Family of Christ Lutheran Church
Third Sunday of Advent
December 13, 2026

Welcome, Announcements and Prayer Requests

Confession and Forgiveness

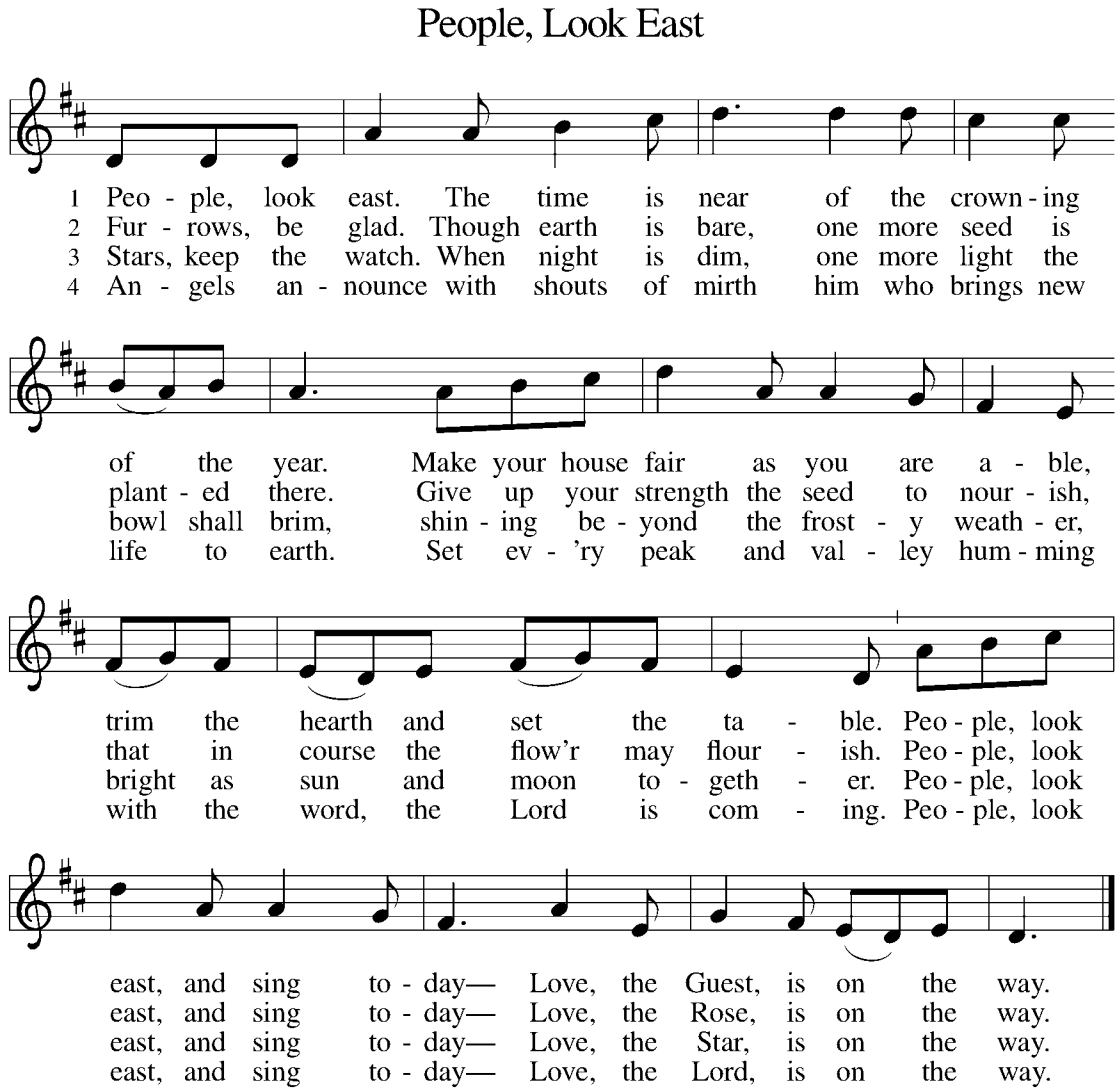
Our hearts cry out for restoration. Our spirits plead for illumination. Let us come before God in confession and in trust. Our salvation is near.

