



The Shore Lutheran

Seasonal Magazine of the

Chesapeake Country Area Ministry

Delaware-Maryland Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

www.shorelutherans.org

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church

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Sunday Eucharist 8:45am

Sunday Eucharist 10:45am



Advent and Christmas 2025

Beginning Wednesday, November 12th

The practice of observing a time of preparation for Christmas is such an ancient practice that its historical roots are, for all intents and purposes, lost in history. In fact, in recent years, what we thought we knew about the origin of the date of December 25th for celebrating the birth of Christ has been up for debate. Regardless of its origin, December 25th is the day we celebrate the Christ Mass –Christmas. The Church around the world celebrates with joy that for us and for our salvation God himself took on flesh to live among us, to teach us, and to die on the cross and rise again for us. However, we do not just celebrate on December 25th. Just as the Church has since at least the fifth century, we enter into a time of deep spiritual preparation—Advent. Amongst the chaotic busyness of the holiday season, amidst the parties, dinners, shopping, and all that, the Church invites us to pause and reflect on God's reconciling vision for us and the whole world in the person of

Jesus Christ. We do that by drawing closer to our Lord in Word and Sacrament, in prayer and meditation, and by following the biblical story, from creation to incarnation, in these days we call Advent.

The Christian family that is the Chesapeake Country Area Ministry - ELCA invites you, your family, and friends to join us in the many and varied ways in which we will tell the story of God at work in the world from the beginning of time, through the birth of Jesus, and into our own day. The pages in this brochure will afford you in greater detail all of the opportunities which are yours this year. We encourage you to take full advantage of everything offered this year in both Grace Lutheran and St. Paul's Lutheran Churches as we journey together toward a joyful Christmas celebration.

Isn't Advent early?

Rediscovering a Six-Week Advent in a world that rushes to Christmas

Over the centuries the dates for the observance of Advent, this time of preparation before we celebrate the birth of our Lord, have moved around. We have known Advent as the four Sundays preceding Christmas – and as a standard, that is the case. **However, in many places around the Church, Advent has been a longer season.** The four-week version of Advent is actually the newest form of Advent, when compared to how the season has been celebrated in the history of the church.

Have you heard of Saint Martin (316-397), a favorite saint in France, Germany, and Switzerland? We remember him as a soldier of the Roman Army who gave half of his cloak to a man who was barely clothed at all outside the French city of Amiens. St. Martin, who after that experience was baptized and eventually ordained priest, would become bishop of the Diocese of Tours in France, much against his will! (One legend says that St. Martin was hiding out in a barn from the townsfolk would have him consecrated bishop and a flock of geese honked loudly, revealing where he was hiding.)

One of St. Martin's successor bishops in the Diocese of Tours, who lived at the end of the 400s, started a local practice of beginning Advent right after St. Martin's Day (his feast is November 11th), a tradition which continued on for several centuries. Sometimes this is called **"Saint Martin's Lent."**

Also, two other areas – Spain and the region of northern Italy and Switzerland – the local liturgical tradition was to observe Advent for the six weeks before Christmas. For those areas who



follow the Ambrosian Rite, the liturgy named for St. Ambrose of Milan, the observance of a six-week Advent continues to this day.

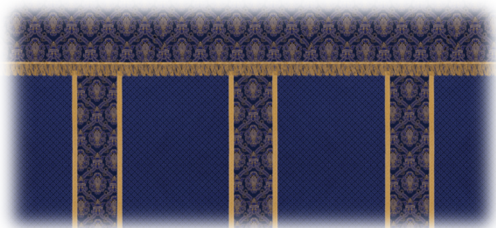
Finally, our Eastern Orthodox sisters and brothers across the world begin their form of Advent, what is called the "Nativity Fast," on November 15th each year, and make prayer, devotion, and penitence all a part of their preparation to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

In our congregations, we follow this earlier practice of keeping a six-week Advent. The Advent season will officially begin Wednesday, November 12th, thus following that ancient tradition of beginning Advent after St. Martin's Day. Our first Sunday of Advent will be November 16^h.

Our world rushes from Halloween, to Thanksgiving, to Christmas, it seems. Even Christians join in the race without slowing down to ponder and pray, contemplating the holy mystery that God became flesh and dwelt among us. To show the world "a more excellent way," we will make more time for preparation and reflection.

Why so blue?

Over time many different colors have been used during the season of Advent and have even changed at times in our own congregations. Over the last thousand years, one might have seen red in parts of Germany, white in parts of England, light blue in Spain, and a dark blue in northern Europe, or violet-purple in Rome.



Most American Lutherans now follow the more Scandinavian tradition of using blue for Advent. A simple reason is that blue sets Advent apart from the other season which also uses purple—Lent. So we reserve purple for times of deeper penitence.

The dark blue fabric of our altar hangings signifies the hour just before dawn, when light is about to break. It brings to mind the shade of very early morning sky as darkness is losing its hold, but there is not yet much light, so you cannot tell if the sky is blue or black. One of the titles of the Messiah, Jesus, is the “dayspring from on high” (Luke 1:78). The pre-dawn blue signifies to us, that the Dayspring, Jesus himself, is coming to us.

And where did the Advent Wreath come from?

The Advent Wreath is widely believed to have originated amongst German Lutherans in the 1500s, but seems to have been popularized by the German pastor Johann Wichern in the 1800s.

Wichern’s wreath, used in his instruction of urban children in poverty, consisted not just of the Sunday candles, but also smaller daily candles.

In modern days, the use of the wreath has taken many forms. Some Orthodox families have adapted the wreath with six candles, representing the Sundays in the Nativity Fast.

Along with variance in the number of candles, due to the differing lengths of the Advent season as observed by various churches, the colors of the candles themselves may vary. For some, the custom is that the candles match the colors of the Sundays, including having a rose candle. Typically, German Advent wreaths use red candles. There is almost certainly no set or prescribed form for the appearance or use of the Advent wreath.

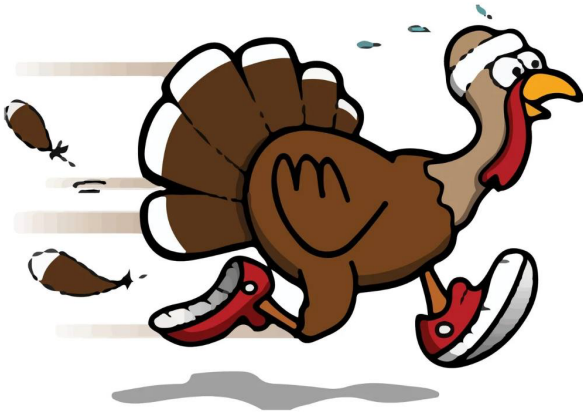
As far as a “liturgy” for the Advent wreath is concerned, there really is no such thing. Many see the wreath as merely a countdown, or another form of Advent calendar. In some churches, the standard is that nothing is said or sung. The candles are simply lit when people are in the church and extinguished once most have left.

Since there is no prescribed way in which an Advent wreath must be used, there is certainly no reason why there may not be some form of extra-liturgical devotion which accompanies the lighting of its candles. Therefore, most churches, ours included, create a form often with Scripture, prayer, and song. It is certainly appropriate to connect the light of the candles to the promised coming of the “Light in the darkness,” Jesus Christ our Lord.



“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing.” Isaiah 9:1-2a

Ways to serve others and love your neighbors in the Advent and Christmas Season of Giving



The Thanksgiving TUESDAY Turkey Trot

Ok, we're not running a 5k - but that got your attention!

We want YOU to trot on over to St. Paul's Lutheran Church at on Tuesday, November 25th to help get turkeys into the oven! We are roasting turkeys which will be used to create dinners for delivery to Easton area seniors on Thanksgiving. This is done by an ecumenical group of Christians who will be working out of Asbury United Methodist Church.

