Owens; Don McMillin; Bob Homstrom; Kelly Koziol; Lila Bell; Wilma Bracey; Charles Levitt; Marie Leicht; Pam Deselem; and those we name before you now, either silently or aloud...* Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Assist: God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love, *especially Lucy, martyr of the church*. Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Pastor: O God, as we face ongoing uncertainties around coronavirus, we continue to pray for ... Hear us, O God.

People: Your mercy is great.

Pastor: Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

SHARING OF PEACE

Pastor: The peace of Christ be with you always.

People: And also with you.

We greet one another, with the words that the risen Jesus spoke to his disciples: "Peace be with you."

OFFERINGS ARE GIVEN

Offering may be dropped off at the office during the week or sent through the mail. For those who wish to give electronically, you may use the secure Givelify app.

Google Play



App Store



OFFERING PRAYER

Pastor: Let us pray.

People: Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season. Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing. In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray. Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Pastor: We have been made one as the body of Christ through the waters of baptism. In our journey of faith & life, we are fed with Christ's own body and blood. Even though we do not celebrate Holy Communion in this virtual gathering, we pause to give thanks for the gift of Holy Communion — as we anticipate, with joy, those times when we are fed at your table.

Pastor: O God most mighty, O God most merciful, O God our rock and our salvation, hear us as we offer our praise and give you thanks. When the earth was a formless void, you formed order and beauty. When Abraham and Sarah were barren, you sent them a child. When the Israelites were enslaved, you led them to freedom. Ruth faced starvation; David fought Goliath; the psalmists cried out for healing, and full of compassion, you granted the people your life. You entered our sorrows in Jesus our brother. He was born among the poor, he lived under oppression, he wept over the city. With infinite love, he conquered death and granted the people your life.

We give you thanks and praise for the gift of Holy Communion and for the blessing it brings to your people. Even though we abstain from your meal in this moment of worship, for reasons you understand, we still sense the power of your forgiveness and grace offered to us and the world through your Son. Awaiting those times when we share in this meal, we still cherish in our hearts the words which Jesus gave us:

People: 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."

We take time for prayer and reflection as we sing together, giving thanks to God for all the times we have been fed with our Lord's body & blood—and look forward to the time when we gather with others around the Lord's Table.

COMMUNION REFLECTION

"How He Loves"

1. He is jealous for me loves like a hurricane

*I am a tree bending beneath The weight of His wind and mercy
When all of a sudden I am unaware of These afflictions eclipsed by glory
I realize just how beautiful You are And how great Your affections are for me*

Chorus: (Yeah) He loves us Oh how He loves us Oh how He loves us Oh how He loves (REPEAT)

2. We are His portion and He is our prize Drawn to redemption by the grace in His eyes

*If grace is an ocean we're all sinking
So Heaven meets earth Like a sloppy wet (unforeseen) kiss
And my heart turns violently inside of my chest
I don't have time to maintain these regrets When I think about the way that*

*How He Loves: Words & Music by John Mark McMillan;
CCLI Song # 5032549; © 2005 Integrity's Hosanna! Music;
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LORD'S PRAYER

Pastor: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

People: 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.

BENEDICTION

Pastor: The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, † now and forever.

People: Amen

SENDING SONG

"Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers"



1 Re - joice, re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;
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.
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.
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.
the day of earth's re - demp - tion that sets your peo - ple free!

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers; Text: Laurentius Laurenti; Music: HAF TRONES LAMPA FÄRDIG, Swedish folk tune

DISMISSAL

Assist: Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

"Reckless Love"

by Cory Asbury

† COMMEMORATIONS FOR TODAY †

Lucy, martyr, died 304

Lucy was a young Christian of Sicily who was martyred during the persecutions under Emperor Diocletian. Her celebration became particularly important in Sweden and Norway, perhaps because the feast of Lucia (whose name means "light") originally fell on the shortest day of the year.

God's Love Shared Through You ...



One Life Deeper in 2020!

*Our prayerful goal is that God will work in every LS disciple to have an impact of faith and hope in the life of one person during 2020. **What shoes might they be wearing?** It may be someone you know already—at work, at home, at school, in the neighborhood, in your daily life. It may be a stranger whom God will bring to you this year. How will the Spirit work through you to bring someone deeper in 2020? **Deeper in Christ, Deeper in Grace, Deeper in Love!***

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS: inviting, involving, mentoring, discipling relationships 1 person at a time!

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS: for the work of God's kingdom in our community and world!

SHARING GOD'S LOVE: with those who are hurting, alone, marginalized, or feeling unloved!

