

**First English Lutheran Church
Butler, Pennsylvania**

**Service of Holy Communion
Second Sunday of Advent
December 10, 2023
10:00 a.m.**

GATHERING

PRELUDE

“The Advent of Our God”

- Richard Hillert

Meditation on “Veni Emmanuel”

- Alfred V. Fedak

“Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”

- Jan Bender

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

The congregation may kneel. A moment of silence is kept.

Most merciful God,

We confess to you our sin in thought, word, and deed, the things we have done, and the things we have failed to do. We have hurt our neighbors and ourselves. We have wounded your creation. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, forgive us. Heal what we have broken and reconcile us to you, to one another, and to the earth and its creatures. Amen.

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.**

The congregation may stand.

GATHERING HYMN

“Fling Wide the Door”

Red Book #259

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.

KYRIE

page 193 in the front of the red book

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The congregation may sit.

THE WORD

CHILDREN’S SERMON

FIRST READING

Isaiah 40:1-11

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God’s people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.

¹Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,

and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13 *read responsively*

¹You have been gracious to your land, O LORD;
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.

²**You have forgiven the iniquity of your people
and blotted out all their sins.**

⁸I will listen to what the LORD God is saying;
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn
their hearts to you.

⁹**Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,
that your glory may dwell in our land.**

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

¹¹**Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**

¹²The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.

¹³**Righteousness shall go before the LORD
and shall prepare for God a pathway.**

SECOND READING 2 Peter 3:8-15a

This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.

⁸Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God,

because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ^{15a}and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Word of God, Word of life.

Thanks be to God.

The congregation may stand.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

“Hallelujah”

Red Book #171

GOSPEL Mark 1:1-8

The holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark, the first chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

The congregation may sit.

SERMON

The congregation may stand.

HYMN OF THE DAY

“There’s a Voice in the Wilderness”

Red Book #255

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

The congregation remains standing or takes another posture that is comfortable for prayer.

The cantor will lead through the refrain one time, then the congregation is invited to repeat. After each portion of the prayers, the assisting minister will bid, "We pray to you, O God." The congregation responds with the sung refrain.

In Silence We Wait

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G-clef (treble clef) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the hymn, with lyrics: "In si - lence we wait, in dark - ness you". The second staff contains the melody for the second line, with lyrics: "come to us; bring us your light." The music is simple, using quarter and eighth notes.

Text: Susan Masters, b. 1957
Music: IN SILENCE WE WAIT, Susan Masters
Text and music © 2009 Augsburg Fortress

Gracious God, by your advent, help us to pay attention to what matters and not to squander energy or time on trivial things. Help us do the hard work of preparing your way by nurturing justice and love in our communities and our relationships. We pray to you, O God:

By your advent, O God, give us a world where peace abides and where no one must flee their home for safety and security. For migrants who cross land and oceans, for refugees who run from bombs and terror, for abuse victims who plot escape from their families, we pray to you, O God:

By your advent, O God, strengthen local ministries and services that care for people experiencing homelessness. For the Glade Run Warming Shelter, Robin's Home, the VA Hospital, and for other programs that assist those who need warmth, shelter, and safety, we pray to you, O God:

By your advent, O God, comfort those who are grieving, brokenhearted, lonely, exhausted, or ill. Especially we remember those who have asked for our prayers this week.... For those whom we have named, and those known to you, we pray to you, O God:

In the name of Jesus Christ, who at his first advent told us to watch for his second, and who dwells with all the saints even now in a greater light, we commend these our prayers to you, O God. **Amen.**

The congregation may stand.

THE MEAL

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The congregation may sit.

OFFERING

ORGAN OFFERTORY

"Comfort, Comfort Ye My People"

- Georg Boehm

The ushers present the offerings and gifts of bread and wine for communion.

CHOIR ANTHEM

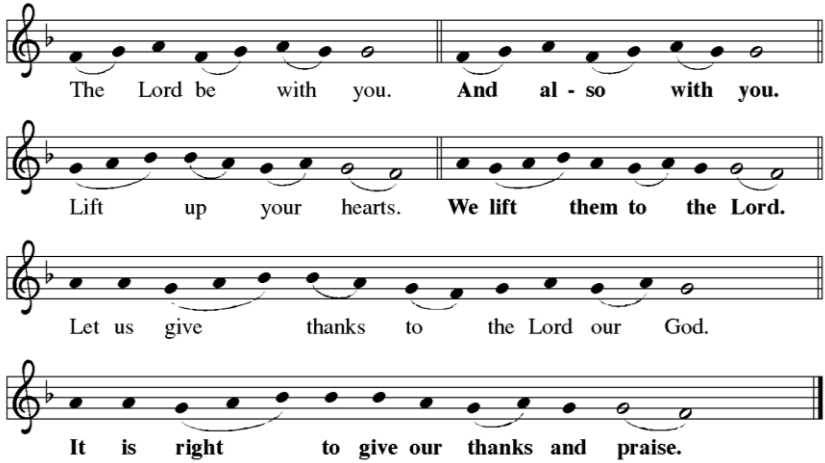
"How Will We Know Him?"

- Charlotte Algozin

The congregation may stand.