(*silence*)

Before God and one another, **we confess our failures of imagination and the ways we close our hearts to the new things you are doing in our world, O God. We resist change that challenges us. We protect our worldviews instead of protecting our neighbors. We put boundaries around your limitless grace. Give us courage to trust you and to love our neighbors freely and without fear. Forgive us, inspire us, and stretch us to embrace a wider vision of your salvation. Amen.**

The Spirit of God enlightens and enlivens us with the joy of our redemption. Take heart and rejoice: You are forgiven ☩, and in Jesus you are set free to dream and to serve. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn: ELW 248



Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965
Music: BESANÇON, French carol
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Please be seated

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.

<u>Lighting of the Advent Wreath</u>

During this busy season, we pause to breathe and worship. We surround ourselves with candles, lights, greenery, and beauty. May these sights and sounds remind us that we are people of faith, guided by the light of the world. We listen for words of joy on this third Sunday of Advent.

Brief pause for silence.

L 2: The wonder of this hallowed place can, at times, provide separation from the pain and suffering happening beyond its walls.

L 1: And although the respite is needed, the collective grief of the world still causes our shoulders to drop and our chests to feel heavy.

What can we do? Where is our joy?

L 2: Take heart, beloved, joy is all around you:

L 1: in the laughter of children, in the gatherings of loved ones, in the overflowing food baskets.

L 2: As we live between the already and the not yet, we remember salvation doesn't happen when all is right in the world.

L 1: The Messiah draws near now, breaking into the present through moments of compassion and flourishing.

L 2: In this season of holy waiting, we first light the candle of hope, welcoming the coming of Christ.

Light the first candle.

L 2: Next, we light the candle of peace, remembering that Advent peace is not simply the absence of conflict but the active work of preparing pathways for healing, justice, belonging, and restoration.

Light the second candle.

L 2: And today, we light the candle of joy.

Light the third candle.

L 1: We reassure one another that joy emerges when we discover God is already near, often in ways we do not expect.

May the joy of God-with-us elevate and elate us.

Prayer of the Day

Joyful Creator, we remember the psalmist's words: "our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy . . . The LORD has done great things." Indeed, O God, you have done great and wonderful things. You created a magnificent world full of beauty and wonder, turned strangers into neighbors through acts of service, disrupted hate-filled rhetoric with words of love, and overturned unjust systems of power. Remind us this day to rejoice in these glorious works. Help us share the good news of the Savior. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

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.
[1]The 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;
[2]to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
[3]to 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.
[4]They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

[8]For 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.
[9]Their 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.
10 I 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.
11 For 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.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 126

1 When the LORD restored the fortunes 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."
3 The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are glad indeed.
4 **Restore our fortunes, O LORD,**
like the watercourses of the Negeb.
5 Those who sowed with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

[6] **Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,**
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

<u>Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24</u>

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.

[16]Rejoice always, [17]pray without ceasing, [18]give thanks in all
circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
[19]Do not quench the Spirit. [20]Do not despise the words of
prophets, [21]but test everything; hold fast to what is good;
[22]abstain from every form of evil.
[23]May 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. [24]The one who calls you is
faithful, and he will do this.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Please rise as you are able.

Gospel Acclamation



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

The Gospel according to John, the 1st chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

> *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.*

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He
came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe

through him. [8]He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

[19]This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” [20]He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” [21]And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” [22]Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” [23]He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ ”

