St. Paul’s Lutheran Church
3rd Sunday of Advent
December 15, 2019

Joyful Expectation

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Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

A note of joyful expectation marks today’s worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God’s reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ’s advent among us.

CONFESSION and FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, the parent who rouses us from slumber, the shepherd who gathers us on the holy mountain, the deliverer who sets us free.

Amen.

Let us come before the living God in confession.

As we wait and watch for the promised day of salvation, we open our hearts to you, O God. Search us and know us. Reveal all that we keep inside. To you, O God, we confess our sins, known and unknown. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us in your ways of justice and peace. Make us reflections of the radiant love of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Beloved children of the Most High, you are gathered before the righteous judge who has mercy on all. Splash exuberantly in the waters of baptism, where sin is washed away in the river of life. Dwell peacefully in the loving arms of the one who nurtures all creation. Go forth boldly in the assurance that your sins are forgiven in the name of the one who is coming and is already here, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen

GATHERING HYMN  (ELW p. 264)  Prepare the Royal Highway

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.
PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Oremos. Despierta las voluntades de todos los que te miran, Señor Dios, y fortalice nuestra fe en tu venida, para que, transformados por la gracia, caminemos en tu camino; a través de Jesucristo, nuestro Salvador y Señor, que vive y reina con ustedes y con el Espíritu Santo, un solo Dios, ahora y para siempre. Amén.

LIGHTING of the ADVENT WREATH

Blessed are you, God of might and majesty, for you promise to make the desert rejoice and blossom, to watch over the strangers, and to set the prisoners free. As we light these candles, satisfy our hunger with your good gifts, open our eyes to the great things you have done for us, and fill us with patience until the coming of the Lord Jesus. O ransomed people of the Lord, come, let us travel on God’s holy way and enter into Zion with singing. Amen.

Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God’s coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

1The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

3Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

4Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God’s people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.
No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 146:5-10

R: The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down.

Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help,
whose hope is in the Lord their God;
who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;
who keeps promises forever;
who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger.
The Lord sets the captive free.

The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous. R

The Lord cares for the stranger;
the Lord sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.
The Lord shall reign forever,
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah! R
SECOND READING:  James 5:7-10

In anticipation of the Lord’s coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.

7 Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! 10 As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.
The assembly stands

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO: Matthew 11:2-11

Glory to You, O, Lord.

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God’s judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus’ response indicates that God’s reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” 4 Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. 6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.” 7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. 9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ 11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ.
NICENE CREED

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

Keeping awake as we watch for Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need. The assembly shall kneel, as they are able

Holy God, we rejoice that your promises take on flesh in Jesus. Grant patience to your church awaiting the fulfillment of your reign of justice and peace, especially for our Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Bishop Sue Briner, the Metropolitan Washington DC Synod, and Iglesia Luterana San Pablo Church in San Antonio, TX. Restore in us the hope that we are called to proclaim to the world. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Life-giving God, we rejoice that you coax flowers from the desert and water from the wilderness. Send rain to parched fields and sun to flooded plains. Nurture all that lies sleeping under frozen ground. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God, you are our help in times of trouble. Like a shepherd who guards the sheep, watch over your flock: those who are sick and hurting in body, mind, or spirit, those who are mocked, and those who are lonely, especially Suzanne, Diane, Shane, Norma, Linda, Jack, Raymond, Mary Louise, Steve, Khloe, Krys & Jamie, Elfren, Moma, Jimmy, Erna Mae, Alejandra, Carly, Meredene, Jerry, Kyle, Cody, and Norma, as well as those that we name
Guard and keep them in your loving care. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Almighty God, we rejoice in your authority as Prince of peace. Deliver us from those who wield power through unjust and oppressive ways. Raise up prophets to speak your truth in this and every nation. Gracious God, we rejoice that you dwell in human bodies. Renew signs of your joyful presence in people of all shapes, sizes, ages, and abilities. Empower all to embrace their callings and the gifts of your Spirit. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Generous God, we rejoice that you create us to praise you. Strengthen the voices and hands of all who prepare to celebrate Christ’s birth with music, dancing, and proclamation, in worship and in the community. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Not knowing the day or hour of your coming, O Lord, this congregation cries to you. Guide our worship, service, and outreach, that our hearts and hands may be opened in generosity toward others. Equip the outreach ministries of St. Paul’s Squared, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Karnes City and St. Paul Lutheran Church in Nordheim. Use our hands and feet, sharing Christ’s love with neighbors in need. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, we rejoice that all who die in Christ are raised to new life. We thank you for the lives of those who have prepared the way for us and have now joined the great cloud of witnesses. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You hear the cries of our hearts, O Lord. Fill us with hopeful expectation, that in each day and hour we may love and serve our neighbors, in Jesus’ name.

