

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT
EZRA AND THE PEOPLE

Stacking Bricks While Waiting
for the Second Advent
of Our Temple



December 17, 2023

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH & PRESCHOOL

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ADVENT PROPHETS

This service draws from readings often used for the weeks of Advent, the Old Testament prophets who pointed to the first Advent of Jesus, His birth, and His Second Advent still to come.

Entrance Words and Invocation

based on Jeremiah 33:14-16

P: "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD.

C: **When He will fulfill the promise He made to all of His people.**

P: In those days and at that time

the LORD will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David.

C: **That Branch is a son of David. That Branch is Jesus, the Son of God.**

P: The Branch shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

C: **In those days the LORD's people will be saved
and His Church will dwell securely.**

P: And this is the name by which the Church will be called:

C: **The LORD is our righteousness.**

P: What does that name mean?

C: **We, His people, are righteous through His righteousness.
We are holy because He makes us holy through His Son.**

P: Let us remember our baptisms,

when the Lord became our righteousness...

in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen!**

Opening Hymn

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

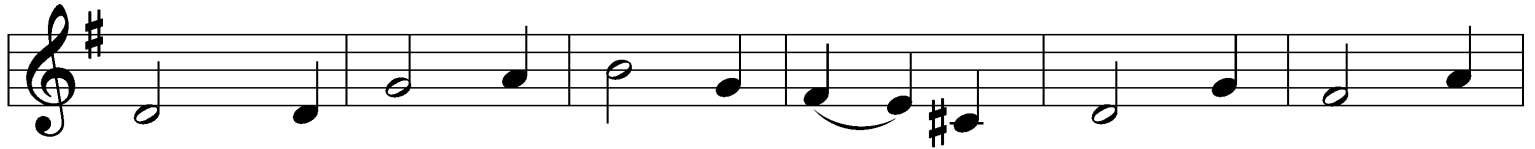
LSB 341 sts. 1, 3-4



1 Lift up your heads, ye mighty - y gates! Be - hold, the
3 How blest the land, the cit - y blest, Where Christ the
4 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; Make it a



King of glo - ry waits. The King of kings is draw - ing
rul - er is con-fessed! O peace - ful hearts and hap - py
tem - ple set a - part From earth - ly use for heav'n's em -



near; The Sav - ior of the world is here. Life and sal -
 homes To whom this King in tri - umph comes! The cloud - less
 ploy, A - dorned with prayer and love and joy. So shall your



va - tion He doth bring; There - fore re - joice and glad - ly sing.
 sun of joy is He Who comes to set His peo - ple free.
 Sov - 'reign en - ter in And new and no - bler life be - gin.



To God the Fa - ther raise Your joy - ful songs of praise.
 To God the Spir - it raise Your hap - py shouts of praise.
 To God a - lone be praise For word and deed and grace!

Preparation for God's Word

based on Malachi 3:1-7b

P: "Behold, I send my messenger
 and he will prepare the way before me," says the Lord.

C: This is John the Baptist who announced that the Messiah is Jesus.

P: Shall we rejoice that the LORD has sent His messenger,
 that the Messiah Jesus has come into our midst?

C: Yes, we shall rejoice; but our sin causes us to fear His coming.

P: The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

**C: But who can endure the day of his coming,
 and who can stand when he appears?**

*For he is like a refiner's fire
 burning away the worthless material in us.
 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver,
 and he will purify us from all our sin.*

P: And the LORD declares to you today
 that His mercies are new every morning. He says:
 "I the LORD do not change;
 therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.
 From the days of your fathers

you have turned aside from my statutes
 and have not kept them.
 Return to me, and I will return to you,”
 says the LORD of hosts.
 Your LORD has drawn you back to Himself
 through His Son, Jesus.
 You have returned to the LORD
 through the work of the Holy Spirit.
 You have returned and find forgiveness for all of your sins
 In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

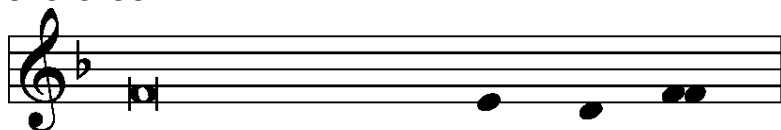
C: Amen.

