



St. James Lutheran Church
Fishersville, VA
December 17, 2023

INTRODUCTION

“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.

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: "People, Look East" (WOV 626)

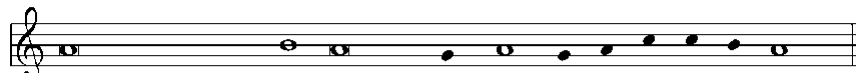
GREETING

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



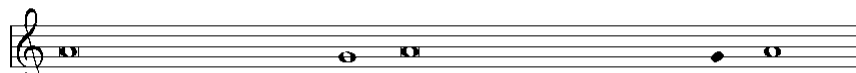
A) In peace, let us pray to the Lord. ☩ Lord, have mer - cy.



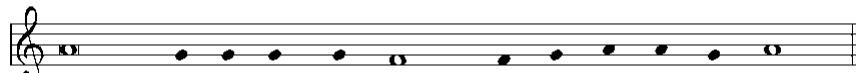
IA For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



☩ Lord, have mer - cy.



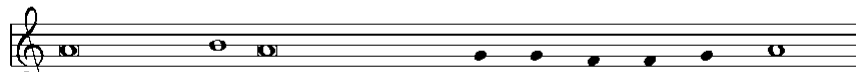
IA For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



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



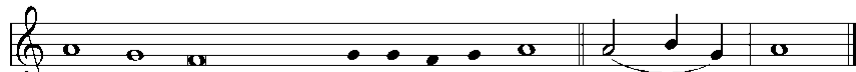
☩ Lord, have mer - cy.



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.

Let us pray.

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.

Amen.

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Praise to you, O God, who holds our joy and sorrow.
You bring water to parched ground and life out of death.

Bless us as this light grows,
and send sorrow and sighing to flee away.

Give us strength and patience,
trusting that you are true to your promises.

Transform the lives of all who suffer
with your wonders near at hand.

Amen.

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

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.

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

¹The 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;

²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;

³to 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.

⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

⁸For 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.
⁹Their 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.

¹⁰I 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.

¹¹For 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.

Here ends the reading.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 126

¹When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,
then were we like | those who dream.

²**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.”

³The LORD has done great | things for us,
and we are | glad indeed.

⁴**Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,**
like the watercourses | of the Negeb.

⁵Those who | sowed with tears
will reap with | songs of joy.

⁶**Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,**
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing 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.



1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

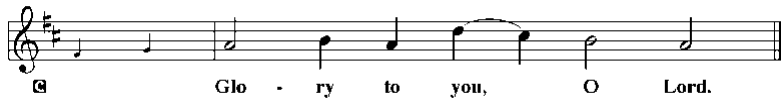
²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Here ends the reading.

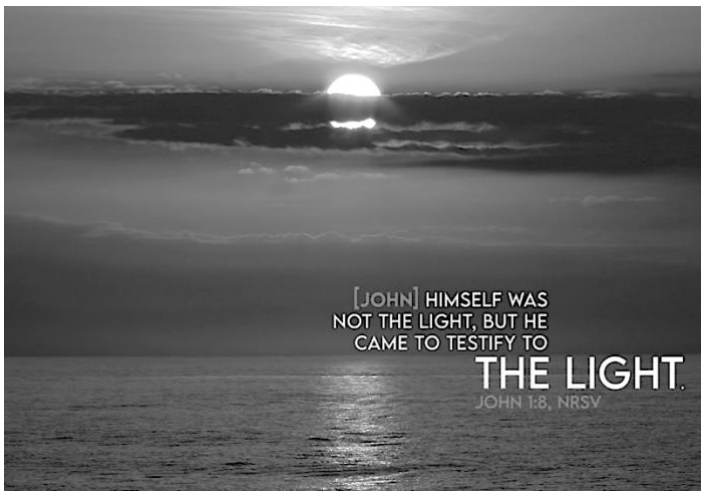
Thanks be to God.



GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28



John’s gospel describes Jesus as the “light of the world.” John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.



⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

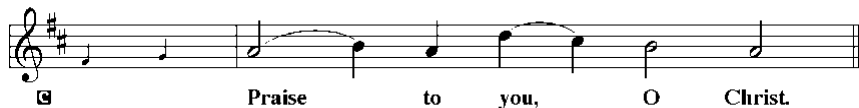
¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” ²²Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

²³He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” ²⁶John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord.



SERMON: Rev. Gordon Putnam

HYMN OF THE DAY: “Joy to the World” (LBW 39)

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.**

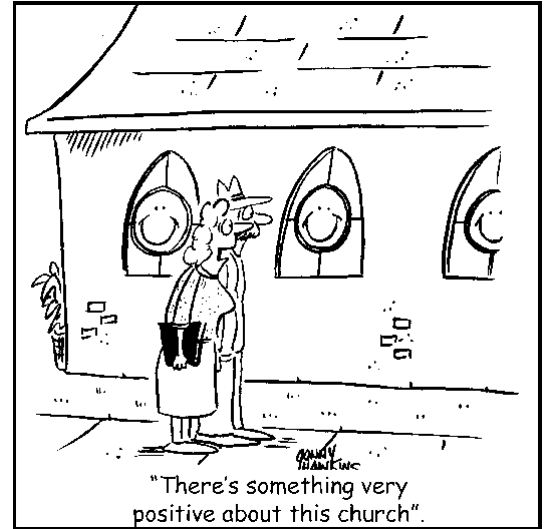
He descended into hell.