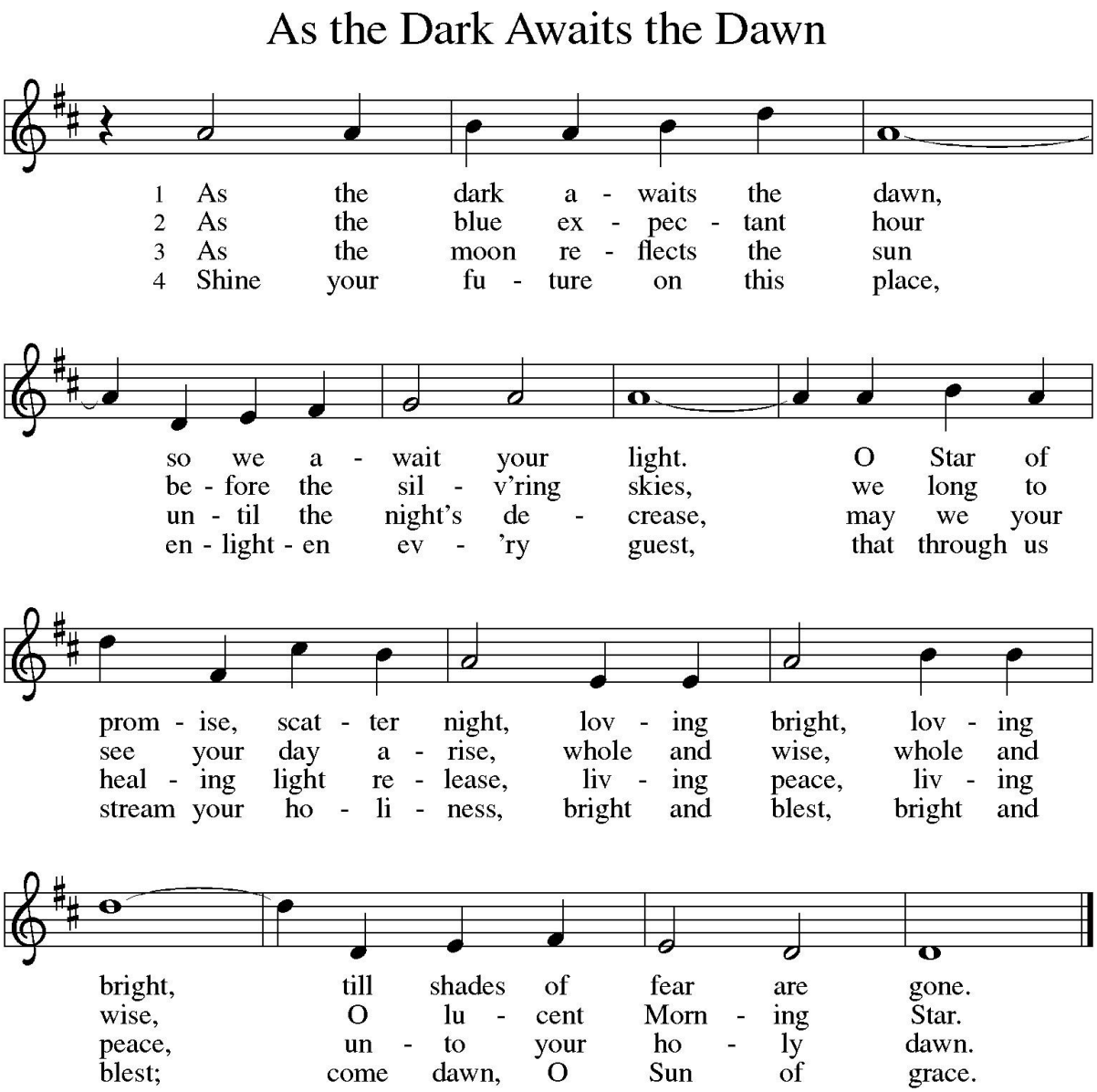
as the prophet Isaiah said.

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

This is the Gospel of our Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

<u>Sermon</u>

Hymn of the Day: ELW 261 As the Dark Awaits the Dawn



Text: Susan Palo Cherwien, b. 1953
Music: LUCENT, Carl F. Schalk, b. 1929
Text © 1996 Susan Palo Cherwien, admin. Augsburg Fortress.
Music © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

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Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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.

Please be seated

Prayers of the People

In hope and expectation, we bring to God our prayers for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Pour out your Spirit upon the church. Fill all who teach and preach with courage and compassion to speak boldly of your good news at work among us. God, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.
Preserve wilderness places and protect public lands from exploitation. Lighten human impact on soil, water, and air, that we might live in balance with the natural world. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
Empower community leaders and organizers in their efforts to strengthen relationships for the common good. Sustain judges, legal advocates, and all who serve on juries, that justice is advanced for all people. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
Bring healing to all who are brokenhearted and release us from that which holds us captive. Draw near to all who suffer in mind, body, and spirit, especially those on our prayer list and those we name before you now *(brief pause)*. Assure all who despair that you are near. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
Bless and grow the service and outreach ministries of this congregation, that our work in the world proclaims your healing love to all we meet. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
We rejoice in the gift of those saints who have come before us. We give thanks for Lucy all the faithful departed whose lives testify to your light among us in the world. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
We entrust these and the prayers of our hearts to you, most holy God, in the name of Christ Jesus our Savior. **Amen.**

Sharing of the Peace

The one for whom we wait is our Prince of peace and Reconciler of the world. We share the peace with a weary world. We share the peace to offer God's grace. We share the peace to anticipate and recognize God's salvation in our world. May the peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