P: And this is the name by which the Church will be called:

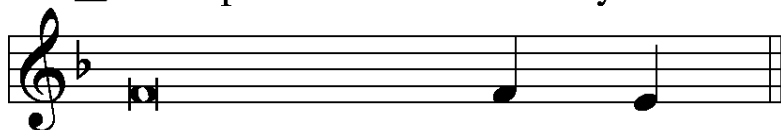
C: The LORD is our righteousness. Amen.

Versicles

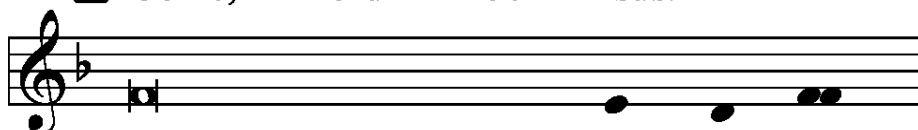
(Advent)



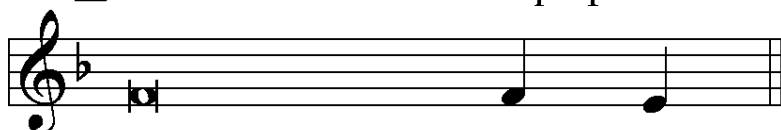
L The Spirit and the Church cry out:



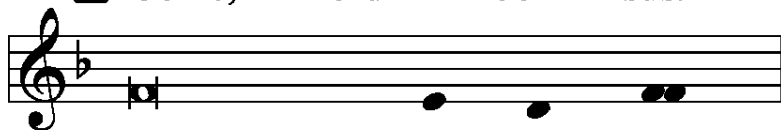
C Come, Lord Je - sus.



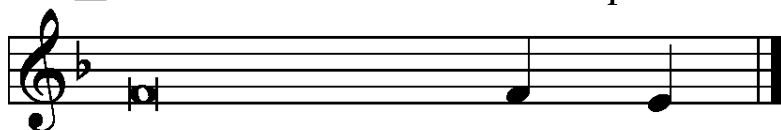
L All those who await His ap - pear - ance pray:



C Come, Lord Je - sus.



L The whole cre - a - tion pleads:



C Come, Lord Je - sus.

Greeting and Collect (Prayer of the Day for the Third Sunday in Advent)

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Anthem

Emmanuel, Expected Jesus

Adult Choir

- Use the anthem's music and words to help you to meditate on God's Word and His truth for you today. Maintain this as meditative time.

O come, O come, Emmanuel, Come, O come expected Emmanuel.
And ransom captive Israel, Ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel; shall come to thee, O Israel.

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy People free.
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art;
Desire of ev'ry nation, hope of ev'ry longing heart.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
Come, O come, expected Emmanuel.

Verses of Preparation for the Third Sunday in Advent

Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26, alt.

P: Alleluia.

C: **Alleluia.**

P: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, O people of God.

C: **We, the people of God, shout aloud.**

P: Behold, your king is coming to you;

C: **Jesus the King is righteous and has salvation for us.**

P: Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.

C: **We, the people of God, shout praises for You.**

P: Alleluia.

C: **Alleluia. Amen.**

Today's Narrative Lectionary Reading

Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-4, 10-13 (VOICE)

During the first year of King Cyrus of Persia's reign over the whole empire now claimed from Babylon, the Eternal One influenced the spirit of the Persian king to send a proclamation and written letter throughout his empire, fulfilling the Eternal's earlier message through the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah:

This is what the Eternal has to say: "You will remain in Babylon for 70 years. When that time is over, I will come to you, and I will keep My promise of bringing you back home" (Jer. 29:10).

King Cyrus' Proclamation:

² The Eternal One, the God of heaven, has decided to give me all the kingdoms of the world to rule as my own. In return for this, He has told me to build Him a new house in Jerusalem of Judah. ³ Any of His people living in my empire may return to Jerusalem of Judah with the help of the Eternal God. There you may rebuild the temple of the Eternal, Israel's God, with my resources and blessing, because He is the God who lives in Jerusalem. ⁴ Every Jew who lives here or in any other part of my empire and wishes to return to Jerusalem should be supported by his neighbors. They should give him silver, gold, goods, and cattle for his journey and should send a freewill offering to the True God's temple in Jerusalem.

