

# ***St. Stephen Lutheran Church***

Member congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (clclutheran.org)

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**December 8, 2024 † Advent 2**



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**We Welcome Our Visitors** who are with us this morning.

We hope that you are uplifted by the Gospel at our worship service.

We invite you to join us every Sunday.

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† Preparation for Worship: Read Psalm 8 (Lutheran Service Book or Pew Bible) †

**Our Worship Services will be Posted to Our Website Each Sunday Evening.  
To Watch our Worship Service Online Please Click This Link:**

**<https://www.sslcwest.org/worship.html>**

# Opening Hymn 340 Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

LSB 340



1 Lift up your heads, ye might - y gates! Be - hold, the King of  
2 A righ - teous Help - er comes to thee; His char - iot is hu -  
3 How blest the land, the cit - y blest, Where Christ the rul - er  
4 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; Make it a tem - ple  
5 Re - deem - er, come and o - pen wide My heart to Thee; here,



glo - ry waits. The King of kings is draw - ing near; The  
mil - i - ty, His king - ly crown is ho - li - ness, His  
is con - fessed! O peace - ful hearts and hap - py homes To  
set a - part From earth - ly use for heav'n's em - ploy, A -  
Lord, a - bide! O en - ter with Thy grace di - vine; Thy



Sav - ior of the world is here. Life and sal - va - tion  
scep - ter, pit - y in dis - tress. The end of all our  
whom this King in tri - umph comes! The cloud - less sun of  
dorned with prayer and love and joy. So shall your Sov - 'reign  
face of mer - cy on me shine. Thy Ho - ly Spir - it



He doth bring; There - fore re - joice and glad - ly sing. To  
woe He brings; There - fore the earth is glad and sings. To  
joy is He Who comes to set His peo - ple free. To  
en - ter in And new and no - bler life be - gin. To  
guide us on Un - til our glo - rious goal is won. E -



God the Fa - ther raise Your joy - ful songs of praise.  
Christ the Sav - ior raise Your grate - ful hymns of praise.  
God the Spir - it raise Your hap - py shouts of praise.  
God a - lone be praise For word and deed and grace!  
ter - nal praise and fame We of - fer to Thy name.

Text: Georg Weissel, 1590–1635; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt.

Tune: Geist-reiches Gesang-Buch, 1704, Halle, ed. Johann A. Freylinghausen, alt.

Text and tune: Public domain

## Invocation

*We invoke ("call upon") the name of the one true God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

- P** In the name of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

## Responsive Reading

*(selected verses of Isaiah 40)*

- P** "Say to the daughter of Zion.
- C** **'Surely your salvation is coming;**
- P** The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD;
- C** **make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**
- P** Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low;
- C** **The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth;**
- P** The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together;
- C** **for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."**
- P** O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain;
- C** **O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength,**
- P** lift it up, be not afraid;
- C** **say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"**
- P** He will feed His flock like a shepherd;
- C** **He will gather the lambs with His arm,**
- P** and carry them in His bosom,
- C** **and gently lead those who are with young.**

## Confession and Absolution

*We come before our Holy God recognizing that we are sinful and daily need His forgiveness.*

- C** **O most merciful God, I confess to You with a sorrowful heart all my sins. I have sinned against You in what I have thought, said, and done. Have mercy upon me, I pray, and forgive me for Jesus' sake. Send Your Holy Spirit to help me know Your holy will and willingly obey it in the spirit of Christian love and thankfulness. Preserve me in the Christian faith so that I finally enter the eternal life in heaven through our Savior Jesus Christ.**

**P** God our heavenly Father has been merciful to us, for He delivered up Jesus on the cross for our offenses and raised Him again for our justification. Since the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the Christian Church, saying that whoever sins you forgive in His stead they are forgiven, therefore according to Jesus' command, as a called servant of God I forgive you of all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

### Prayer of the Day

**P** We pray:

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for Your only Son. By His coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