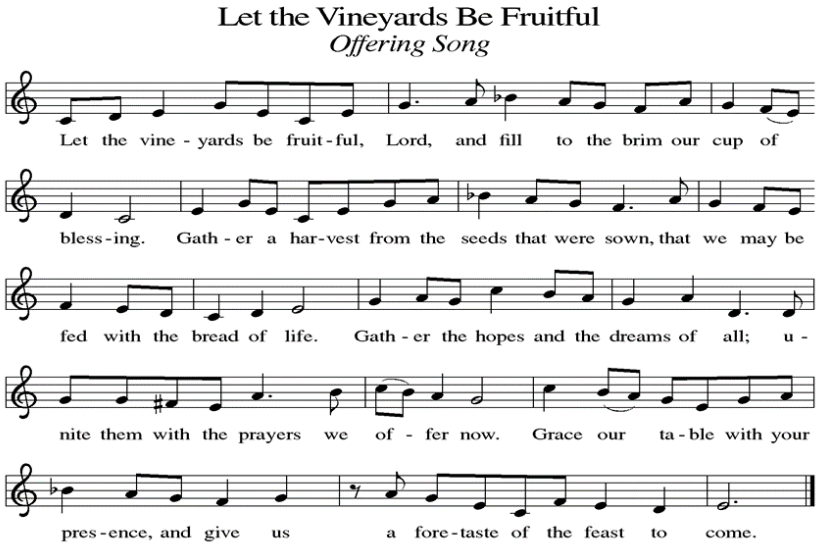
Please share a sign of Christ's peace with those around you.

(Please share a sign of peace however you're comfortable today: fist bump, handshake, high five, peace sign, or gentle wave.)

Offering is collected

Offering and Elements Are Brought to the Table

Offering Song: ELW 182



Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980
Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923
Text and music © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

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Offering Prayer

Gracious God, **in this Season of Advent, as we wait for the Messiah, we offer not only ourselves but our tithes and gifts as well. May these offerings work to bring about healing, justice, belonging, and the thrill of hope to a weary world. Amen.**

Communion

God be with you.

And also with you.

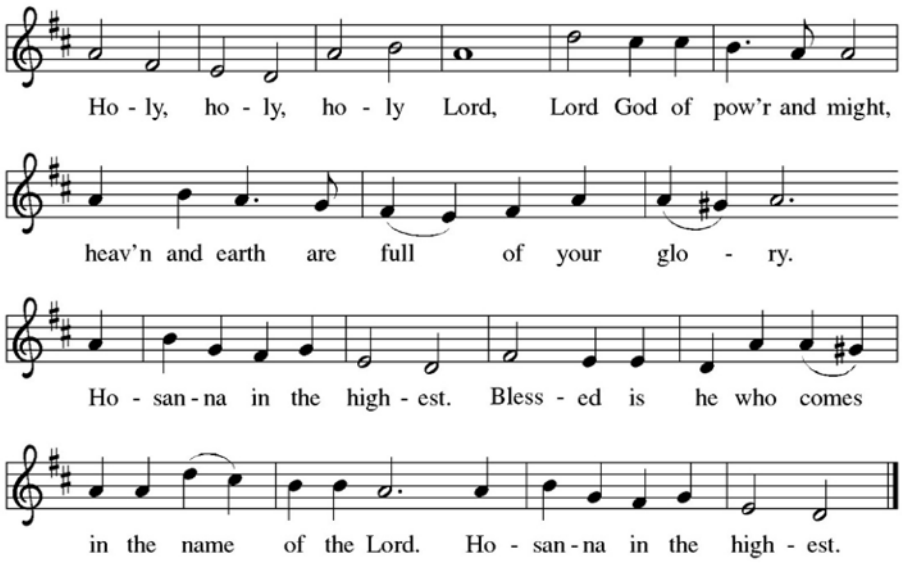
Lift up your hearts full of holy anticipation.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to Immanuel, God with us.

We joyfully 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 a thrill of hope in our hearts, 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:



Holy are you, O God, and blessed is your almighty name.
When the faithful cry out to you, you draw near. Salvation comes.
As we long for healing, restoration, and wholeness, you model the power of mercy, compassion, and generosity through your Son, Jesus Christ.

On the night Jesus gathered his friends to eat together, a common meal was transformed into elements of grace to be shared, remembered, and celebrated by generations upon generations.

