



St. Paul Lutheran Church

share • care • grow
La Grange, Texas

Rev. Stan Larson, Interim Pastor
Organist: Sherise Davis

Sunday—9:00 a.m.

December 31, 2023

First Sunday After Christmas



Next weekend's readings:

Isaiah 60: 1-6; Psalm 71: 1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3: 1-12

Matthew 2: 1-12

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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Web Page: www.stpaulg.org

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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.

At the turn of the year we meditate on endings and beginnings, knowing that all the world's time begins and ends in God. We watch and keep vigil for the coming of God's

GATHER

Prelude

Announcements

Stand as able

Confession and Forgiveness

Amid the troubles and fears of this world, let us confess our sin and welcome God's forgiveness, grace, and love. *(Silence is kept for reflection.)*

Mary accepted your call to be the mother of Jesus. **Forgive our lack of faith and trust.**

Your Son was born in the poverty of a stable. **Forgive our neglect of the poor.**

The shepherds left their flocks and went to Bethlehem. **Forgive our selfishness and complacency.**

With great joy the angels proclaimed, "Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy. Today is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." In Jesus, who is Savior, Christ, and Lord, our sins are forgiven. May you know the peace which the angels sang from the heavens. Indeed, God's forgiveness is good news of great joy! **Amen.**

Hymn

Joy To The World

267

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: Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Sit

Lessons and Carols

First Reading: Genesis 1: 1-5, 14-18

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night — and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

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

Hymn *On Christmas Night (verses 1 & 2)*

274

Second Reading: Micah 5: 2-5a

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. ³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And They shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; ⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

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

Hymn *It Came Upon The Midnight Clear (verses 1 & 2)*

#282

Third Reading: Luke 1: 26-35, 38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with

God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor

David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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

Hymn *Of the Father's Love Begotten (verses 1 & 2)* # 295

Fourth Reading: Matthew 1: 18-25

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

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

Hymn *Love Has Come (Verses 1 & 2)* #292

Fifth Reading: Luke 2: 8-20

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

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

Hymn

What Child Is This? (Verses 1 & 2)

#296

Sixth Reading: Matthew 2: 1-11

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ⁶"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" ⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On

entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

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

Hymn

We Three Kings of Orient Are

We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star. *Refrain*

Refrain Oh, star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light!

Born a king on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again;
king forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign. *Refrain*

Seventh Reading: John 1: 1-14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 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. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

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

Hymn *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice (verses 1 & 2)* # 288

Stand as able

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

Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

A brief silence.

You inspire faith in our hearts and call us to rejoice with our whole selves at the salvation you bring. Make our churches places of belonging for all people in the fullness of their being. Raise up the gifts and the witness of people who are living with autism, living with disability, or bearing invisible illness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Your praise is sung throughout creation in all times and seasons. As the new year turns, ground us in your changeless and sustaining love. Keep us attentive to the rhythms of the cosmos and inspire us to live in harmony with all the earth. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Give hope and stamina to leaders who work tirelessly for the sake of the most vulnerable. We pray especially for organizations working on behalf of children to provide basic needs, to protect them from abuse and neglect, to address trauma, and to rescue the vulnerable from trafficking. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Sustain all people who, like Simeon and Anna, have been waiting for salvation and wholeness. We pray especially for anyone living with cancer or chronic illness, all people who are in physical rehabilitation or addiction recovery, and those experiencing complications from long COVID. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Let this community of faith be a joyful and welcoming place for all ages and generations. Teach us to honor the wisdom of children, the inquisitiveness of youth, the thoughtfulness of adults, and the knowledge of elders. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give thanks for all the beloved who lived with expectation and departed this life in peace. Sustain us in joy until we join them around your throne. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace. **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 *ELW 186*

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit.

Offering Prayer

P: God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. **Amen**

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

SENDING

Blessing

A: God bless you and keep you, ✝ Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever.

Amen.

Sending Song

Go Tell It on the Mountain

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Dismissal

A: Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks Be to God.**

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THIS Weekend:

9:00 am **USHERS:** To Be Determined
LECTOR: To Be Determined
ALTAR GUILD: JoLene & Gerald Hughes
FELLOWSHIP REFRESHMENTS: OPEN
FLOWERS: Jackie Skelton and Family in
Memory of Carol Skelton

NEXT Weekend: 1/7

9:00 am **USHERS:** Caleb & Ashleigh Parks
Billy & Christy Nietsche
LECTOR: Leonard Schulze
ALTAR GUILD: Gloria Raschke
FELLOWSHIP REFRESHMENTS : Open
FLOWERS: Open

SUNDAY (12/31) : 9:00 am Worship

10:30 Sunday School

MONDAY: OFFICE CLOSED

NO CONFIRMATION CLASS

WEDNESDAY: 6:00 pm Hand Bells

7:00 pm Choir

8:00 pm Praise Band

NO LYO THIS WEEK

SUNDAY (1/7) : 9:00 am Worship

10:30 am Sunday School

PLEASE NOTE—No Confirmation this week and No LYO.

REMINDER— Sunday, January 7, 2024 at 4:00 will be an opportunity to tour the Ashley House. Following the tour, at 4:30 there will be a Budget Forum in the Fellowship Hall to review the 2024 Annual Budget. Please make plans to attend to help guide the future financial plans of the congregation, to be discussed at the Annual Meeting on 1/28/2024.

SAVE THE DATE—the Annual Meeting of the St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church will be Sunday, January 28, 2024. Worship will be at 10:00 am, meal in the Fellowship Hall at 11:00 followed by the Meeting at 11:45.

All information for the Annual Report must be in the Church Office by THURSDAY,

JANUARY 4, 2024, by NOON to allow time for printing and mailing of the report as per St. Paul Constitutional guidelines. Please call the church office if you have any questions.

