



St. James Lutheran Church
Fishersville, VA
December 10, 2023

INTRODUCTION

John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

**BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION
AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God,
who opens the heavens
and draws near to us with salvation.

Amen.

God is patient and merciful,
desiring all to come to repentance.
Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.
Silence is kept for reflection.

Everlasting God,
you love justice and you hate wrongdoing.
We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness
that make us reluctant to work against oppression.
We are complicit in systems of exploitation.
We choose comfort over courage.
We are careless with creation's bounty.
Look upon us with mercy.
Turn our hearts again to you.
Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways
for the sake of our waiting world.

Amen.

Hear these words of assurance:
God clothes you with garments of salvation
and covers you with robes of righteousness.
In the tender compassion of ✝ Jesus Christ,
your sins are forgiven.
God's covenant is eternal,
and God's blessing rests upon us all.
Amen.

ENTRANCE HYMN: "Comfort, Comfort Now My People" (LBW 29)

GREETING

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.

KYRIE



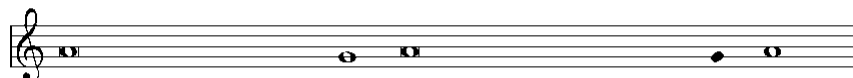
A) In peace, let us pray to the Lord. ☩ Lord, have mer - cy.



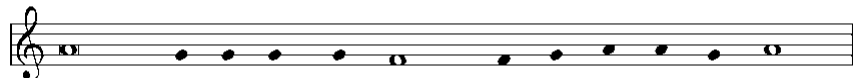
IA For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



☩ Lord, have mer - cy.



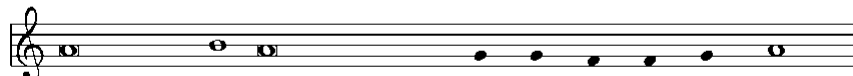
IA For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



and for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the Lord.



☩ Lord, have mer - cy.



IA For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor - ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. ☩ Lord, have mer - cy.



A) Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord. ☩ A - - men

HYMN OF PRAISE



Al - le - lu - ia. This is the feast of vic - to - ry for our God. Al - le - lu - ia.



Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us



free to be peo - ple of God. Pow - er and rich - es and wis - dom and



strength, and hon - or and bless - ing and glo - ry are his.



This is the feast of vic - to - ry for our God. Al - le - lu - ia.



Sing with all the peo - ple of God and join in the



hymn of all cre - a - tion: Bless - ing and hon - or and glo - ry and



might be to God and the Lamb for - ev - er. A - men.



This is the feast of vic - to - ry for our God, for the Lamb who was slain



has be - gun his reign. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Praise to you, O God, who gives us courage to start again.
You fasten righteousness around your waist
and baptize with the Holy Spirit's fire.
Bless us as we mirror your mighty fire in these simple flames,
and teach us to mirror your justice in the paths we prepare.
We ask that peace abound,
until none hurt or destroy over all the earth.
Amen.

*Light two candles and sing
the second verse of
"Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah"
(WOV 630)*

FIRST READING:

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.

Isaiah 40:1-11

¹Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

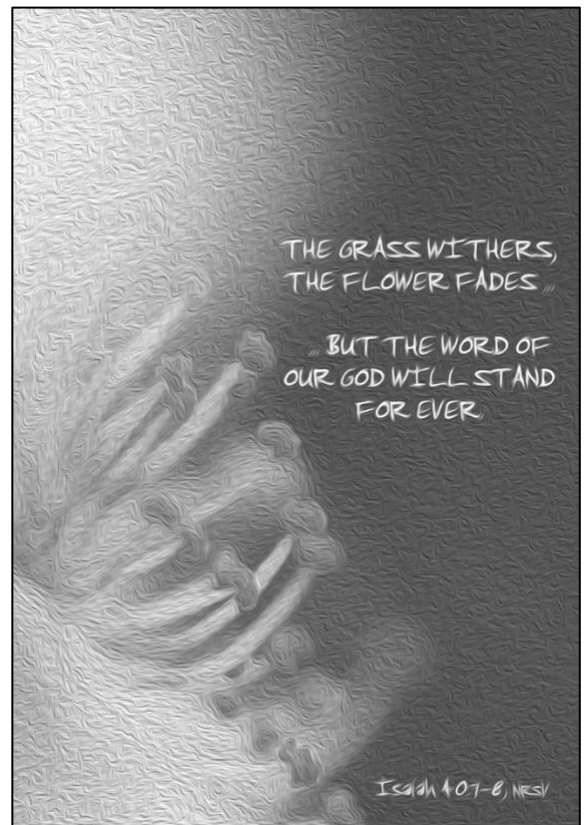
⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;



surely the people are grass.
⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;
 but the word of our God will stand forever.
⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
 O Zion, herald of good tidings;
 lift up your voice with strength,
 O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
 lift it up, do not fear;
 say to the cities of Judah,
 "Here is your God!"