**Amen.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**Meal**

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

**OFFERING** An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

**(ELW p. 512)** **Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil**
OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. Giver of every good thing, we set before you the gifts that you have already given to sustain our lives and to share with others. Help us to be good stewards of the earth and all that is in it, and let our lives be a testimony to the abundant feast you prepare for all who hunger.

Amen.

Lasset uns beten. Geber aller guten Dinge, wir stellen Ihnen die Geschenke vor, die Sie bereits gegeben haben um unser Leben zu erhalten und mit anderen zu teilen. Hilf uns, gute Verwalter der Erde zu sein und alles, was darin ist, und lass unser Leben ein Zeugnis für das reiche fest sein Sie bereiten für alle, die hunger. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

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 our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ.
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 to judge the world in righteousness.
And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

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\text{Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,}
\text{heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.}
\text{Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.}
\]
THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.
Blessed are you in the prophets’ hopes and dreams.
Blessed are you for Mary’s openness to your will.
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,
the Word made flesh.
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.
Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:
\textbf{Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.}
With this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection. We look with hope for his coming.
\textbf{Come, Lord Jesus.}
Holy God, we long for your Spirit.
Come among us. Bless this meal.
May your Word take flesh in us.
Awaken your people. Fill us with your light.
Bring the gift of peace on earth.
\textbf{Come, Holy Spirit.}
All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel,
Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High,
one God, now and forever. \textit{Amen}

LORD’S PRAYER

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

\textbf{Our Father, who art in heaven,}
\textit{hallowed be thy name,}
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
\textbf{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.
\textbf{For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,}
forever and ever. \textit{Amen.}
INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come now with joy to Emmanuel’s table. Feast at the banquet of hope and love.

The assembly is seated.

COMMUNION SONG

1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you suffered death our lives to save: have mercy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mercy now, we pray.

2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;

3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;

eternal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

DISTRIBUTION – All are WELCOME at the table of the Lord.

Jesus Christ, who is God with us, is present here with us as the host of this meal and in the bread and wine. In this meal, Jesus Christ gives you strength for your journey of faith and dwells with you in your daily life as you go forward as the body of Christ in your family, community and the world. Anyone choosing not to commune, but wishing to be blessed, may indicate this by folding their arms across their chest. Anyone who is unable to come forward may indicate to an usher that you wish to receive communion where you are seated. Communion will be by Intinction. After receiving the bread from the Vicar, please receive the wine by dipping the bread into the chalice that is offered by the communion assistant. This meal is for you because God is for you. Taste and See that the Lord is good and his mercy endures forever.

TABLE BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of abundance,
we give you thanks that in this holy meal
you have invited us to feast with you and one another.
May the taste of your love remain with us,
and may our words and our work in your name
invite others into your bountiful grace.
Send us from your table to proclaim your presence,
even as we await the glorious coming of Christ our Savior. Amen
Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

May God, who gathers us in love,
lead you in pathways of righteousness and justice.
May God, who knows us more deeply than we know ourselves,
lead you in pathways of forgiveness and freedom.
May God, who fills us with good things,
lead you in pathways of equity and abundance.
The blessing of the holy Trinity, ✝️ one God,
be upon you and remain with you forever.
Amen.