7:30am - Roasting at St. Paul's

8:00am - Coffee, tea, and sweet treats

8:30am - Morning Prayer (Matins)

9:00am - Bible Study

1:00pm - Turkey picking and packaging

7:00pm - Thanksgiving Worship Service (Holy Eucharist)

Don't be a turkey! Come join us as we help spread the love of Christ through hospitality, fellowship, and gratitude!

The Annual Thanksgiving Service
The Holy Eucharist
St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Cordova
Tuesday, November 25th
7:00pm



The Angel Tree at Saint Paul's

Keep watch (always the Advent Theme) for Angel Tree tags for children's gifts as they arrive at St. Paul's around Thanksgiving. A mid-December date will be announced at Saint Paul's for the return of wrapped gifts to the church – that date will be announced at worship and in the weekly St. Paul's News email.

Adopt-A-Family at Grace Church

This year, Grace Lutheran Church is serving three adopted families, with a total of ten children and three mothers. We have everything from bicycles, to shoes, to games, and more on the gift tags, which will be posted in the back of the church on Sunday, November 16th. Wrapped gifts need to be back to the church no later than Sunday Morning, December 14th. A special offering will be received at Lessons and Carols to help with the project.



Ingathering of Paper Products for Senior Citizens at St. Mark's Village

At both churches we will be gathering the following items to share with those in need at St. Mark's Village. They have told us that these are some of the most needed items.

Paper Towels, Toilet Paper, Napkins, Kleenex, Paper Plates,
13 Gallon Trash Bags



The Advent Blessing Box Challenge!



As we begin the season of Advent and head towards Christmas, we will begin hearing how this is a “season of giving,” and it certainly is! We celebrate the gift of God’s love for us in the birth of Jesus and by his grace we are freed to reach out in love to others, feeding those who hunger, as Jesus commands us.

There will be three different types of empty boxes for you to take home through this season.

First - A box labelled “**GENERAL.**” You are challenged to take that box home on the First Sunday of Advent and put one non-perishable item per day (being mindful of expiration dates) in the box. Bring it back to your church at Christmas to help us start 2026 with a replenished

stock.

Secondly – A box labelled “**THANKSGIVING.**” Take this home with you on the First Sunday of Advent (November 16th) and bring it back Sunday, November 23rd, with items specific to Thanksgiving Dinner, such as stuffing, macaroni and cheese, canned gravy, instant potatoes, cranberry sauce, etc.

Thirdly – Later in the season we will have boxes labelled “**CHRISTMAS.**” Take these boxes home with you and bring back by Sunday, December 21st, with Christmas Dinner items (basically the same as Thanksgiving).

Together we follow Jesus in feeding those in hunger.





Advent Tuesday Mornings Matins and Bible Study St. Paul's Church

Matins (<i>Morning Prayer</i>)	8:30am
Bible Study	9:00am

Join us in the nave of St. Paul's Church for traditional Matins, commonly called "Morning Prayer" each Tuesday morning in Advent. The Matins liturgy includes the portion of the Psalter appointed for the day, Scripture readings, prayers, and a hymn for Advent.

After Matins, we spend time in Bible Study in the Fellowship Hall. This year, we will use the ELCA's "Daily Faith Practices" series, exploring Advent themes and Scriptures as they inform our daily Christian lives. The materials for Daily Faith Practices are provided on the following pages. *Please note that this is not the same as last year's study, which was titled "Daily Discipleship."*

November 18	Daily Faith: Being Blameless <i>1 Corinthians 1:3-9</i>
November 25	Daily Faith: Wait with Patience <i>2 Peter 3:8-15a</i>
December 2	Daily Faith: Wake Up! <i>Romans 13:11-14</i>
December 9	Daily Faith: Rejoice, the Lord is Near! <i>Philippians 4:4-7</i>
December 16	Daily Faith: The Reason for the Season <i>Hebrews 10:5-10</i>
December 23	Daily Faith: Hope <i>Romans 15:4-13</i>



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

November 18th – 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Focus: *Being Blameless*

word of life

"[Our Lord Jesus Christ] will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 1:8 (NRSV)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

The church season of Advent begins on a Sunday and includes the four Sundays preceding December 25. Advent includes a two-fold preparation: We prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus born centuries ago and to receive the second coming of our Lord. Advent lectionary texts are full of ominous warnings about the return of Christ.

1. *What are some images and words associated with Advent?*
2. *Take a moment to reflect on Advent traditions which you have observed.*

Advent often is overshadowed by the hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping, cooking, cleaning and preparing. We can get hooked into attempting to produce a perfect Christmas Day, but that is not why Christ came to dwell among us. Advent calls for prisoners to be released, sins to be forgiven, and lives to be made whole. The hopes of all the years rest on the coming of the Messiah. What a stark contrast with the holiday buzz of the pre-Christmas rush.

Advent invites us to stop, breathe, and listen to the Word of God.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul cuts through the distractions. He writes as a believer who anticipates Christ to return at any point – within his lifetime. There is no need to invest in celebrating the first birth of Jesus when his second return is imminent.

3. *Are you preparing for the return of Christ? Why or why not?*
4. *What might you do differently if you knew Christ would return on December 25 of this year?*

Paul begins the letter in his typical pattern with words of thanksgiving. He gives thanks not only for the work of the Corinthians, but for the ways God is working through them. He looks at the Corinthians and sees God shaping, leading, guiding, and inspiring the people of Corinth – despite their internal struggles and disagreements.

God's grace has been given to the Corinthians through Jesus Christ. It is God who has already made them rich. Spiritual gifts have already been given, even if the faith community struggles to claim those gifts and to use them to benefit others.

5. *How has God made you rich?*

Paul prays the Corinthians might be blameless on the day of the Lord at the end of time. He is concerned about them standing before God at the final judgment, but Paul knows God is already at work strengthening the faithful through the fellowship with Christ.

6. *What does it mean to be blameless?*
7. *Is being blameless a goal of your life? Explain.*
8. *What thoughts and feelings do you have when you think about judgment day?*

word among us

On the first day of camp, Miss Mary leads the following song to get to know the names of the children.

All: *Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?*

Joey stole the cookies from the cookie jar?

Joey: *Who me? Not me!*

All: *Then who?* [Joey points to someone else and yells that person's name]

Joey: *Beth!* [The song is repeated until each person has a turn.]

In this singing game, each person gets blamed for stealing cookies. Of course, each child is innocent and points the finger at someone else until all are declared blameless. Hopefully the group can rejoice when the cookies are found and enjoy eating them.

None of us likes to be blamed, especially when we are innocent. Paul hopes each follower of Jesus can stand on judgment day blameless and without reproach. At first, this hope and prayer by Paul might seem mind-boggling and not attainable.

1. *What is your first reaction to Paul's hope for followers of Christ to be blameless?*
2. *How can we as sin-filled humans ever hope to attain a state of blamelessness?*

We can stand before God blameless only because of Jesus Christ working within us. He takes the sin of the world upon himself, allowing us to be reconciled with God. In this season of gift-giving, we are reminded that God has made us rich through the gift of Jesus Christ.

3. *How do we respond to the gift of Christ?*
4. *What is your part in becoming blameless before God?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people.

All this talk about being blameless can stir additional questions. Most of us squirm when we hear about God keeping us blameless. Good thing we have others in the church to discuss this matter. In baptism, we are connected not just to Jesus Christ, but to the body of Christ. God is not strengthening us in isolation, but God's Spirit is at work calling, gathering, and enlightening the church.

As people of faith, we are on a journey. Have courage. God continues to be at work in us so we might be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. *Who might you consult about their understanding on leading a "blameless" life?*
6. *What questions might you ask that person?*
7. *What will you continue to ponder during the Advent season?*

Prayer

God, prepare our hearts to receive the gift of Christ. Strengthen us so we may be blameless on the day our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

last word

Begin each day
asking Christ to keep you
blameless for the day.



