



Third Sunday of Advent
A Liturgy of Everlasting Light
Candle of Love
Children's Christmas Message

December 15, 2024 + 9am

Zion-Public WiFi password: Zion54484
Congregational responses are in BOLD.

All are welcome to receive Jesus' unconditional gift of God's grace through the sacrament of Holy Communion. Regardless of your church membership or affiliation, all are encouraged to participate in communion or to come forward for a blessing.

The communion bread is homemade by congregation members and contains gluten and honey. For those with allergies or sensitivities, an alternative will be provided upon request.

Children of all ages are encouraged to worship with the whole community in Christ. Children's worship bags are available in the back of the sanctuary.

Page numbers that are listed are found in the front of the cranberry-colored hymnal on the bottom of the page. Hymn numbers are listed in bold, large print on the top of the page.

If you would like home communion, hospital visit, or a conversation with the pastor, please contact the church office at 715.687.4110 or at office@zionstratford.org or Pastor Amy Heinz at 608.498.5772 or pastoramy@zionstratford.org.

Ministers: All the People of God through the love of Jesus and the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit

Pastor: Rev. Amy Heinz

Administrative Assistant: Kathy Busche

Organists: Judy Polege, Marge Redetzke, Ryan Huther

Custodian: Maryel Schoenfuss

Missionaries: Steven & Bethany Friberg, Tanzania

*From Sundays and Seasons, copyright 2025 Augsburg Fortress,
License #23254, One License #A-715097

**Reprinted and adapted for local use by permission from *The Worship Sourcebook, Second Edition*, ©2013, Faith Alive Christian Resources.

PRELUDE

CENTERING AND BELLS' CALL TO WORSHIP

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

We Gather in Grace

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

In a world torn asunder by violence, Jesus says, "No more."

"As I have loved you, you also should love one another."

In a world where hurting people are too often neglected, Jesus says, "No more."

"As I have loved you, you also should love one another."

In a world where others' needs are too often overlooked, Jesus says, "No more."

"As I have loved you, you also should love one another."

This morning we light three candles. In a world where darkness abounds, the light of the first candle radiates the hope of God's unfailing promise. As we light the second candle, we long for God's perfect peace to calm our souls and end our wars. As we light the third candle, we seek to share with others the love God has shown us through the gift of Jesus Christ.

INVOCATION

We gather in the name of God, the Creator of Light; +Jesus, the Light of the World; and the Holy Spirit, the Light who illumines our path.

Amen

HYMN

"The King Shall Come"

ELW 260 v1,2,5

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In this season of light, let us go before God and confess how our words and actions contribute to the darkness rather than adding to the light.

God of Love and Light,
we confess that we are not always the light-bearers you desire us to be. We shine a spotlight on the transgressions of others while trying to keep our own sins hidden in the dark. We burn bridges by being impatient, opinionated, and judgmental. We inflame others by lashing out in anger. We go through our days enveloped in the gloom of fear and doubt. We let our witness become a smoldering ember until it dies out completely.

Forgive us Jesus, Everlasting Light. Come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel. Teach us to walk as children of light, surrounded by your love, forgiveness, and healing. We ask this in the name of Christ. Amen.

God is light, and in God there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

Amen.

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

Spirit of old and young together,
Jesus welcomed the children with respect for their powerful witness. Give us ears to hear their message this morning, and give us courage to follow them. We pray in the name of the One who inspires our witness, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Friend.
Amen.

We Hear the Word of God

READING

Matthew 1:18-2:12

¹⁸ Now 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 pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But 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. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

^{2:1} In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, ² asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They 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.’ ”

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ Then 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.” ⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ On 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. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

A “Beastly” Christmas

Cast Members:

Caleb Camel ... Reed

Cashbah Camel ... Jevin

Cashmere Camel ... Nolan

Daniel Donkey ... Dayton

Katrina Cow ... Averie F.

Morticia Cow ... Eleanor

Camel Masters ... Turner, Xander, Griffin

Shepherds ... Grayson, Archer

Angels ... Mila, Ivy, Averi J., Violet, Ellie

Reader ... Ian

Bessie Cow ... Ryleigh

Shilo Sheep ... Finley

Shelby Sheep ... Ruby

Sherlock Sheep ... Brynn

Mary ... Hadley

Joseph ... Jordy

“Angels We Have Heard On High”

ELW289
Congregational singing

“Joy to the World”

ELW267
Children will sing verse 1
Congregation join for verse 4

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.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Keep watch, O Lord, with all who work or watch or weep, and in your great mercy, give ear to our prayers for all.

God of hope.

be with all who are waiting for a miracle.

Waiting for God;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for justice;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for a diagnosis;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for a phone call;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for a job;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for death;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for inspiration;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for the right moment;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for the fighting to stop;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for day to dawn;

hear our fervent prayer.

waiting for a baby to be born;

hear our fervent prayer.

Hear our cries as they rise to your throne,

cries from those who wait in God's house.

We pray in the name of Emmanuel.

Amen.**

SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

We Share the Meal

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

ELW 294 v3

OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of Light, our world can be a very dark place. Therefore, we return to you the gifts of ourselves, our time, and our resources, trusting you will use them to set the world aglow with your loving presence. May our offerings continue to shine brightly before others so they may see our good works and give glory to you. We ask this in the name of Christ.

Amen. **

THE 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.

At the beginning of creation God said, "Let there be light;" and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. In ancient times God led the Israelites through the desert with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The priests of old kept a perpetual fire burning in the temple to remind us that God is the light which cannot be extinguished.

Finally, Jesus, the Word, who was with God since the beginning of creation, became flesh and lived among us. We have seen his glory shining in our world, full of grace and truth. Christ's light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. We are commanded not to hide this light under a bushel basket, but to put it on a lamp stand so that everyone can see it. With our lights burning brightly, we now join the saints and angels in a hymn of praise to God, the Everlasting Light.

SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly One... God of pow - er, God of might. Heav'n and
earth are full of your glor - y. Ho - sa - na in the high - est. Blessed! Blessed
is the one who comes... Blessed! Blessed! in the name of God._____

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

DISTRIBUTION SONGS

"O Lamb of God" (to the tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel)

"What Feast of Love"

ELW 487

"Your Little Ones, Dear Lord"

ELW 286

BLESSING AND PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We Serve the World in God's Name

BENEDICTION

In gratitude to God, and empowered by the Spirit, let us strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying: Come, Lord Jesus! And may God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—bless you now and forever.

Amen.

CLOSING SONG

"Prepare the Royal Highway"

ELW 264 v1,3,4

DISMISSAL

Lay aside works of darkness, put on the armor of light, and go in peace,

with open doors, open hearts, and open hands.

Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

Most liturgical texts were written and/or adapted by David Eck, ©2011. The words to the *Kyrie*, *Hymn of Praise*, *Sanctus*, and *Lamb of God* were written and/or adapted by David Eck, ©2011. All tunes are traditional carols and traditional arrangements with no copyright restrictions.

Additional liturgical texts have been adapted for local use
by the Rev. Amy Heinz.

Notes, Prayers, and Thoughts

Zion Lutheran Church

Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Hands

213501 Legacy Street

Stratford, WI 54484-5908

715.687.4110 + <https://zionstratford.org>