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.

Fill our mouths with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy as we bear witness to the great things you have done. Give your church a spirit of gladness as we gather and as we are sent. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Let the trees of the field sing your praise. Protect forests, orchards, rainforests, and all wooded areas from disease and deforestation. Keep us grateful for their gifts of oxygen, food, shade, and shelter. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

You love justice and promise your favor to those who are oppressed, brokenhearted, and incarcerated. Grant wisdom and compassion to those who work for public safety and all who work within prisons, jails, and courts, that mercy may increase and violence wither away. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Give us strength to pray for our world without ceasing and provoke us toward love and good deeds for all who are in need. Provide for all without adequate housing, food, employment, or access to health care. Empower us as helpers and advocates. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Open our hearts to those who serve as truth-tellers in our church and in our society. Bless leaders in church and society in their task of proclamation. Amplify voices of peacemakers, advocates, and especially those whose voices are ignored or marginalized. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

With gratitude we rejoice in the saints who witnessed to your life in all circumstances, in whom your Spirit was not quenched, even in death. Through them, teach us always to hold fast to what is good. 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...)

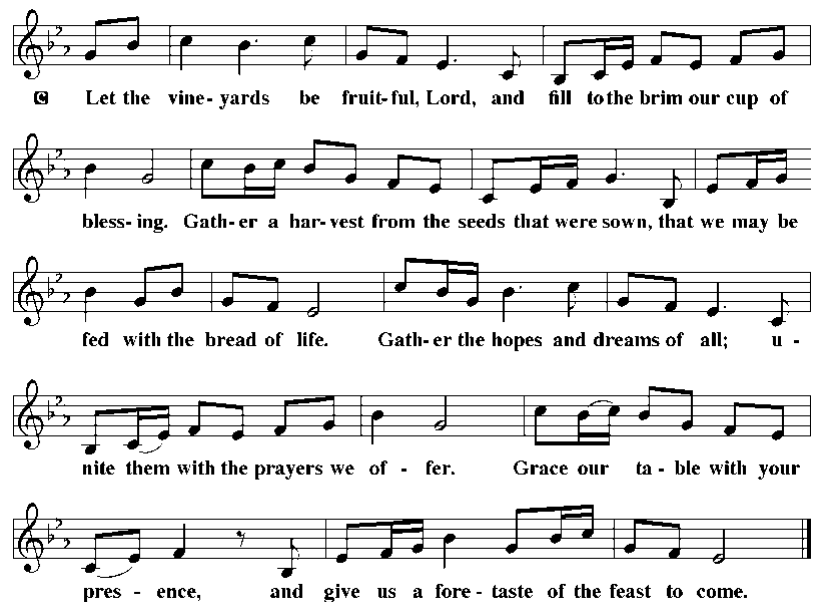
Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy. **Amen.**

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

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

ANTHEM: “Sing of Mary, Pure And Lowly” Music, Skinner Chavez-Melo; Text, Roland Palmer

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.

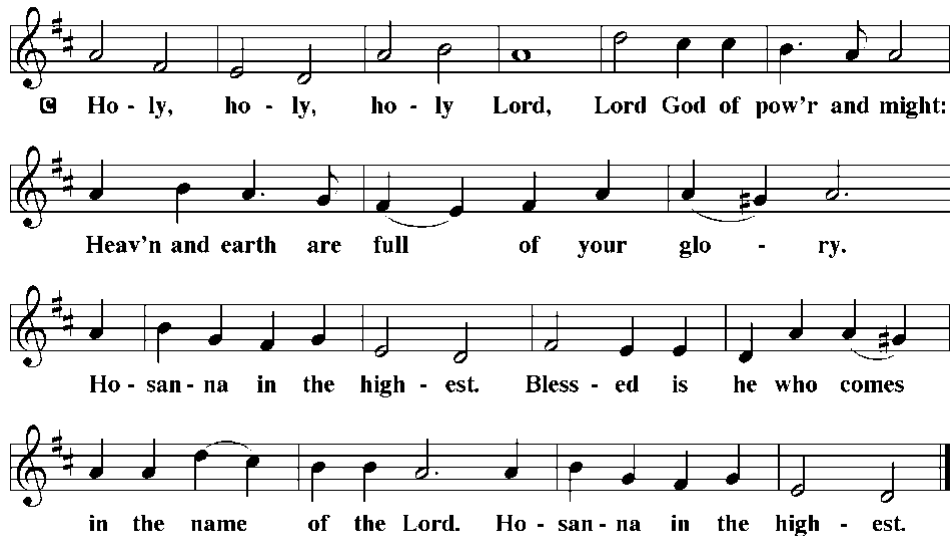
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" (LBW 30)

DECEMBER



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



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

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.

Dismissal

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

Advent and Christmas Schedule

Advent Services

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



Back Pack Needs

We need your help the Backpack program now has 19 kids. Your support by purchasing any of the items listed below is much appreciated. Items can be placed in the box in the narthex. There is also an offering basket for financial support of the program.

Mac and cheese	Kroger meals
Chef Boyardee meals	Fruit cups
Boxes of cereal	Poptarts
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.
- 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
- December 31st Soup luncheon after worship and before taking down the Christmas decorations. Sign-up sheet in the Narthex.
- 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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