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

November 25th - 2 Peter 3:8-15a

Focus: *Wait with Patience*

word of life

“But do 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.” 2 Peter 3:8 (NRSV)

Read 2 Peter 3:8-15a

It has been over 2000 years since Jesus was born under a bright star in Bethlehem. Some might reason if a day with the Lord is like a thousand years, then only two days (of God’s time) have passed since Mary gave birth. Attempts to explain God’s use of time are simply *attempts* to gain understanding of the ways God operates.

We are encouraged to imagine one day with the Lord as like a thousand years. Try to imagine that one day.

1. *What do you think one day with the Lord would be like?*
2. *How would you describe God’s time?*
3. *How do you respond when people ask you when Christ will return again?*

“The 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.” (2 Peter 3:9 NRSV) God created us and gave us breath. God does not want us to perish, but desires life for us. That means God is patient with us as we discover God’s love and life-giving promises.

4. *How does it feel to know the Lord is patient with you?*
5. *God wants no one to perish. What implications does that have for the way the church functions?*

There is so much we simply do not know about God and God’s use of time. We do not know how or when time ends – that is particularly true for each of us and our life span. Like a thief who comes unexpectedly, the end may come without warning. We live finite lives on this earth.

The Advent message rings out: Get ready. Be prepared. Watch. Wait.

This passage captures the urgency of Advent, calling believers to live a godly and holy life. Usually that includes changing our ways and returning to Christ. The house to be cleaned in December is our own spiritual house. We ground our preparations in prayer, hoping the fruits of a faithful life will overflow with acts of compassion and kindness.

If we allow the message of Advent to take root, we realize God can use these weeks of preparation to restore order to our lives. We actively prepare for a guest to come into our hearts and lives, the One who offers to be with us forever.

6. *Do you believe the Lord is returning any time soon? Why or why not?*
7. *What difference will it make when the Lord returns?*
8. *Summarize this passage.*

word among us

As the years passed, the problem increased rather than disappeared. Nicki's husband hated to wait. She assumed he would become more patient as he got older. Not so. Instead, his tantrums had become woefully predictable. Whenever Nicki and her husband found themselves in a situation when they needed to wait, all started fine. Shortly, Nicki would see her husband's leg begin to twitch, followed by a full-body restlessness. Once her husband stood up to pace, Nicki knew his patience was gone. It was time to leave the situation.

1. *How do you cope with waiting?*
2. *What makes waiting so challenging?*

Many times we get caught in a frenzy waiting for God to act in our lives and world. We sometimes forget God waits for us as well. "The 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." (2 Peter 3:9 NRSV) Take a moment to reflect on God's patience.

3. *What feelings are stirred in you when you hear of God's patience with you?*
4. *How do you test God's patience?*
5. *What is God waiting for you to do?*

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.

In baptism, we become connected to Christ and become part of the body of Christ. There are times we stay within the safe walls of the church for ministry opportunities. Other times, we are boldly sent into the world to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.

Unfortunately, proclaiming good news in our daily lives does not come with a manual. Our daily life takes us to stores, meetings, gatherings, and functions. So how do we proclaim the good news in those settings? Fortunately, the Holy Spirit serves as a guide. And so we wait and listen. Who needs an encouraging smile or word? Who needs a word of hope?

Times of waiting are transformed into moments of prayer and discernment. We wait upon God to fill us with wisdom, love, and mercy.

6. *Instead of being impatient at times of waiting, what is another option?*
7. *How do you choose to occupy your time on earth while you wait for Christ to return?*

Prayer

Christ, interrupt our life and make us still. Transform times of waiting to moments of discernment of your will. Help us to wait with patience for your return. Amen

last word

During times of waiting,
thank God for a time of prayer.
Then, begin to pray.



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

December 2nd - Romans 13:11-14

Focus: *Wake Up!*

word of life

"Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near." (Romans 13:11-12b NRSV)

Read Romans 13:11-14

Apostle Paul writes to the Romans, "You know what time it is..." (Romans 13:11 NRSV) But Paul does not use the Greek word *chronos*, a word commonly used to reference a chronological time period such as measured by a calendar or clock. Instead, he uses the Greek word *kairos*, a word meaning the "right" time. In the New Testament *kairos* is used to refer to God's appointed time. So, to know the time (*kairos*) is to acknowledge God's intervening activity through Jesus Christ in our chronology.

Awake! Awake to God's time frame. Wake up and acknowledge God's time zone—one not measured by minutes, hours, days, months, and years.

1. *What is meant when Paul writes, "You know what time it is..."?*
2. *How does God's time (kairos) compare to human-measured chronological time (chronos)?*
3. *Is it helpful to think of time in these two ways? Explain your answer.*

There is a sense of urgency as people are called to discard complacency and apathy. Salvation is nearer to us than ever before! These words are not intended to evoke fear and trembling, but instead be reassuring to believers of Christ Jesus. Do not be anxious! Do not obsess about the end of time when Christ will return. Instead, wake up. Something wonderful is about to occur.

4. *What does it mean to spiritually wake up?*
5. *How might the nearness of salvation be reassuring?*

In this wake-up call in Romans 13, Paul uses the imagery of light and darkness associated with chronological time to call people into an ethical response to God's *kairos* moment. "Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light..." (Romans 13:12b NRSV) Works of darkness include reveling, drunkenness, debauchery, licentiousness, quarreling and jealousy.

6. *What else might be added to this list of works of darkness?*
7. *What would be on the list of works of light?*

For Paul, putting on the armor of light is to put on Jesus Christ. "Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." (Romans 13:14 NRSV) Rather than wearing the clothing of warfare with all its armor, put on love as described in Romans 13. "Owe no one anything, except to love one another...Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:8, 10 NRSV)

It was a tradition in the early church to put a new garment on the newly baptized as a way to represent his or her new life in Christ. This reference to putting on Jesus might be baptismal vocabulary. Rather than wearing clothing for sleeping, put on a baptismal garment and prepare to serve Christ in daily life.

8. *What does it mean to put on Jesus Christ?*
9. *How urgent is it to put on Jesus Christ?*

Word among us

Pat couldn't sleep. Tomorrow was a big day, full of so many unknowns. Darkness lingered outside. Slowly, slowly the sun strolled through the back yard, casting shadows and drying the dew. There would be no turning back now that dawn was here. It was no longer yesterday, but today had begun. Onward.

1. *What is it like to wake up early and wait for the sun to rise?*
2. *Describe a day when you woke up early because of a special event. What feelings do you associate with that day?*

No matter our native land, gender, or age, we can all relate to the measurement of time by the rising of the sun. When the night passes into dawn, the sun casts long shadows as light peaks over the horizon. It is only a matter of time before the brightness of the day will be upon us.

As much as we might prefer to delay the beginning of a day, we cannot force the sun to retreat into the horizon. Once dawn comes, there is no returning to the darkness of night.

Paul uses this imagery of light and darkness to describe aspects of faith. Once we put on Christ, there is to be no more energy invested in the works of darkness. Our actions are to be done in the light of day open to public viewing. An older man told the story of dating his wife. Before each date, her father would come near the dating couple and sternly say, "Have a good time, but just make sure you have Jesus sitting in the backseat of your car."

3. *What was the father trying to tell his daughter and her date?*
4. *What might happen to us as we imagine Jesus as our companion in life?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

Wake up! It is easy to slumber through our lives, ignoring daily opportunities to love our neighbor. Love is our response to God's action in Jesus Christ. "Owe no one anything, except to love one another...Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:8, 10 NRSV) Yet love does not come easily or quickly. It is by the grace of God we become lovers.

Paul's imagery of putting on Jesus Christ and the armor of light can be helpful. Whether this is warfare or baptismal vocabulary, we get the point. Each day as we rise to put on our clothing for the day, we are reminded to intentionally put on Jesus. This is not just a daily occurrence, but repeated over and over throughout the day.