Note on the Reading

(VOICE)

When the Jews return to Jerusalem, they are ready to reconstitute the nation and reclaim God's promise to Abraham and their ancestors. All families are asked to prove their lineage before they return to their ancestors' cities, and all priests are asked to do the same before they begin service at the temple. The Jewish leaders are careful that the right people return to the right places so that the new nation resembles the nation under the great kings David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

The reconstruction of the altar is the first order of business when the Jews return to Jerusalem. But they cannot be overzealous in their rebuilding. While most of the population was exiled to Babylon, some Israelites were left there by the Babylonians to tend the land. Those who have remained in the land revere the site of the destroyed temple as holy. To immediately build the temple on the old foundations could be considered apostasy, so the Jews proceed in their reforms with caution. They don't want to incur the wrath of God or of their new neighbors.

^{3:1} In the seventh month, *the month of Tishri*, when the Israelites had settled into their towns and when all of the returning Jews had gathered together in Jerusalem in preparation for the festivals, ² Jeshua (son of Jozadak) and his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel (son of Shealtiel)

and others of those returning home built a new altar of uncut stone for burnt offerings to the True God of Israel following the law of Moses, the man of the True God. ³ The men built the altar on the *ruined foundation of Solomon's altar* because they feared those who were left behind in the land *during the exile*. Jeshua and the priests burned offerings to the Eternal each morning and evening ⁴ and celebrated the Feast of Booths just as *Moses had* prescribed, offering the required number of burnt offerings each day.

¹⁰ After the laborers had laid the Eternal's temple foundation, the priests and Levites praised the Eternal as their *beloved King David* of Israel had prescribed. The priests dressed in their vestments and played trumpets, the Levite descendants of Asaph played their cymbals, ¹¹ and together they sang praises and gave thanks to the Eternal.

Priests and Levites:

We praise him because He is good and because of His continual and loyal love for Israel.

All the people joined in, shouting praises to the Eternal because the foundation of His temple was complete. ¹² But in the midst of those praises, the priests, Levites, and tribal leaders who remembered the first temple wept loudly when they saw it *because they knew this temple could never be as grand as Solomon's*. ¹³ There were shouts of joy intermingled with cries of sorrow, and the entire ensemble grew so loud it could be heard a great distance away.

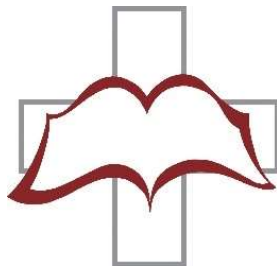
L: This is the Word of the Lord.


C: **Thanks be to God.**

Collect (Prayer of the Day for Today's Lectionary Reading)

P: Let us pray. God of restoration, You brought Your people home from exile and in their joy they rebuilt Your temple. Deliver us from our personal and communal exiles, and help us to build up Your Church, until that Day when You will deliver us from this great exile and bring us into Your eternal presence in the New Earth at the Second Advent Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**





1 God is here! As we your peo - ple meet to of - fer
 2 Here are sym - bols to re - mind us of our life - long
 3 Here our chil - dren find a wel - come in the Shep - herd's
 4 Lord of all, of church and king - dom, in an age of



praise and prayer, may we find in full - er mea - sure
 need of grace; here are ta - ble, font, and pul - pit;
 flock and fold; here as bread and wine are tak - en,
 change and doubt, keep us faith - ful to the gos - pel;



what it is in Christ we share. Here, as in the
 here the cross has cen - tral place. Here in hon - es -
 Christ sus - tains us as of old. Here the ser - vants
 help us work your pur - pose out. Here, in this day's



world a - round us, all our var - ied skills and arts
 ty of preach - ing, here in si - lence, as in speech,
 of the Ser - vant seek in wor - ship to ex - plore
 ded - i - ca - tion, all we have to give, re - ceive;



wait the com - ing of the Spir - it in - to o - pen minds and hearts.
 here, in new - ness and re - new - al, God the Spir - it comes to each.
 what it means in dai - ly liv - ing to be - lieve and to a - dore.
 we, who can - not live with - out you, we a - dore you! We be - lieve!