SHARING GOD'S STORIES: so we do not remain silent about God's ongoing work in the world!

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT:

Who Are You?

John knows who he is. When the Pharisees' messengers demand that John give his credentials, he confidently responds that he is on a divinely appointed mission to witness to the light of Christ. He references the Hebrew Scriptures, orienting himself within the wider story of God's relationship with Israel. John knows that his testimony is important.

It is notable that John also knows who he is not. In this conversation alone, he clarifies that he is not the Messiah, nor a reincarnation of Elijah, nor a prophet. He emphasizes that he is not even worthy to untie the sandals of the one who comes after him. In other words, John has the humility to admit that he is not Jesus.

The gospel writer says that John "confessed" these declarations about who he was and who he was not (John 1:20). This means that he freely gave public testimony, going "on the record," so to speak.

Today, many Lutheran churches include a rite of communal confession during Sunday worship. When we confess together, we publicly declare who we are not by naming our captivity to sin. We are not God. We have not loved God wholeheartedly and have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Yet, confession also reminds us who we are. We are children of God. In the words of absolution, we hear the truth that we are completely forgiven by God, we are made alive in Christ, and we are strengthened with the power of the Holy Spirit (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, pp. 95–96).

The practice of repentance is a return to our baptismal vocation. We declare not only who we are but whose we are. We belong to God, who renews us to live in service of the gospel. Like John, we are witnesses to the light of Christ, and we are called to reflect that light as it shines in our lives and in our world.

December Book of the Month: Joel-Zechariah-Malachi

Forward in FAITH Forward in GENEROSITY



Last week, we began returning our Statements of Intent for our generosity to God and the work of Christ's church next year. We give thanks for your generous hearts!

46 Statements of Intent have already been returned as of last Thursday - and it is exciting to anticipate how the Holy Spirit will use our gifts to grow God's kingdom in the coming year and beyond! On the front of the prayer envelopes, nearly 60% of us were inspired to indicate some type of increase in generosity. What a wonderful witness, as we move Forward in Faith and Forward in Generosity together!

We are all at unique places in our lives, especially in this challenging year – ***no matter where you may be in your journey, your intent card is important!*** Please don't forget the special \$2500 challenge gift we have been offered as a congregation, if we reach 82 intent cards returned.

If you were unable to return your intent card last week, you may still do so in one of 4 ways:

- Any worship time (Sunday 8:15 or 10:00, Tuesday Noon, Wednesday 6pm) - pick up a Special Prayer Envelope for your intent and place it in the manger.
- Mail the card back to church (with "Attn: Financial Secretary" on the front). Bill Franck will confidentially transfer the card to a Prayer Envelope and place it in the manger for you.
- Come by the church anytime during the week and get a Prayer Envelope from the office. You (or we) can place your envelope in the manger in the sanctuary.
- Call the church, and a member of the Lifelong Discipleship team will bring you a Prayer Envelope and bring your intent back to the manger for you.

A special note of thanks:

I would like to thank everyone who has joined me and my family in returning your Intent Cards. It truly is a blessing to be able to share as a family how God has provided for us . . . and to make a commitment of generosity for 2021 in response to God's blessings to our family. As we go through this Advent Season, I read daily in the scriptures and the thoughts of the devotion writers of how God blesses us and cares for us. I hear responses of LOVE, HOPE, PEACE, and JOY surrounding us, even in these tough times when making a commitment, financial or otherwise, may seem difficult. As the Angel told Mary, "Do not be afraid." Join me in continued prayer to respond in ways that keep us moving Forward in Faith and in expectation of Jesus coming to us with more generosity than we could ever imagine.

Jan B., Council Vice-President

Forward in FAITH Forward in GENEROSITY



GROWING IN CHRIST, GROWING IN JOY!

When do we stop giving and growing in giving? We don't. Growth in generosity is a journey that takes us to deeper places of joy, as we experience how sharing God's blessings in our lives can bring so much blessing to the lives of others - knowing that we can never match the giving of our abundant, all-giving generous God.

As our giving is blessed and joyful, it continues to grow and expand. For each person, the path of that growth may look different! Some are motivated by a Biblical tithe and then grow beyond ... to the concept of joyful "offerings" beyond a tithe. Others seek to grow by a percent a year and never stop their giving. Still others have the challenge to let the Spirit guide them to grow in generosity in creative ways, even in a case where income has declined due to world events, changes in employment, or other changes in one's life situation.

In each case, once you have experienced the joy of good and generous giving that gives hope & blessing to others, you will want to keep on growing, in whatever way possible!