5. *How will you remind yourself to put on Jesus Christ each day this week?*
6. *What are the obstacles in your life which prevent you from putting on the armor of light?*
7. *How has this passage stirred you to wake up?*

Prayer

Gracious God, stir us from our sleep. Wake us with a passion to put on Christ each day of our lives. Amen

last word

Pray to put on Christ... throughout the day.



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

December 9th - Philippians 4:4-7

Focus: *Rejoice! The Lord is near!*

word of life

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.” Philippians 4:4-5 (NRSV)

Read Philippians 4:4-7

The Third Sunday in Advent has traditionally been known as *Gaudete* Sunday. This Latin word is the first and last word of the opening verse of today’s reading: *Gaudete in Domino semper; iterum dico, gaudete* (“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” Philippians 4:4 NRSV) This verse was traditionally sung on this Sunday in the liturgical year as the entrance hymn to begin worship. Many churches using Advent wreaths in this season will light a pink or rose-colored candle on this *Gaudete/Rejoice!* Sunday, and the penitential theme of the coming of the Day of the Lord, so prominent in the first two Sundays in Advent, is supplanted with the theme of joy.

1. *Think of your church. In what ways do you celebrate Advent?*
2. *Do you notice a difference in the theme for this Sunday?*

Why this exhortation to rejoice? After all, Paul is writing this letter from a prison cell. (See Philippians 1:7.) He has experienced suffering, and the believers in Philippi have experienced their share of suffering as well. The cause for rejoicing is found in four simple, short words: “The Lord is near.” (Philippians 4:5 NRSV)

3. *Is it possible to find joy in the midst of suffering? Why or why not?*
4. *What does it mean to you to say, “The Lord is near”?*
5. *Have you experienced the nearness of God? How so?*

For Paul, knowing that the Lord is near has profound implications for how the believer is to live. He articulates them in imperatives:

- rejoice (vs. 4)
- let your gentleness be made known to everyone (vs. 5)
- do not worry about anything (vs. 6)
- pray with thanksgiving, letting your needs be made known to God (vs. 6b)

All this is possible because of the belief and conviction that the Lord is near.

6. *Reflect on these four imperatives. Which do you find easier to do?*
7. *Which ones are more challenging for you?*

Paul concludes this rich section of his letter with a benediction of *shalom* – of peace. (vs. 7) It is a wholeness, a deep and abiding completeness beyond all human understanding, a sure and certain hope of the presence and grace of God in our midst. Note the assurance and firm conviction in his words: “and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7 NRSV) It doesn’t make sense to our human comprehension. (Does the cross ever make sense?) God’s peace will come, even in the midst of suffering. And so we rejoice this Advent season, for the Lord is near. Thanks be to God!

8. *What does “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” mean to you?*

word among us

This Bible study is being written in the fall of 2012. There has been much speculation recently about a recently-discovered ancient Mayan calendar which ends on December 21, 2012. (If you are reading this after the “end date,” you know what has happened. If you are reading this before December 21, 2012, you better get prepared!) Attempts to discern the timing of the end of the world have come and gone, and we are still waiting.

1. *Can you think of other instances where the end of the world was predicted?*
2. *How did you respond? What did Jesus say about this?*

The season of Advent reminds us that the Lord is near. We hear this proclamation in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. This nearness is three-fold: we anticipate the coming celebration of Emmanuel—God -with-us—in the birth of Jesus; we look for signs of God’s nearness now; and we wait expectantly for the coming of Christ in glory at the last day.

But as Christians, we do not idly wait. No, we rejoice with thanksgiving for the presence of God long ago; we live expectantly for the fulfillment of the promises of God in the future; and we look for the presence of God in our midst now. We may not know what the future holds; but we know Who holds the future. So we can rejoice! The Lord is near.

3. *What evidence of the nearness of God do you currently see in your life?*

Knowing how the story ends, and trusting in the promises of God, we do not need to worry. We experience the peace of God which is beyond anything we can imagine or conceive. This peace “...will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7 NRSV)

faith practice in daily life

Hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s Supper

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. We make this bold proclamation as the cup is lifted up, the bread is broken, and the great thanksgiving is celebrated. In many ways, we are doing as Paul exhorted us. We are rejoicing, for the Lord is near. Christ’s presence in the meal empowers us to lives of service; and it gives us the assurance that we are not alone.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice ... for the Lord is near! Have a joyful *Gaudete* Sunday. May you know and experience the fullness of God’s peace.

4. *What might you do when worries creep into your thinking?*
5. *As best as you can, describe God’s peace.*

Prayer

Ever-present God, we know you are always near us, yet we too often fail to see your presence. Open our eyes and our hearts this Advent season, that we might see you with us. Grant us your peace in Christ our Lord. Amen

last word

Rejoice in the Lord always this week;
again I say, Rejoice!



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

December 16th - Hebrews 10:5-10

Focus: *The Reason for the Season*

word of life

“And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:10 (NRSV)

Read Hebrews 10:5-10

At first glance, this seems to be a strange reading for the Sunday before Christmas Day. Images of sacrifices and offerings, and of doing God’s will, predominate these five verses. But this reading is in many ways an explanation of the Incarnation; we hear the purpose and significance of the birth of Jesus for the world. Jesus was born ... to die.

1. *What themes do you associate with Christmas?*
2. *How are Christmas and the cross connected?*

The reading for today is a part of a lengthy section on the central theme of Hebrews: that the sacrifices and offerings by human priests cannot take away sin (the old covenant) so the true sacrifice (the new covenant) is required. This sacrifice is the purpose for which Christ was born; and his obedience to God’s will sanctifies us and makes us whole. (See Hebrews 10:10.)

The assigned reading for today begins with an incarnational statement: “...when Christ came into the world....” (Hebrews 10:5 NRSV) In these few words, the author summarizes the words from John’s gospel – “the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory ... full of grace and truth.” (John 1: 14 NRSV) The incarnation is also seen in the words from Hebrews (from Psalm 40:6-8) which are placed by the writer in the voice of Christ saying, “...a body you have prepared for me.” (Hebrews 10:5 NRSV) The significance of Christ becoming flesh cannot be overstated. Frederick Buechner in his book *Wishful Thinking: A Seekers ABC*, writes, “...incarnation means that all ground is holy ground because God not only made it but walked on it, ate and slept and worked and died on it. If we are saved anywhere, we are saved here.” (© Harper San Francisco, 1973, p. 52)

3. *What does the incarnation mean to you?*
4. *What difference does it make?*

The writer of Hebrews emphasizes Christ’s obedience to do God’s will by entering the world as a human body and offering himself as a pure sacrifice. In two verses in our reading for today, the words are attributed to Christ, “I have come to do your will.” (Hebrews 10:7, 9) The old way of relating to God—the old covenant—is abolished; and the new way in the sacrificial gift of Christ is established. (vs. 9)

5. *Have you ever thought of Christmas as the beginning of a new way of relating to God and God relating to us?*

The incarnation—Emmanuel, God-with-us—is enfleshed in the birth of the infant Jesus. It is our salvation in Jesus’ obedient sacrificial death on the cross. It is what sanctifies us, making us holy and whole in God’s eyes. “And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:10 (NRSV)

Christ was born to save! Christ was born for this!

word among us

There was a Christmas card a few years ago that was disturbing to some. Upon first glance, it was the familiar scene portrayed in Sunday school children's Christmas programs – Mary and Joseph in the stable holding the infant Jesus, the shepherds and wise men bowing down in worship, cattle and sheep seemingly in rapt attention at this wondrous birth.

But a closer look at the card revealed an unexpected red stain on the swaddling clothes. The baby Jesus had wounds in his perfect little hands and a wound in his side. The greeting on the inside of the card read simply, "Remember the reason for the season."