Sermon **“Stacking Bricks While Waiting for the Second Advent of Our Temple”**

Confession of Faith

Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.—And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.—I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Offering & Prayer Requests

In addition to the prayer requests already received, Pastor will pause here to see if there are additional requests. Prayers can be thanksgivings, joy, requests for yourself, or requests for others.

Offertory

Breathe On Me, Breath of God

UMH 420

(we join in singing as the offerings are brought forward to the altar)

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Breathe on me, Breath of God,
fill me with life a - new, that I may love what thou dost love,
so shall I nev - er die, but live with thee the per - fect life
and do what - thou wouldst do.
of thine e - ter - ni - ty.

Prayers

The Lord’s Supper: What We Believe

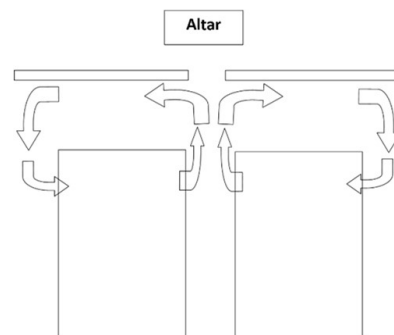
All Christians who are baptized and have been instructed are invited to receive Communion with us if you believe as we do—that the bread is the body of Christ, and the wine is the blood of Christ, truly present for us for the forgiveness of our sins.

If this is a new teaching to you, or if this is different than you believe, we ask that you wait to commune until we’ve had a further chance to talk. We invite those who are not communing to come to the rail, cross your arms, and receive a blessing from the Lord.



Communion Distribution

- Pastor distributes the bread, and the Elders distribute the wine—with individual cups or common cup. The individual trays also contain alcohol-removed wine in the center of each tray in the purple cups.
- Each side will be ushered from the center aisle to the communion rail, row by row, starting with the front.
- Go to the rail on your side of the sanctuary, filling in starting with the outside wall towards the center.
- Once you have received the elements, you may remain at the rail for prayer and leave at your own pace. Return to your seat using the outside aisle.
- Use the distribution time to prepare yourself for communion, sing the hymns as prayers to God, and maintain this as meditative time.

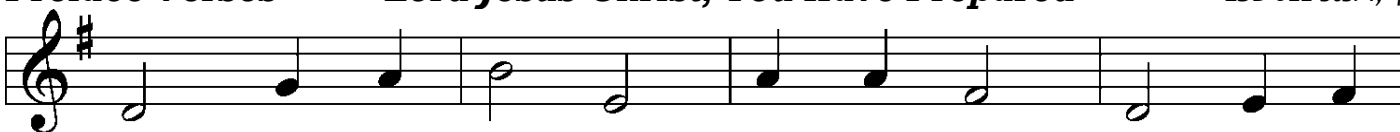


Preparation for the Lord's Supper

Preface Verses

Lord Jesus Christ, You Have Prepared

LSB 622 sts. 1, 4



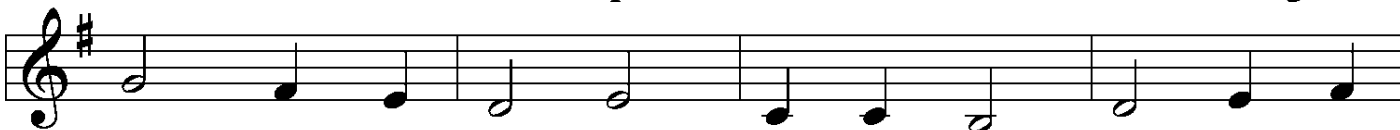
1 Lord Je - sus Christ, You have pre - pared This feast for
4 We eat this bread and drink this cup, Your pre - cious



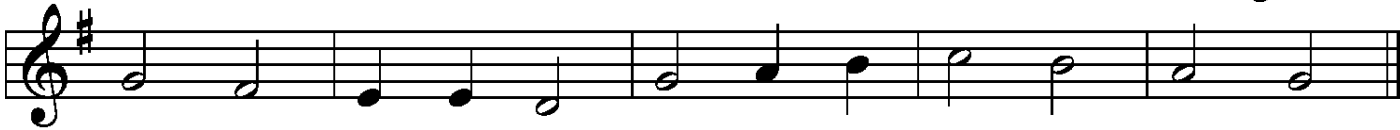
our sal - va - tion; It is Your bod - y
Word be - liev - ing That Your true bod - y



and Your blood, And at Your in - vi - ta - tion
and Your blood Our lips are here re - ceiv - ing.