**C** Amen.

### First Reading

**Malachi 3:1-4 (NKJV)**

*"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts. <sup>2</sup> "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderer's soap. <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness. <sup>4</sup> "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the LORD, As in the days of old, As in former years.*

### Second Reading

**Philippians 1:3-11 (NKJV)**

**P** The second reading is from Philippians 1:3-11

**C** Sanctify us by Your truth, O LORD. Your Word is truth!

<sup>3</sup> *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, <sup>5</sup> for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; <sup>7</sup> just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

**P** Here ends our Scripture readings.

**G** Praise to You, O Christ.

**Apostles' Creed** *We boldly confess what we believe.*

*W.S. p. 15*

**G** 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 there 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.

## Hymn of the Day: 347 Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

LSB 347



1 "Com - fort, com - fort ye My peo - ple, Speak ye peace," thus  
2 Yea, her sins our God will par - don, Blot - ting out each  
3 Hark, the her - ald's voice is cry - ing In the des - ert  
4 Make ye straight what long was crook - ed; Make the rough - er



saith our God; "Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness, Mourn - ing  
dark mis - deed; All that well de - served His an - ger He no  
far and near, Call - ing sin - ners to re - pen - tance, Since the  
plac - es plain. Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, As be -



'neath their sor - rows' load. Speak ye to Je - ru - sa - lem  
more will see or heed. She hath suf - fered man - y a day,  
King - dom now is here. O that warn - ing cry o - bey!  
fits His ho - ly reign. For the glo - ry of the Lord



Of the peace that waits for them; Tell her that her  
Now her griefs have passed a - way; God will change her  
Now pre - pare for God a way; Let the val - leys shall  
Now o'er earth is shed a - broad, And all flesh shall



sins I cov - er And her war - fare now is o - ver."  
pin - ing sad - ness In - to ev - er - spring - ing glad - ness.  
rise to meet Him And the hills bow down to greet Him.  
see the to - ken That His Word is nev - er bro - ken.

Text: Johann Olearius, 1611–84; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–78, alt.

Tune: Trente quatre Pseaumes de David, 1551, Geneva, ed. Louis Bourgeois

Text and tune: Public domain

## **Sermon Text: Luke 3:1-6**

**(NKJV)**

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, <sup>2</sup> while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, <sup>4</sup> as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. <sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; <sup>6</sup> And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "

## **Sermon Theme: Preparations of the Heart for a Joyous Christmas Celebration**

1. Include having a correct understanding of the nature of Jesus' reign as king
2. And mankind's need for Him as Savior

## **Offertory**

*LSB 956*

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new  
a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way  
from Thy pres - ence; and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it  
from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va - tion;



and up - hold me with Thy free spir - it. A - men.

Public domain

**Offering** *We offer our gifts to the Lord, remembering that He has first given to us that we might have to give to Him.*

**Sermon Hymn: 354 Arise, O Christian People**

LSB 354



1 A - rise, O Chris - tian peo - ple! Pre - pare your - selves to -  
2 Pre - pare the way be - fore Him; Pre - pare for Him the  
3 The hum - ble heart and low - ly God rais - es up on  
4 Pre - pare my heart, Lord Je - sus; Turn not from me a -



day; Pre - pare to greet the Sav - ior, Who takes your  
best. Cast out what would of - fend Him, This great, this  
high; Be - neath His feet in ter - ror The haugh - ty  
side, And help me to re - ceive You This bless - ed



sins a - way. To us by grace a - lone The  
heav'n - ly guest. Make straight, make plain the way: The  
soul shall lie. The heart sin - cere and right, That  
Ad - vent - tide. From stall and man - ger low Come



truth and light were giv - en; The prom - ised Lord from  
low - ly val - leys rais - ing, The heights of pride a -  
heeds God's in - vi - ta - tion And makes true prep - a -  
now to dwell with - in me; I'll sing Your prais - es





heav - en To all the world is shown.  
bas - ing, His path all e - ven lay.  
ra - tion— It is the Lord's de - light.  
glad - ly And forth Your glo - ry show.