SENDING SONG (ELW p. 248) People, Look East

DOXOLOGY (ELW p. 884) Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Set your hope on Christ.
Thanks be to God.

For Prayerful Consideration

Ill, Injured or Otherwise Struggling: John, Suzanne Dietzel, Diane Dziuk, Shane Edens, Norma Foreman, Linda Henning, Jack Hockey, Evelyn Hoffman, Raymond Jenkins, Mary Louise Jonas, Steve Kelly, Frances Kempe, SuzAnn Kroll, Khloe Martinez, Krys & Jamie Michael, Elfren Moczygemba, Jimmy Moore, Moma Ndeh, Alejandra, Carly Rosenboon, Meredene Shockome, Casey Stagg, Jerry Vajdos, Enedina Vasquez, Cody Zaiontz, and Norma Zamzow

For those in the military: Nick Adams, Anthony Alvarez, Allen Bowles, Justin Chandler, Justin Elkins, Rodney Foreman, Jamaica Goodhue, Jacob Jones, Felipe Leal, Jr., Garrett Peterson, Jon Wayne Schulz, James Skinner, Chris Sustaita, Kassie Thompson, John Vasquez, and Delmico Villanueva

Birthdays: Barbara Jonas, Evelyn Hoffman (Dec. 17), Orlis Jonas (Dec. 19), Jaiden Robinson (Dec. 31)
Welcome!

We have all come to St. Paul’s by different paths, and from various walks of life. Through worship, study, prayer and fellowship we each seek to deepen our faith, comfort and encourage one another and dedicate our lives more fully to sharing Christ in our homes, our community and the world. All are welcome at St. Paul’s. We are eager to know you, and we invite you to get to know us. If you are unable to hear, require a bulletin, or need any other assistance, please signal an usher.

Announcements

Opportunities to Learn, Worship, Pray, and Serve

Music Academy Recital

TODAY is the Christmas Recital beginning at 3:00 p.m.

It’s Poinsettia Time!

Poinsettia’s may be purchased from Viv’s Victorian Country (780-3300) for $15. Please order from Viv no later than tomorrow! Monday, December 16. The flower shop will deliver the poinsettias to the church prior to our Christmas Eve Service.

In Celebration of Vicar Rodriguez’ Ministry at St. Paul’s

Sunday, December 29, will be Vicar Rodriguez’ last Sunday with us. We will join with St. Paul’s – Nordheim for worship in Nordheim at 10:30 a.m.. A potluck luncheon will follow the worship service. There WILL NOT be a worship service at St. Paul’s – Karnes City on December 29.

Annual Meeting in January

If you would like to run for Council, or would like nominate someone to run, please speak with Ronnie Retzloff.
REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

Please leave your contributions in the red tub located in the Narthex. All donations will be delivered to the San Antonio Food Bank.

December 1 - box of cereal
December 2 - peanut butter
December 3 - stuffing mix
December 4 - boxed potatoes
December 5 - macaroni and cheese
December 6 - canned fruit
December 7 - canned tomatoes
December 8 - canned tuna
December 9 - dessert mix
December 10 - jar of applesauce
December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
December 12 - cranberry sauce
December 13 - canned beans
December 14 - box of crackers
December 15 - package of rice
December 16 - package of oatmeal
December 17 - package pasta
December 18 - spaghetti sauce
December 19 - chicken noodle soup
December 20 - tomato soup
December 21 - can corn
December 22 - can mixed vegetables
December 23 - can carrots
December 24 - can green beans

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WANT TO KEEP “CHRIST” IN CHRISTMAS?

FEED THE HUNGRY, COMFORT THE AFFLICTED, LOVE THE OUTCAST, FORGIVE THE WRONGDOER, INSPIRE THE HOPELESS