1. *What is your reaction to a card such as this?*
2. *How does it "fit" with our traditional celebrations of Christmas?*

The card was troubling at first glance. It didn't fit in with the festive expectations for the season. But the more people thought about it, the more it made sense. The "Christ event"—the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus—is the reason for the season. We too often try to separate the birth from the sacrificial death. The card was a powerful reminder that the birth and death of Jesus are two acts of the same drama. They both point to the central reason for the season. "A body you have prepared for me," the Christ in the book of Hebrews says. "I have come to do your will," he says again and again. "And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:10 NRSV)

Christ's willingness to become incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary; his willingness to be crucified under Pontius Pilate; his willingness to suffer death and burial – all of it is done for us and for our salvation. Listen for these words when the church confesses the faith in the words of the Nicene Creed; they are central to our faith.

The Christmas card had it right: **Our salvation** is the reason for the season!

3. *What do you believe is the reason for the season?*
4. *What reminds you of the reason for the season?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

There is a certain rhythm to life. The seasons change, the days and years go by. The same could be said about the church. The seasons change—Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost—and the days and years go by. But the constant figure throughout all of life and all of the changes is Jesus Christ. We gather among God's faithful people to be reminded of that sure and certain fact.

So much of what we do as we celebrate Christmas can drown out the central message of the angels: To you is born a Savior, Christ the Lord! Christ is born to save! Christ is the reason for the season!

5. *How do you hope Christ is born in you this week?*
6. *What might you do this week to invite others to experience the reason for the season?*

Prayer

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray. Cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today. Amen

last word

Remember the reason for the season as you celebrate Christmas this week.



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

December 23rd - Romans 15:4-13

Focus: *Hope*

word of life

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13 NRSV)

Read Romans 15:4-13

Hope! That is the theme of this passage from Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. Whether we are strong or weak, we are to place our hope in Jesus Christ. "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4 NRSV)

Take a moment to think of the Old Testament's description of those who lived before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Consider the words of prophets who both comforted and challenged the people of Israel. Focus on those who had hope.

1. *What scriptural passages from the Old Testament encourage you and give you hope?*
2. *What individual in the Old Testament inspires you? How so?*

It is the prayer of Apostle Paul for the church in Rome to live in harmony with each other. Paul offers this prayer, "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15:5-6 NRSV)

Apostle Paul envisions followers of Jesus having a single voice to give glory to God. "To live in harmony" and to act "with one voice" is a wonderful goal of the church. This goal is not obtained by the work of Christians, but by the Holy Spirit at work in the life of believers.

3. *What makes it easy or challenging to live in harmony with other Christians?*
4. *How important is it for the church to strive to "live in harmony"? Explain your answer.*

Hope is not reserved for Abraham and his descendents, but God extends hope to the Gentiles. This inclusive vision of God is both expansive and radical. Apostle Paul is not the first to mention God's grace for the Gentiles; the seeds of hope for the Gentiles are planted in the Old Testament.

God chooses to use the Jewish nation to proclaim the promises of God to an audience beyond the descendents of Abraham. Romans 15:9-13 includes a series of Old Testament quotes to support this conclusion. "...and again Isaiah says, 'The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.'" (Romans 15:12 NRSV) Although the roots of the family tree of Jesus include David and his father Jesse, the branches include both Jews and Gentiles.

Paul's prayer concludes with his words, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13 NRSV)

5. *What does it feel like when the God of hope fills us with joy and peace?*
6. *Describe what it means to abound in hope.*

Word among us

The choir took their place in the front of the sanctuary of the small church and prepared to sing their anthem. Just as the introduction was being played on the piano, a young female adult with some visible learning problems enthusiastically skipped up to join the choir. Immediately, the choir welcomed her and gently helped her find her position. It was abundantly clear how much the choir loved this enthusiastic singer.

The choir sang exceptionally well, despite the various sounds sung by the young woman. She smiled broadly as she lingered on a favorite word or note. Whatever notes she sang, she offered them with great gusto and joy. The anthem was memorable, but not because of its musical qualities. No doubt there are other church choirs with more talent and training, but it is doubtful to find a choir with more genuine love for each other. Most importantly, this choir modeled how to sing with one voice and glorify to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—despite not being on the same page.

1. *What was more important to the choir than a perfect performance?*
2. *How did the choir bear witness to the love of Christ?*

Paul prayed to God for believers "to live in harmony with one another... so that together you may with one voice glorify God...." (Romans 15:5-6 NRSV) When we think of harmony and having one voice, we often think of choirs. So many times choirs inspire us with their music, but we forget the collaborative and prayer-filled effort to blend individual voices to create one voice.

3. *What often prevents a congregation from becoming one voice?*
4. *What lessons might a church learn from an effective choir?*
5. *What role does the Holy Spirit play in creating a community which lives in harmony?*

faith practice in daily life

Hear God's Word and share in the Lord's Supper

As we hear God's Word, there are several themes which ring consistently. Hope is clearly one of those themes. But hope does not come alone; it is coupled with joy and peace in believing. It is God alone who is the sole Source which instills hope in us through the Holy Spirit. We are invited to hear God's Word and turn to the God of hope.

As hope touches each of our lives, it spreads to brothers and sisters in Christ. By the grace of God, we become a community of individuals voices molded into a single voice offering praise and glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

6. *How does the hope of Christ shape a community into a single unified voice?*
7. *What is attractive about someone who has hope in Christ?*
8. *How might your hope in Christ impact your decisions in the upcoming week?*

Prayer

Gracious God, grant us to live in harmony with one another so we might glorify you with one voice. Amen

Advent Evening Prayer – Vespers

5pm Wednesdays at Grace Church



What is Vespers?

Dating back to at least the 300s, the Church in Jerusalem and other churches, especially throughout the East, designated the “tenth hour” as the time when the lamps were light and incense was offered. Along with the lamplighting, various hymns were sung, including “Phos Hilaron,” Greek for “O Gracious Light,”

which is considered the oldest hymn in the Christian tradition, and is a hymn which survives in our own hymnal today. Some scholars believe this hymn and the earliest roots of the tradition date back to around the year 150.

Every Wednesday evening at Grace, we continue this ancient Christian tradition of Lamplighting (called “Lucernarium” as an opening to the service called “Vespers,” which comes from the Greek word “hespera,” or “evening.” Vespers consists of singing psalms, hearing lessons from Scripture, singing the Magnificat, or “Song of Mary,” and concludes with various prayers appropriate for evening. The pattern for Vespers comes to us from the Benedictine tradition, in which monks, nuns, the clergy, and lay folk within the vicinity of the church would gather eight times daily at appointed times for prayer, to chant psalms, to hear the Scriptures, and to sing hymns.

If you have not experienced this beautiful liturgy and time for prayer and meditation, Lent offers you the opportunity to join others in prayer, as the office of Vespers takes us out of the fast-paced world around us and into sacred space with our Lord as we offer our prayers and hear the Word of God spoken fresh into our lives.

Wednesday, November 12th Luke 21:5-19

“By endurance you will gain your souls.

Wednesday, November 19th Matthew 17:22-27

Commemoration of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary

Wednesday, December 3rd Matthew 21:23-32

The outcasts inherit the kingdom

Wednesday, December 10th Matthew 23:1-12

The Greatest Commandment

Note: The themes of the other Vespers services in Advent may be found on page 26.

Advent Midweek Services

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church of Cordova Selected Advent Thursdays at 6:30pm

A hallmark of Lutheran tradition during the season of Advent is our midweek Advent worship services. This year, we will offer these midweek services at St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Cordova at 6:30pm, **on selected Thursdays.**

The evening Advent services on November 13th, November 20th, December 4th, December 11th, and December 18th will be **Contemplative Communion Services.**

These services will feature time for quiet contemplation, Scripture, prayer, meditative song and music, and a simplified celebration of Holy Communion.

The Advent Contemplative Service is to be a balm for the soul during a hectic season. While the world may be at full speed, we are not. This worship opportunity is to help us move away from the loud and even oppressive nature of the world around us and draw closer to Jesus, who says, "come away with me and rest awhile."