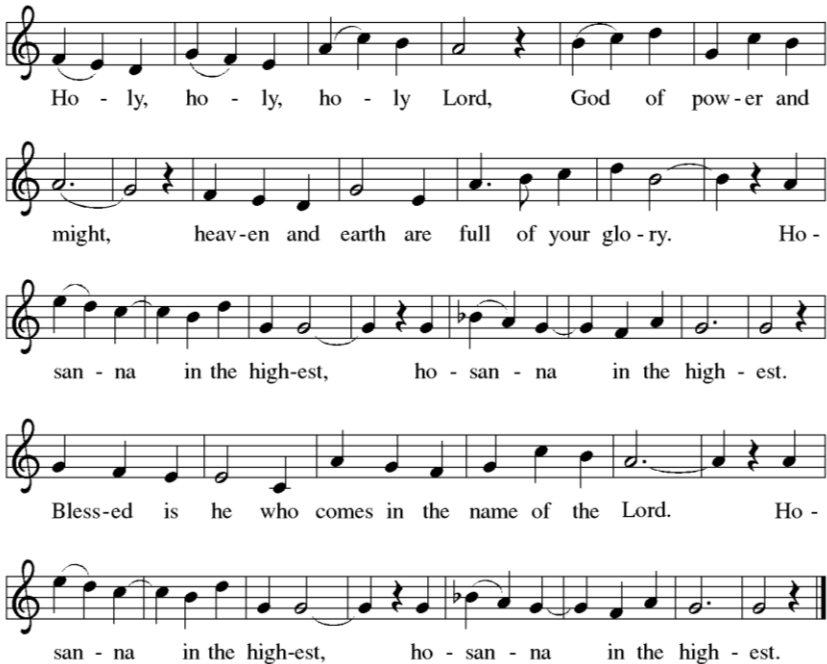
OFFERING PRAYER *led by the assisting minister*

GREAT THANKSGIVING



The Lord be with you. And al - so 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....we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and
might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho -
san - na in the high-est, ho - san - na in the high - est.
Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
san - na in the high-est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life....Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

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.

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.

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. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

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

**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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Jesus said: I am the bread of life. I am the vine, you are the branches.
Come to me and never be hungry; believe in me and never thirst.

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you
take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

The congregation may sit.

SHARING OF THE SACRAMENT

All are welcome to Holy Communion today. Lutherans believe that Christ is truly present in the bread and wine. The ushers will invite you forward to receive. Gluten free wafers are available; please let the pastor know if you wish to receive them. If you are able to receive either bread or wine (but not both), please know that you still receive the full communion.

After all have received, the congregation may stand.

HYMN DURING COMMUNION

“Come Now, O Prince of Peace”

Red Book #247

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

led by the assisting minister

THE SENDING

BLESSING

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

“Comfort, Comfort Now My People”

Red Book #256

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. The Lord is with you!

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

“O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide”

- Hugo Gehrke

SERVING IN WORSHIP TODAY

The Rev. Kimberly van Driel	Presiding Minister
Mollie Hibbs	Assisting Minister
Sharon Heist Miller	Communion Assistant
Jeanne Graff	Reader
Amelia O'Rourke	Crucifer
Claudia van Driel	Acolyte
Kevin Mathias	Organist
Harry Cunningham	Sr. Choir Director
Jim Cunningham	AV Assisting Minister
Brandon Stein	PowerPoint Minister
Bob and Karen Domanski; Brenden Stevens	Ushers
Susan Farrell and Sue Morrow	Counters
Roxanne Glagola	Altar Guild

Altar flowers are given to the glory of God by Jack and Sue Lehew, in loving memory of Tamm.

All are welcome to join us for social hour following the worship service.

THIS WEEK AT FIRST ENGLISH

Mon., 12/11	5:00 PM	Community Dinner
	8:00 PM	NA Meeting (Social Hall)
Tues., 12/12	7:00 PM	Council Meeting
Thurs., 12/14	TBA	Bible Study
	7:00 PM	Choir Rehearsal
	7:30 PM	NA Meeting (Downstairs)
Sat., 12/16	12:00 PM	NA Meeting (Downstairs)
Sun., 12/17	9:00 AM	Bible Study (Pastor's Office)
	10:00 AM	Worship
	11:15 AM	Trimming of the Trees
	5:30 PM	AA Meeting (Downstairs)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Confirmation class will meet today following worship.

Today is the final Sunday of our annual Christmas Tree Drive for the Children and Youth Agency of Butler County. Stop by the Christmas Tree to offer your donation or indicate your donation on the special line of your offering envelope, payable to First English Lutheran Church.

This will be happening Dec. 10. Thank you!

After worship on Dec. 17, we will be staying to decorate the trees. We will be having coffee, hot chocolate, and donuts. Please join us!

Support First English's ministry: In thanksgiving to God, financial contributions to the congregation can be placed in the offering plate at the rear of the worship space or made online at

www.firstenglishbutler.org/giving.

PRAYERS

Vicki Shields Cannon; Jayden; Mairead Magee; Jan Nieto; Myrna Hamil; Linda; Kathy Schweikart Spingola and Charles Spingola; Marj Rogner;

Pam Reeder; Greg Reeder; Carol Cunningham; family of Zema Schaney;
Frank Miller; family of Tony Sequite; Mackenzie Perkins; Linda Mathias;
Gus Keiser; Cory; Will; Carol Chamberlain; Carol Johnson; Mason
Martin; family of Janet Warner; Eileen Herbeck; family of Linda
Hibbeler; Thelma Hassler; continued healing for Graham Cannon; Aryl
Bashline; Holly Schubert; Tad Sellers; Pam Patterson; Tom Olson

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS

Isaiah 40:1-11

Good news of God's coming to a people in exile

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Righteousness shall prepare a pathway for God. (Ps. 85:13)

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Waiting for and hastening the day of God

Mark 1:1-8

John appears from the wilderness

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