As wea - ry souls, with sin op - pressed, We come to
This Word re - mains for - ev - er true, All things are



You for need - ed rest, For com - fort, and for par - don.
pos - si - ble with You, For You are Lord Al - might - y.

The Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in Your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

All: 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.

Words of Institution

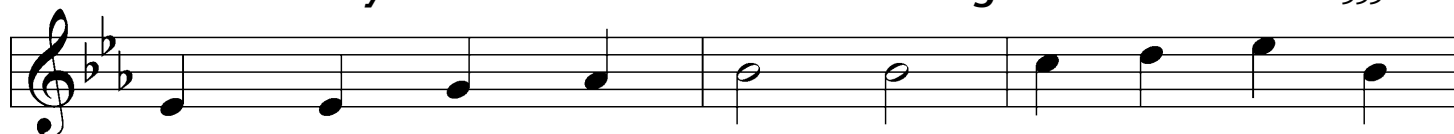
Pax Domini (The Peace of the Lord)

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always. C: **And also with you.**

(We greet one another in peace saying "God's peace" or "The Lord be with you.")

First Distribution Hymn Once He Came in Blessing

LSB 333



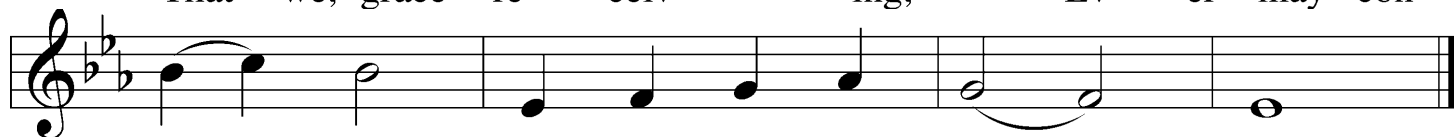
1 Once He came in bless - ing, All our sins re -
2 Now He gent - ly leads us; With Him - self He
3 Soon will come that hour_____ When with might - y
4 Come, then, O Lord Je - sus, From our sins re -



dress - ing; Came in like - ness low - ly,
feeds us Pre - cious food from heav - en,
pow - er Christ will come in splen - dor
lease us. Keep our hearts be - liev - ing,



Son of God most ho - ly; Bore the cross to
Pledge of peace here giv - en, Man - na that will
And will judg - ment ren - der, With the faith - ful
That we, grace re - ceiv - ing, Ev - er may con -



save us; Hope and free - dom gave us.
nour - ish Souls that they may flour - ish.
shar - ing Joy be - yond com - par - ing.
fess You Till in heav'n we bless You.

Second Distribution Hymn *Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come*

LSB 350



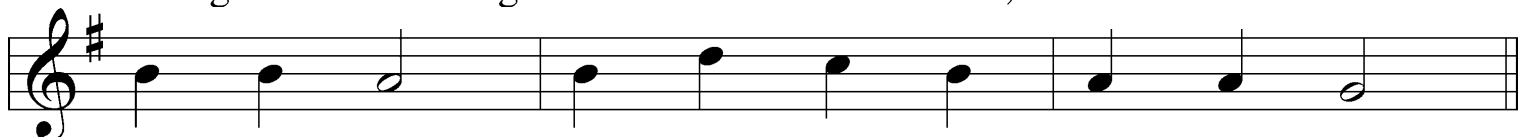
1 Come, Thou pre - cious Ran - som, come, On - ly hope for
2 En - ter now my wait - ing heart, Glo - rious King and
3 My ho - san - nas and my palms Gra - cious - ly re -
4 Hail! Ho - san - na, Da - vid's Son! Je - sus, hear our



sin - ful mor - tals! Come, O Sav - ior of the world!
Lord most ho - ly. Dwell in me and ne'er de - part,
ceive, I pray Thee; Ev - er - more, as best I can,
sup - pli - ca - tion! Let Thy king - dom, scep - ter, crown,



O - pen are to Thee all por - tals. Come, Thy beau - ty
Though I am but poor and low - ly. Ah, what rich - es
Sav - ior, I will hom - age pay Thee, And in faith I
Bring us bless - ing and sal - va - tion, That for - ev - er



let us see; Anx - ious - ly we wait for Thee.
will be mine When Thou art my guest di - vine!
will em - brace, Lord, Thy mer - it through Thy grace.
we may sing: Hail! Ho - san - na to our King.