November 13 th	Matthew 24:36-44	<i>Keep watch!!</i>
November 20 th	Luke 1:5-25	<i>A Promise for Elizabeth and Zechariah</i>
December 4 th	Luke 21:25-36	<i>Watch and Pray</i>
December 11 th	Luke 1:57-80	<i>God's Promise Fulfilled</i>
December 18 th	Isaiah 11:1	<i>The Root of Jesse</i>



In each of these services, there will be time for quiet prayer and worshipers will be offered an opportunity to come forward to light individual candles as they offer their own prayers.

A Forgotten Advent Tradition **The Sunrise Rorate**

Saturday, December 6th at 6:00am
St. Paul's Church

Imagine a crisp December morning, before sunrise, and you are in a church that is mostly dark, yet the altar is illuminated by so many candles that it feels as though you have been transported to another time and place. There is silence until you hear words from Isaiah 45:8.

*Rorate caeli desuper,
et nubes plúant jústum.*

Drop down, ye heavens, from above,
and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Going all the way back to the 700s, this Eucharistic liturgy was in many places on each of the seven days preceding Christmas. In some places in Italy, this liturgy was celebrated on the nine days preceding Christmas, presumably each day representing a month in the Virgin Mary's pregnancy with Our Lord. By more modern times, if the Rorate was celebrated at all, it was normally offered before December 16th, and only once.

While much of the custom around the Rorate (pronounced roh-rah-teh) Eucharist varies greatly from region to region, the character is mostly the same. It is celebrated by candlelight and awaits the sunrise, just as we, deep in Advent, await the birth of Christ. The readings are taken from the Feast of the Annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she is to bear the very Son of God. The Gospel lesson concludes with Mary's *fiat*, "Let it be unto me according to thy word." We are invited, in this liturgy, to meditate upon our own Christian calling and how we may offer our "yes" to God."



The liturgy ends with the words "Ecce, Dominus veniet," or "Behold, the Lord is coming" three times, as a parallel to the three times the deacon chants "Behold, the wood of the Cross" on Good Friday and "The Light of Christ" at the Easter Vigil.

Strengthened by the Eucharist and our spirits fed in quiet worship, contemplation, and closeness to Christ, we venture back out into the world, with the sun having risen.



Lillejuleaften – Little Christmas Eve **Tuesday, December 23rd**

Worship — 5:00pm Grace Church

In much of the world where large numbers of Lutherans have been found, including Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, there is a tradition of December 23rd being a "Little Christmas Eve," since the main Christmas celebrations are on the night of the 24th. We will be celebrating Little Christmas Eve (in Danish: *Lillejuleaften*) at our 5:00pm Vespers on December 23rd. Traditional "Little Christmas Eve" desserts, including cherry desserts, will follow.

Advent Hymn

People, Look East!

Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965), born in London, was a rather accomplished author of children's literature, mostly in the area of things such as nursery rhymes and children's songs. Many of us will know her work without even knowing much of her thanks to a 1971 release by Cat Stevens. In that release, he used the words of her 1931 hymn for children "Morning Has Broken," which was set to the tune BUNESSAN – a Gaelic tune named for a location on the Isle of Mull in Scotland.

Farjeon's hymn "People, Look East!" is set to an even older, nearly ancient, carol tune BESANÇON, named for its city of origin in eastern France on the border with Switzerland. Historically, Besançon has been known as a capital of watchmaking. The city's cathedral boasts a 70-dial astronomical clock which tells things such as sunrises, sunsets, eclipses, and even tides!



Of this hymn, Dr. C. Michael Hawn writes

Key images of the season are abundant. "People, Look East" is the direction of the rising sun and, in the history of Christianity, the direction of the coming Messiah. In stanza two, the bare earth is waiting for the seed that will flourish in the reign of the Promised One. In stanza [four], the stars that guided the Magi shape the "bowl" of the heavens, giving signs of hope beyond "the frosty weather." The angels' song, in stanza [five], sets "every peak and valley humming," an oblique reference to Isaiah 40:4, "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low. . ."

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. People, look east. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the guest, is on the way. | 2. Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
One more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
That in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the rose, is on the way. |
| 3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build,
Guard the nest that must be filled.
Even the hour when wings are frozen
God for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the bird, is on the way. | 4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim,
Shining beyond the frosty weather,
Bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the star, is on the way. |
| 5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the Lord, is on the way. | |

Stations of the Incarnation:

An Advent Devotional



We all know of the *Stations of the Cross*, which can be prayed as a devotion any time of the year, but there are stational devotions which help us along a Christ-focused journey at other times of the year as well. Several years ago, Pastor Moyers created a set of stations for Advent, called “**Stations of the Incarnation.**”

These stations depict God at work in salvation history in various biblical events leading up to the birth of Christ, such as the Creation, the anointing of David, the Annunciation, and the Visitation.

The artwork used for the Stations of the Incarnation is a set of 14 (just like Stations of the Cross) medieval and Renaissance era paintings, reproduced by permission for this devotion.

We will be praying the Stations of the Incarnation through Advent in both St. Paul’s and Grace Churches, usually before selected Vespers services. If you are unable to be present for Stations of the Incarnation on one of the dates listed below, but still wish to pray the Stations, feel free to do so on your own at any time the churches are open. Booklets for the devotion will be available by the first station in each church.

Monday, December 1st
Thursday, December 11th
Saturday, December 20th

Grace Church
St. Paul’s Church
Grace Church

5:00pm
5:30pm
4:15pm



Advent Hymn

Prepare the Royal Highway

THE RIGHT REVEREND Frans Mikael Franzén (1772-1847) was born in the town of Oulu, which at the time of his birth was called Uleåborg in Swedish and was made the capital of the Oulu province in Swedish-controlled Finland just years after his birth. Perhaps a child genius, or at least a literary prodigy in the making, he entered the Royal Academy of Turku at the age of thirteen and graduated four years later. Later he embarked on a tour of England, France, Germany, and other countries before returning to Turku as the university's librarian in 1796, becoming a professor in 1801.

In 1809, the Finnish War between Sweden and Russia was concluded and Russia took control of Finland, making it a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire. Franzén left for Sweden proper, where he was made a Lutheran parish priest in the Church of Sweden Diocese of Strängnäs. He would move on to Stockholm and eventually be consecrated as bishop for the Diocese of Härnösand, a bishopric he would serve from 1832 until his death in 1847.

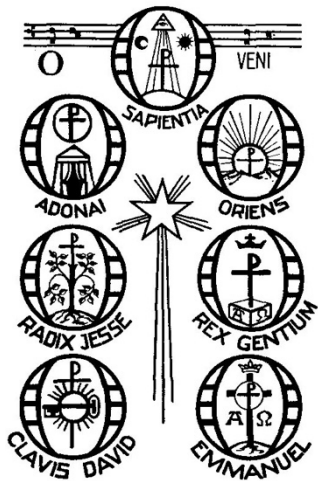


PREPARE THE ROYAL HIGHWAY, in Swedish *Bereden väg för Herran*, is perhaps the best known of his works for those of us in the Lutheran tradition. However, outside of the church he is much better known for his literary and other poetic works. Notwithstanding, this hymn is probably most familiar Advent hymn amongst Lutherans – or at least certainly was before the popularity of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” arose. “Prepare the Royal Highway” has been translated by numerous translators, and, in some hymnals, is known as “Prepare the Way, O Zion.” Similarly, the refrain offered in the Lutheran Book of Worship as “Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God’s Word,” is sometimes presented as “O blest is he that came in God the Father’s Name!” The hymn is sung to a 14th century Swedish folk tune which we take from Den Svenska Psalmboken (1697).