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
 and his arm rules for him;
 his reward is with him,
 and his recompense before him.
¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
 he will gather the lambs in his arms,
 and carry them in his bosom,
 and gently lead the mother sheep.
 Here ends the reading.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13



¹You have been gracious to your ¹land, O LORD;
 you have restored the good for- ¹tune of Jacob.
²**You have forgiven the iniquity ¹of your people
 and blotted out ¹all their sins.**
⁸I will listen to what the LORD¹ God is saying;
 for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their ¹
 hearts to you.
⁹**Truly, your salvation is very near to ¹those who fear you,
 that your glory may dwell ¹in our land.**
¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have ¹met together;
 righteousness and peace have ¹kissed each other.
¹¹**Faithfulness shall spring up ¹from the earth,
 and righteousness shall look ¹down from heaven.**
¹²The LORD will indeed ¹grant prosperity,
 and our land will ¹yield its increase.
¹³**Righteousness shall go be- ¹fore the LORD
 and shall prepare for ¹God a pathway.**

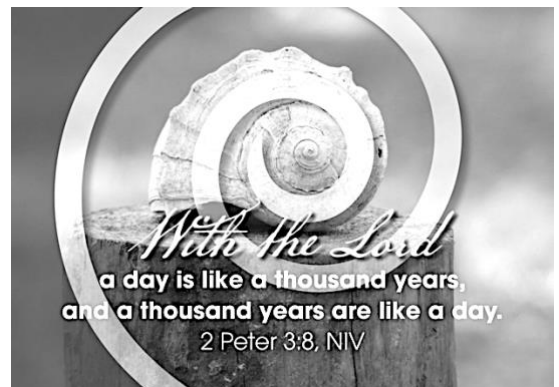
SECOND READING:

This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.

2 Peter 3:8-15a

⁸Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.
⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?



¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

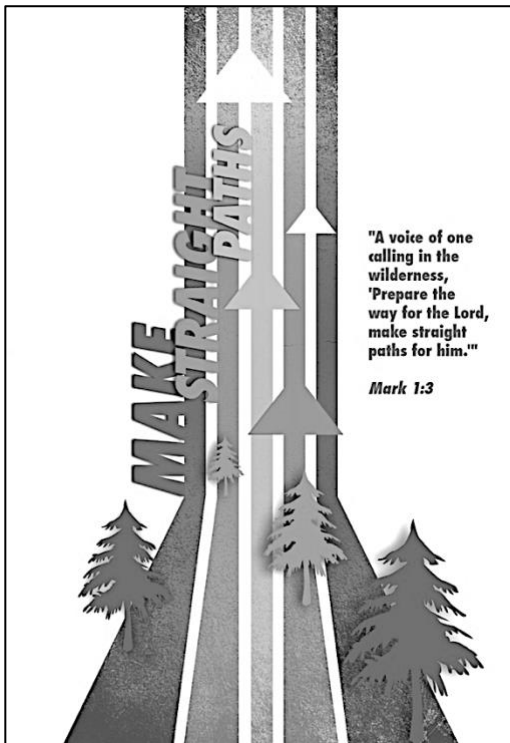
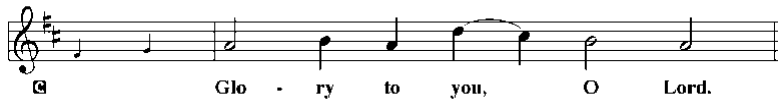
¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ^{15a}and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Here ends the reading.

Thanks be to God.



GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8



The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

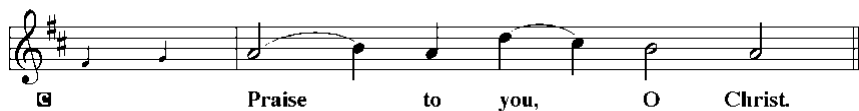
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' "

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The Gospel of the Lord.



