

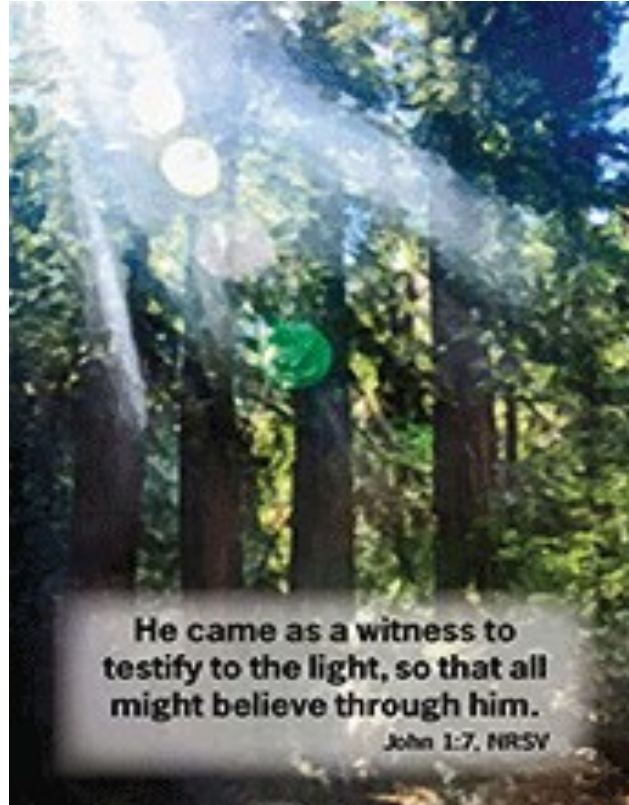


St. Paul Lutheran Church

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La Grange, Texas

Rev. Stan Larson, Interim Pastor
Praise Band Sunday

Sunday, 9:00 am
December 17, 2023
Third Sunday of Advent



Next weekend's readings:

Isaiah 9 2-7; Psalm—Luke 1: 46-55; Titus 2: 11-14

Luke 2: 1-20

Visit our webpage, www.stpaulg.org, and click **"Live Worship"** to hear our services live on your smart phone or computer! You can choose to watch live or listen only. You can also view our bulletin, weekly service video, newsletters and current calendar. Visit our Facebook page to view the service live Sunday morning at 9 a.m.

St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Stan Larson, Interim Pastor

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Office Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.; 2 - 5 p.m.

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Welcome!

- + Welcome to worship! All are welcome at the table of grace. We believe that Christ is truly present as we share the bread and wine. Those at home are invited to participate with appropriate elements.
- + The 9 a.m. service will be on Facebook live & audio streamed on our webpage, www.stpaullg.org. It will also be posted on our Facebook page. You may listen to last week's service on KBUK 104.9 FM on Sundays at 10 am.

GATHER

Prelude

Announcements

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

A: 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.**

Hymn *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* Verse 7 #257

Stand as able

Invocation *The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their baptism.*

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Most merciful God, **we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

P: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Hymn

(See Overhead Screen)

Greeting

P: 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

P: 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**

Sit

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.

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.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: Psalm 126

¹When 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."**

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

⁴**Restore our fortunes, 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, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

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.

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.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Stand as able

Gospel Acclamation

(See Overhead Screen)

The Holy Gospel according to St. John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sit

Children's Word

Pastor Stan Larson

Sermon

Pastor Stan Larson

Service of Baptism *ELW page 227*

Stand as able

Hymn

(See Overhead Screen)

P: 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

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 especially Aldine, Mary Ann, Delores and Ruth. 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.**

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

The Sharing of the Peace

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

Sit

Offering *The offering plates will be passed.*

Stand as able

Offertory *(See Overhead Screen)*

Offering Prayer

P: 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.

MEAL

The Great Thanksgiving *ELW 144*

P: 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:

(See Overhead Screen)

Words of Institution

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

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

Communion

All are welcome to the Lord's table. White grape juice is in the center of the tray of cups. If you are physically unable to come forward for communion, please tell an usher and communion will be brought to you. You may also remain in your pew and use a prepackaged kit.

Prayer after Communion

P: 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.

SENDING

Blessing

P: 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.**

Sending Song *(See Overhead Screen)*

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Keep awake. **Thanks be to God.**

This Weekend: 12/17

9:00 am **USHERS:** Ken & Linda Diers
Caleb & Ashleigh Parks

LECTOR: Praise Band

ALTAR GUILD: Ginger Muesse and Faye Bresan

FELLOWSHIP REFRESHMENTS: Annette Citzler

FLOWERS: Poinsettias

Next Weekend: 12/24

9:00 am **USHERS:** Scott & Kathy Toensing
Paul Mikula & Linda Morrison

LECTOR: Paul Mikula

ALTAR GUILD: Ginger Friemel

FLOWERS: Poinsettias

7:00 pm **USHERS:** Lloyd & Sylvia Jewell,
Tim & Susan Knesek

LECTOR: Altan Citzler

ALTAR GUILD: Ginger Friemel

FLOWERS: Poinsettias

SUNDAY: 9:00 am Worship
10:30 am Sunday School

**MONDAY: 3:00 pm NEWSLETTER
DEADLINE**

TUESDAY: 6:00 pm Church Council

WEDNESDAY: 8:30 am Bible Study

5:00 pm Confirmation Class

6:00 pm Handbells

6:30 pm LYO Deputy Santa Shopping

7:00 pm Choir

8:00 pm Praise Band

SUNDAY: 9:00 am Worship

7:00 pm Candlelight Worship

Both Services with Holy Communion

BAPTISM—We welcome Luke Michael Hensel to the St. Paul family today. Luke's parents are Blake and Claire Hensel. Baptismal sponsors for Luke are Kylie and Chad Childs.

Reminder—Church Council will meet Tuesday, 12/19 at 6:00 in the Friendship Room

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE—if you want to have information in the **JANUARY 2024** Messenger, please note the deadline: **Monday, 12/18 at 3:00 pm.**

Next Weekend—Services at 9:00 am with Holy Communion and Candlelight Service at 7:00 pm with Holy Communion.

THE 2024 FLOWER CALENDAR is available on the bulletin board in the Narthex. Please consider providing flowers to decorate the sanctuary in the coming year. If you wish to donate in memory or honor of someone, please let the Church office know so that information can be included in the bulletin.