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 Prepare the royal highway,
the King of kings is near;
let every hill and valley
a level road appear.
Then greet the king of glory
foretold in sacred story:</p> <p>3 Then fling the gates wide open
to greet your promised king;
your king, yet every nation
its tribute too should bring.
All lands, bow down before him;
all voices, thus adore him:</p> | <p>2 God’s people, see him coming:
your own eternal king!
Palm branches strew before him;
spread garments; shout and sing.
God’s promise will not fail you;
no more shall doubt assail you:</p> <p>4 His is no earthly kingdom;
it comes from heaven above.
His rule is peace and freedom,
and justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding
for kindness so abounding:</p> |
|---|--|

Refrain

Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God’s Word



Keeping the Os: The Golden Nights of Advent

December 16 th	St. Paul's Church	5:00pm
December 17 th	Grace Church	5:00pm
December 18 th	St. Paul's Church	6:30pm
December 19 th	St. Paul's Church	5:00pm
December 20 th	Grace Church	5:00pm
December 21 st	St. Paul's Church	7:15pm
December 22 nd	Grace Church	5:00pm
December 23 rd	Grace Church	5:00pm

Many of us know the Advent hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” as we sing it in Sunday worship throughout Advent. However, did you know the story behind it? The verses of the hymn are actually antiphons, or phrases, assigned to be sung before and after the Magnificat, or the Song of Mary, at Vespers on the last nights of Advent. These Golden Nights, beginning on the 16th, mark “high” or “late” Advent.

These O Antiphons, as they are called, because they all begin with O to indicate that they are addressing the Messiah by one of his titles, have been in existence at least since the eighth century and perhaps much earlier, were only found in the prayerbooks of monasteries and convents until the antiphons were gathered and rearranged as an Advent hymn which appeared in the hymnal *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum* in 1710 in Cologne, Germany. In 1851, the English hymnist Thomas Helmore paired it with the French hymn tune from the 1400s which we sing today as “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

But, back to the origins. Dating back to at least the 700s and probably much earlier, these antiphons that make up the verses of our favorite Advent hymn each belong to a specific day. These are given in the chart below. We are keeping the perhaps 1500 year-old tradition of “Keeping the O’s” alive by gathering for Vespers each night from **December 16th-23rd** and singing the O Antiphons in their original tunes. You will notice that there is one extra antiphon at the end of the chart – “O Virgo Virginum,” or “O Virgin of Virgins.” This last antiphon was added by various orders in England and Germany, thus adding one more Golden Night.

O Sapientia	“O Wisdom”	Isaiah 11:2-3	December 16
O Adonai	“O Lord”	Isaiah 33:22	December 17
O Radix Jesse	“O Root of Jesse”	Isaiah 11:1	December 18
O Clavis David	“O Key of David”	Isaiah 22:22	December 19
O Oriens	“O Dayspring”	Isaiah 9:2	December 20
O Rex Gentium	“O King of the Nations”	Isaiah 9:6	December 21
O Emmanuel	“O God with us”	Isaiah 7:14	December 22
O Virgo Virginum	“O Virgin of virgins”	Luke 23:28	December 23

There is a hidden message in the O Antiphons, and it is in the form of an acrostic, which is a word puzzle.

Taken from last to first

Virgo Virginum
Emanuel
Rex Gentium
Oriens
Clavis David
Radix Jesse
Adonai
Sapientia

The first letters of all the antiphons, put together, form two Latin words – “Vero cras,” meaning “truly, tomorrow.” The Golden Nights of the O Antiphons end on December 23rd. Thus, Christ comes “truly, tomorrow” for those who celebrate on Christmas Eve!

Advent Hymn

O Bride of Christ, Rejoice

THE MOST REVEREND Johan Olof Wallin (1779-1839) is perhaps one of the most prolific hymnwriters and translators who remains largely hidden in our history. Having begun writing poetry the year before he earned his doctorate in 1803, Wallin would go on to write or translate more than 150 hymns that would be included in *Den Svenska Psalmboken* (The Swedish Hymnbook) and various American Lutheran hymnals, as well as those of other denominations.



The son of a soldier, he was ordained priest (many Lutheran churches around the world, especially in Scandinavia, use “pastor” and “priest” almost

interchangeably) in 1806 and continued a life that was rooted in both the academic and parish ministries. He served various pastorates up to 1818, when he was appointed dean (head cathedral priest) of Västerås. In 1824 he was consecrated as bishop and in 1837 Wallin was appointed as the Archbishop of Uppsala, the leader of the Church of Sweden. He only held that position for two years, as he died suddenly at the age of 59 in 1839.

In addition to his writing and pastoral work, Wallin was passionate about education in Sweden and was an early champion of serious education for women and girls. At the time of his death and through much of the rest of the century, he was known as one of the most beloved Swedish writers. The Lutheran Book of Worship includes hymns of his, amongst them “All Hail to You, O Blessed Morn,” “Christians, While on Earth Abiding,” and “We Worship You, O God of Might.”

His hymn “O Bride of Christ, Rejoice,” written in 1816, bids us to prepare for a triumphant arrival of Christ onto the world scene, relying upon the kingly entrance imagery of Psalm 24. That theme of the king’s triumphant arrival is coupled with the image of the arriving bridegroom in Matthew 25:6. By singing this hymn in Advent, we sing to the twofold nature of this season: preparing for the yearly celebration of Christ’s first coming in his birth at Bethlehem, and joyfully looking forward to his second coming, to claim his bride, the church.

**1 O Bride of Christ, rejoice!
Exultant raise thy voice
To hail the day of glory,
Foretold in sacred story.**

**3 He wears no kingly crown
Yet as a king He's known;
Though not arrayed in splendor,
He still makes death surrender.**

**5 E'en babes with one accord
With thee shall praise the Lord,
And every gentile nation
Respond with exultation.**

**2 Let shouts of gladness rise
Triumphant to the skies.
Here comes the King most glorious
To reign o'er all victorious**

**4 Thy heart now open wide,
Bid Christ with thee abide;
He graciously will hear thee,
And be forever near thee.**

Refrain
**Hosanna, praise and glory,
Our King, we bow before Thee.**

Easton Holiday Christmas Parade

Saturday, December 6th at 6:00pm in Easton



This year our Shared Ministry has reserved a place in the Easton Holiday Christmas parade! Now we need to create a meaningful and beautiful float or display to carry the true message of Christmas to all. Friends and members of both Grace and St. Paul's Churches are encouraged to come walk in the parade!

For more information, please contact Jan Krut at 410-822-6232 or email at mdmimi3@goeaston.net.

Advent Lessons and Carols



An Advent Celebration with
Organ Music, Hymns, Choral Music, and Scriptures

At Grace Lutheran Church in Easton

David Nicholson, Organ
The Vespers Choir

Sunday, December 14th at 4:00pm
With Reception Following

Join us on Sunday, December 15th, as we enjoy great music at Grace Church in Easton, and sing along with carols and other seasonal favorites. Scripture and song will tell the story of the coming of Christ into the world and God's love for all humanity. Organist David Nicholson will lead us in song and the choir of Grace Church will offer special music.

Children's Christmas Program at St. Paul's Church

Sunday, December 21st 4:30pm
Dinner to follow



This is a great opportunity for all of us, across our Area Ministry, to support and encourage our young ones participating in Sunday School. We invite everyone, with special invitation to the friends and families of Sunday School students, to join us for a fun evening of Word and song, as our younger ones help us to prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth!

Advent Hymn

Wake! Awake! For Night is Flying

If ever there was a hymn which could be known as the

quintessential Advent hymn, it may very well be "**Wake! Awake! For Night is Flying!**" or in German, "*Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*." This hymn, written by one of the fathers of Lutheran hymnody, Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608), has as its foundation the text of Matthew 25:1-13, which we will hear on the Second Sunday of Advent. This text is known to us as the parable of the "wise and foolish maidens." The wise, of course, have prepared themselves for the arrival of the bridegroom by making sure their lamps have oil, and the foolish neglected such. This hymn calls us wakefulness in no uncertain terms. The watchmen are jubilant as the thrilling cry announces to us the Lord's arrival. The translation we use was done by Catherine Winkworth.