SERMON: Rev. Gordon Putnam

HYMN OF THE DAY: “On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry” (LBW 36)

APOSTLE’S CREED

With the whole church, let us confess our faith by using the words of the Apostle’s Creed.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born
of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**



THE PRAYERS

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God’s day of restoration.

A brief silence.

Send forth your faithful people with words of promise and forgiveness. Teach your church to be bold in revealing your good news in word and in deed. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Reveal your majesty in mountain peaks, flowing rivers, and blossoming wilderness roads. Heal the earth where it longs for renewal. Bring wholeness to the earth and all its creatures. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Turn the hearts of the nations toward righteousness and peace. Increase cooperation for justice between countries, commonwealths, political parties, and diplomatic leaders. In times of prosperity, direct leaders to be generous for the sake of all. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Grant holy patience to all who are waiting this season. Give hope to those seeking employment. Bring reassurance to people awaiting new diagnoses or treatments. Protect expectant parents. Watch with those who keep bedside vigil. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

With you a thousand years is like a day. Bless the memory of the saints from ages past and the anticipation of saints yet to be born. Inspire us to live with faith as we await your new heaven and new earth. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Comfort your people with tender words of love and healing. Surround all who are grieving, all who know depression or anxiety, or all who feel lonely or forgotten, especially Norma, Gillian, Cecilia, Jean, Betty, Inez, Charlotte, Zeby, Susan, Claire, Charles, Ellen and Pastor Stewart. Deliver all in any need. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

(For whom else and what else shall we pray...)

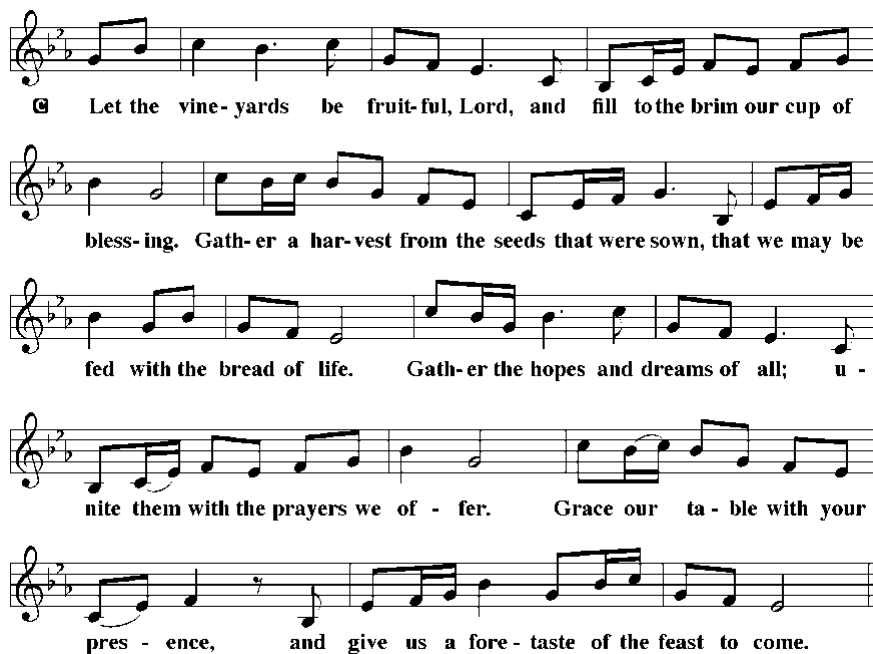
Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy. **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And also with you.

(Greet each other in the peace of the Lord.)

ANTHEM: “Hallelujah” Arranged by John Overholt

OFFERING



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be
fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u -
nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

OFFERING PRAYER

God our provider,
by your merciful hand
abundance springs up from the earth.
Receive and bless these gifts of your own bounty.
Let them be a sign of your steadfast love
and faithfulness for all people,
through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