On that night, Jesus took a simple loaf of bread.
Blessed it.
Broke it.
And Shared it.
He said, "Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Then Jesus took a cup of wine.
Blessed it.
Passed it.
And said, “Drink from it, all of you. 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 our faith:
Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Gracious God, pour out your Spirit on us and these your gifts of grace. May they be for us a reminder of how your salvation breaks through in everyday life to everyday people. May we remember the Messiah who saved us is saving us and will save us. Fill our hearts with gratitude for this table where there is enough for all. **Amen.**

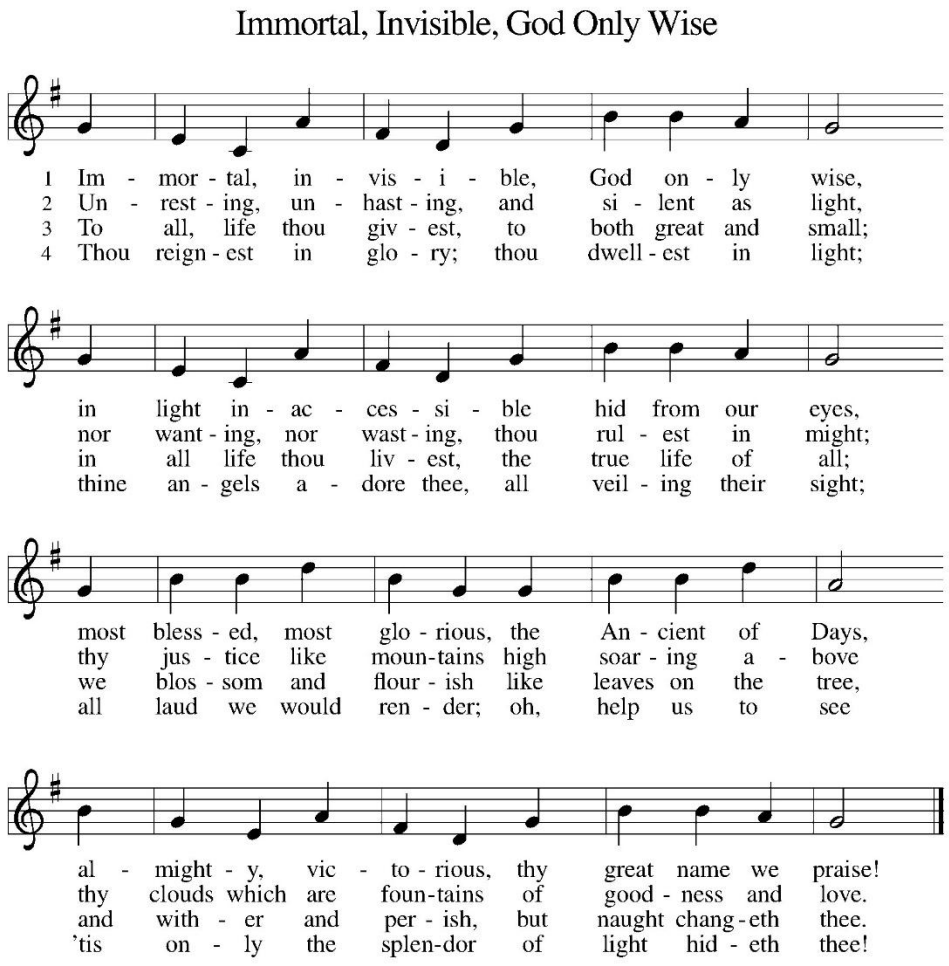
With confidence, we pray the prayer Jesus taught us:
Lord’s Prayer
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

God invites all people to this table. Here we find a thrill of hope, the promised peace, the joy of grace, the love of God. Come, not because you are perfect, but because God's love is perfect and given freely. **Amen.**

(All are welcome at the Table. The juice is the innermost circle on the tray. Reminder: You commune fully even if you consume just one of the elements.)

Communion hymn: ELW 834 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise



Text: Walter Chalmers Smith, 1824–1908, alt.
Music: ST. DENIO, Welsh traditional

Post-Communion Blessing

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

Prayer after Communion

Enlivening God, **in this meal you have strengthened our bodies for service and gladdened our spirits for joy. Send us from the table as witnesses to your love and salvation, in the name of Christ. Amen.**

Blessing

May the blessing of God, our salvation, Christ, our peace, and the Spirit, our joy, ☩ thrill your heart and sustain your spirit, now and always. **Amen.**

Sending hymn: ELW 266 All Earth Is Hopeful



Dismissal

Go to share tidings of joy for all people.
Thanks be to God.

Announcements:

- **Getting Crafty:** Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. Bring your current work-in-progress and craft and visit for a while.
- **Christmas Pageant:** Dec. 27, 10 a.m.
- **Annual Meeting:** Jan. 17, right after service.

focelca.com
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Pastor Jane Brda, SAM
Ellen Mueller — Music

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