Text: Johann Gottfried Olearius, 1635–1711; tr. August Crull, 1845–1923, alt. Tune: Neu-verfertigtes Darmstädtisches Gesang-Buch, 1699, Darmstadt

Common Dismissal

P: Now may this true body and true blood of our Lord...

C: **Amen.**

Acknowledgments

This liturgy arranged and written by the Rev. Dr. Benjamin C. Squires.

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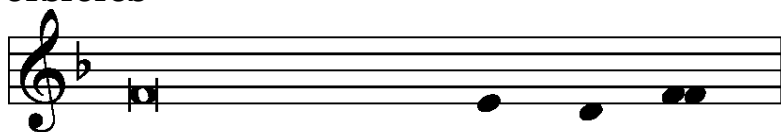
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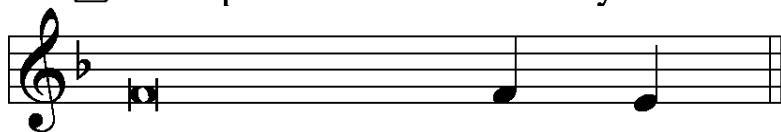
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Versicles

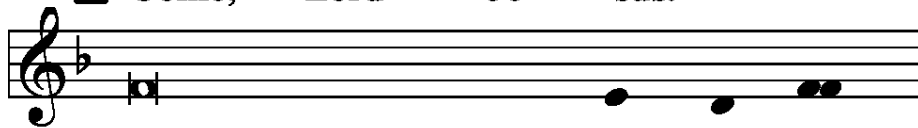
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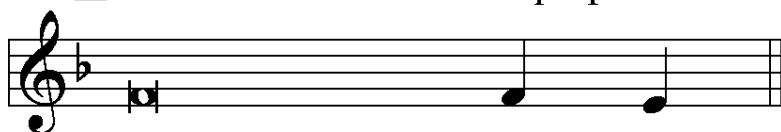
L The Spirit and the Church cry out:



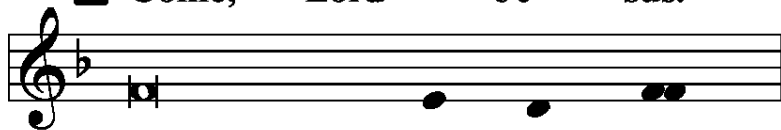
C Come, Lord Je - sus.



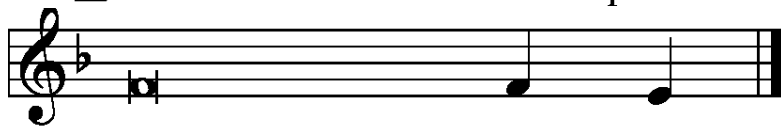
L All those who await His ap - pear - ance pray:



C Come, Lord Je - sus.



L The whole cre - a - tion pleads:



C Come, Lord Je - sus.

Benediction

based on Micah 5:2-5a

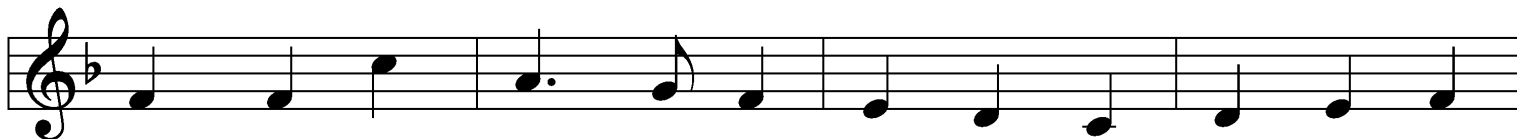
P: Jesus shall stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And you, His flock, shall dwell secure,
for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth.
And He shall be your peace.
The almighty and merciful Lord,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless you and always watch over you.