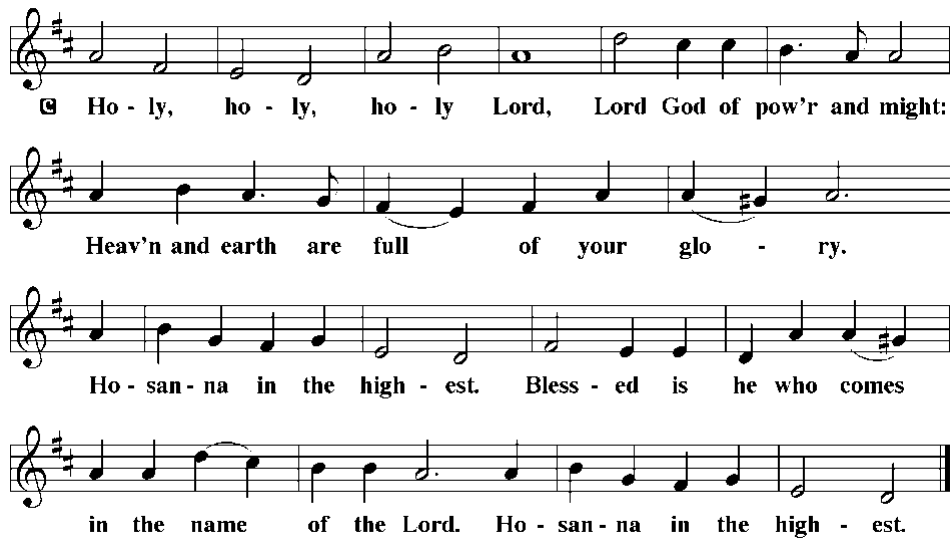
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everliving God. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes again to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS



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.

THANKSGIVING

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.

LORD'S PRAYER

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

**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 this meal, righteousness and peace meet together.
Come, take your place at the table.

COMMUNION

The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.
Amen.

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Generous God,
in bread and cup you have revealed your glory
for all people to see together.
Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim
your good news of liberation and release,
brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

CLOSING HYMN: “Prepare the Royal Highway” (LBW 26)

BLESSING

The God of peace bless you,
the love of Christ sustain you in hope,
and the anointing of the Spirit + remain upon you
now and forever.
Amen.



19th	Reid Leach
26th	Sarah Grove Jordan
26th	Jaxon Diehl



December	
10 th	Anne Putnam
17 th	Bambi Straw
24 th	– 11am Sherie W-Rohal
14 th	– 7pm Anne Putnam
31 st	Debbie Snyder

Dismissal

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

Advent and Christmas Schedule

Advent Services
December 13th at Grace
December 20th at St. James
December 21st Blue Christmas Service at Bethlehem

Sunday December 24th Christmas Eve
11:00 am service of the word no communion
7:00 pm Candlelight service with communion

December 31st take down Christmas decorations



We need your help the Backpack program now has 17 kids. Your support by purchasing any of the items listed below is much appreciated. Items can be placed in the box in the narthex.

Mac and cheese	Kroger meals
Chef Boyardee meals	Fruit cups
Boxes of cereal	Pop-tarts
Oatmeal	Ramen Noodles, any kind
Boxed juices	Yahoo chocolate milk
Apple sauce	Raisins
"Hugs" Drink Barrels	All single servings

Prayer Concerns

Ongoing Need for Prayer

Norma Turak, Cecilia Shott, Jean Geiser, Betty Diehl, Gillian Taylor, Charlotte Shifflett (Danny's aunt), Inez Johnson (Becky and Debbie's aunt), and Susan Zirges (friend of Sherie & Paul).

Prayer Request for

Zeby (Ellen & Charles' grandson), Charles, Ellen, Claire, and Pastor Stewart.

Community Conversations

- December flowers are given by Gene Giltner.
- Choir practice every Tuesday at 6pm at Betty Bartley's home.
- Men's Group meets every Friday at 9:00 am.
- Today soup luncheon after worship before we decorate the church for Christmas.
- December 12th—Quilt Group meets at St. James, 1pm.
- December 12th Council meeting at St. James, 7pm.
- December 13th Advent service at Grace, 7pm.
- December 17th Christmas Open House at Pastor Gordon and Anne's home from 2pm to 4pm.
- December 20th Advent service at St. James, 7pm.
- December 21st Blue Christmas service at Bethlehem, 7pm
- For prayer concerns, contact Pastor Gordon.
 - Council Person of the Month
 - December—Lynda Diehl

Pastor Gordon Putnam

434-760-0263

Grputnam1949@gmail.com

Pastor Carl Trost

Hannah Pingel, Pianist

Sam Diehl and Bambi Straw, Assisting Ministers

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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