Text: Valentin Thilo, 1607–62; tr. Arthur T. Russell, 1806–74, alt.  
Tune: New Catechismus Gesangbüchlein, 1598, Hamburg, alt.  
Text and tune: Public domain

## Prayer of the Church *We bring our prayers to God.*

### Lord's Prayer

LSB 209

- C** 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 *The blessing given by God for the blessing of His people (Numbers 6:24-26).*

- P** The LORD bless you and keep you.  
The LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.  
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.

- C** ♪ Amen, Amen, Amen.

## Closing Hymn: 349 Hark the Glad Sound

LSB 349



1 Hark the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, The Sav - ior  
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, In Sa - tan's  
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, The bleed - ing  
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, Thy wel - come



prom - ised long; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare a  
bond - age held. The gates of brass be - fore Him  
soul to cure, And with the trea - sures of His  
shall pro - claim, And heav'n's e - ter - nal arch - es



throne And ev - 'ry voice a song.  
burst, The i - ron fet - ters yield.  
grace To en - rich the hum - ble poor.  
ring With Thy be - lov - ed name.

Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702–51  
Tune: Thomas Haweis, 1734–1820  
Text and tune: Public domain

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today:           **10:00 a.m. Worship Service**  
                      **11:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal**  
                      **11:15 a.m. Children Christmas Eve Practice**  
Wednesday      **6:00 p.m. Midweek Advent Service**

12/11/24

Next Sunday:   **10:00 a.m. Worship Service**  
12/15/24       **11:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal**  
                      **11:15 a.m. Children Christmas Eve Practice**

### Upcoming:

Tuesday        **5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Children's Service**

12/24/24

Wednesday     **10:00 a.m. Christmas Day Worship Service**

12/25/24

**Call News** At our voter's meeting last Sunday, the voter assembly decided to extend the call to Pastor Delwyn Maas of Mapleton, North Dakota to serve as our next resident pastor. In other call news, Faith Lutheran in Manchester, Missouri called Pastor Drew Naumann of Spokane, Washington.

**Our Thanks** to the willing hands that helped put up the Christmas decorations in the church last Sunday. All of this makes God's House of Worship very festive.

**Midweek Advent Service** will be conducted this Wednesday at **6:00 p.m.** Please note the correct time, as the first rendition of the church calendar had the wrong time listed. In the service, we will be focusing on the symbolic significance of the Advent candles that have been traditionally used in our midst. There will be Scripture readings and the singing of Christmas Carols. If you care to participate in the cookie exchange, you are welcome to do so.

**Daily Rest** devotional booklets have arrived and can be found in the distribution boxes. For some reason the shipment was delayed by a week.

**Nolting Update** A short while ago Pastor Paul Nolting underwent heart surgery. He sent out this update on his progress in recovery. "My recovery is going well. I created the Thanksgiving Service last week and sat in on the service. I was able to lead the Grace Bible Class this past Sunday, but had Philip Mayhew do the two services. I have prepared the first

Midweek Advent service and will finish the sermon tomorrow. Dan Morrison will be our lay-leader. I hope to preach in Mission next Sunday morning and also do the Grace Bible Class, but will ask someone to lead the service here at Grace. I have resumed as of this morning my Religion 7-8 Class and hope to resume my three chapels each week next week. I should be able to drive again after- meeting with my surgeon on December 19 in North Platte. Cardiac Rehab begins after our return from Minnesota the week of Epiphany. The Lord is good!"

**Christmas Season Worship Schedule 2024**

**Advent Worship Scripture, Carols & Christmas Cookies – Wed. Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> - 6pm**

**Christmas Eve – Tuesday, Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> – 5p.m.** Children’s Christmas Eve Service

**Christmas Day – Wednesday, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> – 10 a.m.** Christmas Day Worship