C: Amen.

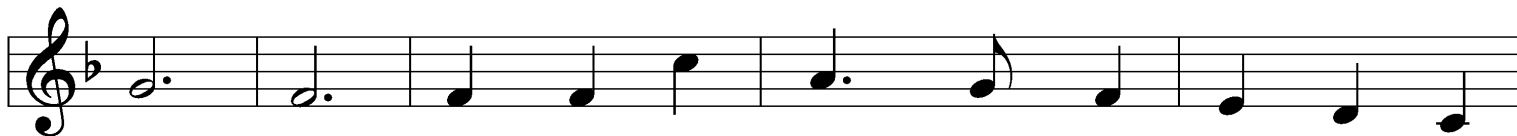
Closing Hymn

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

LSB 790 sts. 4-5



4 Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and de -
5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me a -



fend you; Surely His goodness and mercy shall
dore Him! All that has life and breath, come now with



dai - ly at - tend you. Ponder anew What the Al -
prais - es be - fore Him! Let the A - men Sound from His



might - y can do As with His love He be - friends you.
peo - ple a - gain; Glad - ly for - ev - er a - dore Him!

Text: Joachim Neander, 1650-80; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-78, alt. Tune: Ander Theil Des Erneuerten Gesang-Buchs, 1665, Stralsund

Announcements



UPCOMING WORSHIP SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

IN-PERSON WORSHIP (IN GYM W/COMMUNION) – 9AM

FELLOWSHIP 10-10:30AM

EDUCATION HOUR 10:30-11:30AM

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

IN-PERSON WORSHIP (IN SANCTUARY) – 6:30PM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

IN-PERSON SPECIAL WORSHIP W/CHRISTMAS MOVIE (IN GYM) – 9AM

CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24

IN-PERSON CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP (IN GYM) – 6:30PM

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE, DECEMBER 25

IN-PERSON WORSHIP (IN GYM W/COMMUNION) – 10AM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

IN-PERSON WORSHIP (IN GYM W/COMMUNION) – 9AM

CONTACT THE OFFICE IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SCHEDULE. USHERS, READERS, AND VARIOUS OTHER VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP AND COMMUNION. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING FOR ONE OF THOSE ROLES, PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE AT OFFICE@BETHELGURNEE.ORG.



Thank You for Beautifying our Worship Areas with Poinsettias

Norm Balliet – To the glory of God;

Sheila Bunnell – (2 plants) In memory of Helen & Richard Tone;

Wayne & Kathy Henkel – In memory of Mavis Henkel;

Jim Franz – (3 plants) In memory of his mother, father, brother, sister and grandmother;

Chris Mason – (2 plants) In memory of Noreen Hyde, Helen & Earl Mason and Christine & Roy Roberts;

Midge & Bill Ratzburg – (2 plants) To the glory of God;

Ted & Marlene Witt – To the glory of God;

Paul & Linda Groh - (2 plants) To the glory of God;

John & Karen Kozlik – (2 plants) To the glory of God;

The Sanders Family - To the glory of God;

The Rayos Family – In memory of Grace Moreland;

Holly Traynor - (4 plants) In memory of Sun Traynor, Muriel Adams and to the glory of God;

Victor Sundararaj – (2 plants) In memory of his father;

The Kazarian/Rasmussen/Souza Families – (4 plants) In memory of Grace Gibson, Art & Evelyn Rasmussen, Bill & Alice Souza, Mark Souza and Pat Souza-Rasmussen;

Elizabeth Blasko – In memory of Michael Yarusinsky;

Joan Blasko – (2 plants) In memory of parents & grandparents and to the glory of God;

The Squires Family - (2 plants) In memory of Pastor's grandparents Palmer & Mary;

The Kailer Family – (2 plants) In memory of Betty & Henry Schramm;

David & Cheryl Ross – (4 plants) In memory of Gordon & Carol Gillings and George & Jean Ross;

Dawn Werfelmann – (2 plants) To the glory of God.

Your Poinsettia's will be available for pickup after the Christmas day worship service or arrange to pick them up with the church office the following week. Contact the church office at 847-244-9647 with any questions.