Nicolai wrote this text in the midst of unspeakable calamity. He wrote this hymn in 1599, but from July 1597 to January 1598, his own parish where he was pastor, Unna, Westphalia, was stricken so hard with the plague that 1300 lives were taken and in one day alone he officiated 30 burials. It cannot be overstated how this hymn should be seen as the promise of Good News and hope in Christ for people living in devastation.

Beginning this work in 1724, **Johann Sebastian Bach**, also a father of Lutheran music, wrote a cantata based on Nicolai's hymn and tune. Cantata BWV 140 "*Wachet Auf, Ruft Uns Die Stimme*" is best recognized for its fourth movement, a chorale fantasia, with two melodies dancing around each other, one of which is the hymn tune as the second verse of the hymn is sung. This cantata was first performed at St. Nicholas' Church in Leipzig on November 25th, 1731. That fourth movement would become the model for the first chorale prelude for organ in a series of six chorale preludes in the Schübler Chorales, published 1747-1748. BWV 645 *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* remains standard, favorite repertoire for organists to this day, usually played in Advent on the Sunday the corresponding Gospel and Nicolai's hymn appear in the liturgy.

1 "Wake, awake, for night is flying," the watchmen on the heights are crying; "awake, Jerusalem, arise!"

Midnight hears the welcome voices, and at the thrilling cry rejoices: "Oh, where are all you virgins wise?"

The Bridegroom comes, awake! Your lamps with gladness take! Alleluia!

With bridal care yourselves prepare to meet the Bridegroom, who is near."

2 Zion hears the watchmen singing, and all her heart with joy is springing; she wakes, she rises from her gloom.

For her Lord comes down all-glorious, the strong in grace, in truth victorious; her star is ris'n, her light is come.

Now come, O Blessed One, Christ Jesus, God's own Son. Hail! Hosanna!

We enter all the marriage hall to eat the Supper at your call.

3 Now let all the heav'n's adore you, let saints and angels sing before you with harp and cymbal's clearest tone.

Of one pearl each shining portal, where, dwelling with the choir immortal, we gather round your radiant throne.

No vision ever brought, no ear has ever caught such great glory;

therefore will we in victory sing hymns of praise eternally.

An Advent Tradition

The Moravian Star

A popular symbol from the beginning of Advent through the end of Epiphany is called the *Herrnhuter Stern*, or in English the “Moravian Star.” This tradition finds its root not in liturgical celebrations, but in an educational setting.



Predating the emergence of the Lutheran Reformation and the Lutheran Church, another gathering of Christians seeking to reform their religious and spiritual lives came up in the region of Moravia, which is now in the Czech Republic. The Moravians, whose church is also called the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Unity of the Brethren, trace back to the reformer Jan Hus, who was martyred at the Council of Constance in 1415. Like Luther, Hus sought to put the Scriptures in the hands of the Christian faithful, and also like Luther, abhorred the practice of only distributing the consecrated bread to the laity, instead of both the bread and the chalice.

Out of the Moravian tradition would arise a significant missionary movement which would find its way to North America. The Moravian Church would make great establishments in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Communities such as Bethlehem, PA, Nazareth, PA, and Winston-Salem, NC are originally Moravian communities.

One priority of Moravian missionary activity is the maintaining of schools – many of them boarding schools. It is in the Moravian Boys’ School in Niesky, Germany that the Moravian Star has its origin. There, a 26-point star, called a **rhombicuboctahedron** was created as a geometry project. Peter Verbeek, who himself attended that school, would go on to manufacture the stars for sale. His son Harry would continue that business in the Moravian headquarters town of Herrnhut in Saxony. Moravian Stars are made to this day in Herrnhut and may be ordered online (look for the Abraham Dürninger Company).

Lutherans developed a special love for the Moravian Star. The Star may be found in our churches across the world. One of the most famous ones may be found suspended over the altar in the Thomaskirche in Leipzig – the very church where Johann Sebastian Bach was Kantor.

Now, from the Himalayas to the Caribbean, the star proclaims the hope of Advent. Whatever its form, the star reminds us of God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness and of the light which is the life of humanity. It reminds us of the promise of Abraham that his descendants would be more numerous than the stars; we are reminded of the star that pointed to the “great and heavenly light from Bethlehem’s manger shining bright.” The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. This is the message of the Advent star, which also points to Jesus, who said, “I am the bright and Morning Star” (Revelation 22:16). It is the star of promise, the star of fulfillment, and the star of hope.

Watch for where the Moravian Star appears in our churches this year!



Christmas Eve

O Come, Let Us Adore Him!



The Festival Eucharist of Christmas Eve

December 24th

4:00pm

Grace Lutheran Church
Of Easton

7:00pm

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Of Cordova

Pre-service Carols at 3:40pm

Pre-service Carols at 6:40pm

The parish churches of the Chesapeake Country Area Ministry warmly invite everyone to our celebrations of the Festival Eucharist of Christmas! Come sing your favorite Christmas carols, such as "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "O Come, All Ye Faithful," and many more. But more importantly, join with us in joyful, thankful celebration that God is with us – God's love is manifest amongst us as He takes on flesh to live amongst us and to be our salvation!



The Shepherds' Mass

Die Hirtenmesse

11:00pm, with Pre-service Carols at 10:45pm

Grace Lutheran Church of Easton



The Christ child is in Bethlehem's manger and the shepherds, die *Hirtenfolk*, or shepherds, who have been watching their flocks in the fields by night, have come, by the message of an angel.

You are invited to come and worship Christ the newborn King during the Shepherd's Mass, worship at **11:00** on Christmas Eve. This service will be more *quiet and gentle in nature*, as compared to the principal Festival Eucharist earlier in the evening. Don't miss this chance to adore the Christ child in the simplicity of the manger! Carols will include *Stille Nacht* (Silent Night), *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen* (Lo! How a Rose E'er Blooming), Angels We Have Heard on High, and Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence, and many others.

"On Christmas Day in the Morning..."



**December 25th
Christmas Morning**

**Coffee Hour
8:30am**

**The Holy Eucharist
9:30am**

St. Paul's Church

from the Service Book and Hymnal (1958)

The Christmas celebration continues! A service of Christmas Carols and Holy Communion will be celebrated at St. Paul's on **Christmas morning at 9:30am**. Come sing the traditional Christmas morning carols and celebrate the new day that Christ brings to us all.

Come early on Christmas morning for the old Swedish tradition of Julotta! This word comes from "jul," or "Yule," and "otta," which means "morning" or "dawn." Literally, it is the dawn of Christmas!

This tradition embodies the excitement of Christmas morning. In some places, it would be a race to the church as soon as the sun rose. The first person to arrive would receive a gift. In other places, people raced home after Christmas morning worship and it was believed that the first person who arrived home would have the best crops of the next year.

Our Julotta will be a coffee hour hosted by Pastor Moyers at 8:30 on Christmas morning. However, you do not have to worry about being the first to arrive, as everyone will receive a Christmas gift. Along with the gift, we will share pastries along with our coffee or tea. Worship will begin at 9:30am



Sunday Lectionary Readings in Advent

The First Sunday of Advent – November 16th

Old Testament	Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalms	80:1-7, 16-18
New Testament	1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Gospel	Matthew 21:1-9



The Second Sunday of Advent – November 23th

Old Testament	Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
Psalms	122
New Testament	Acts 13:14b-26
Gospel	Mark 13:24-37



The Third Sunday of Advent – November 30th

Old Testament	Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalms	85:1-2, 8-13
New Testament	Romans 13:11-14
Gospel	Matthew 25:1-13



The Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 7th

Old Testament	Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalms	72:1-7, 18-19
New Testament	Philippians 4:4-7
Gospel	Luke 3:1-9

The Fifth Sunday of Advent – December 14th

Old Testament	Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalms	89:1-4, 19-26
New Testament	Hebrews 10:4-10
Gospel	Luke 1:26-38

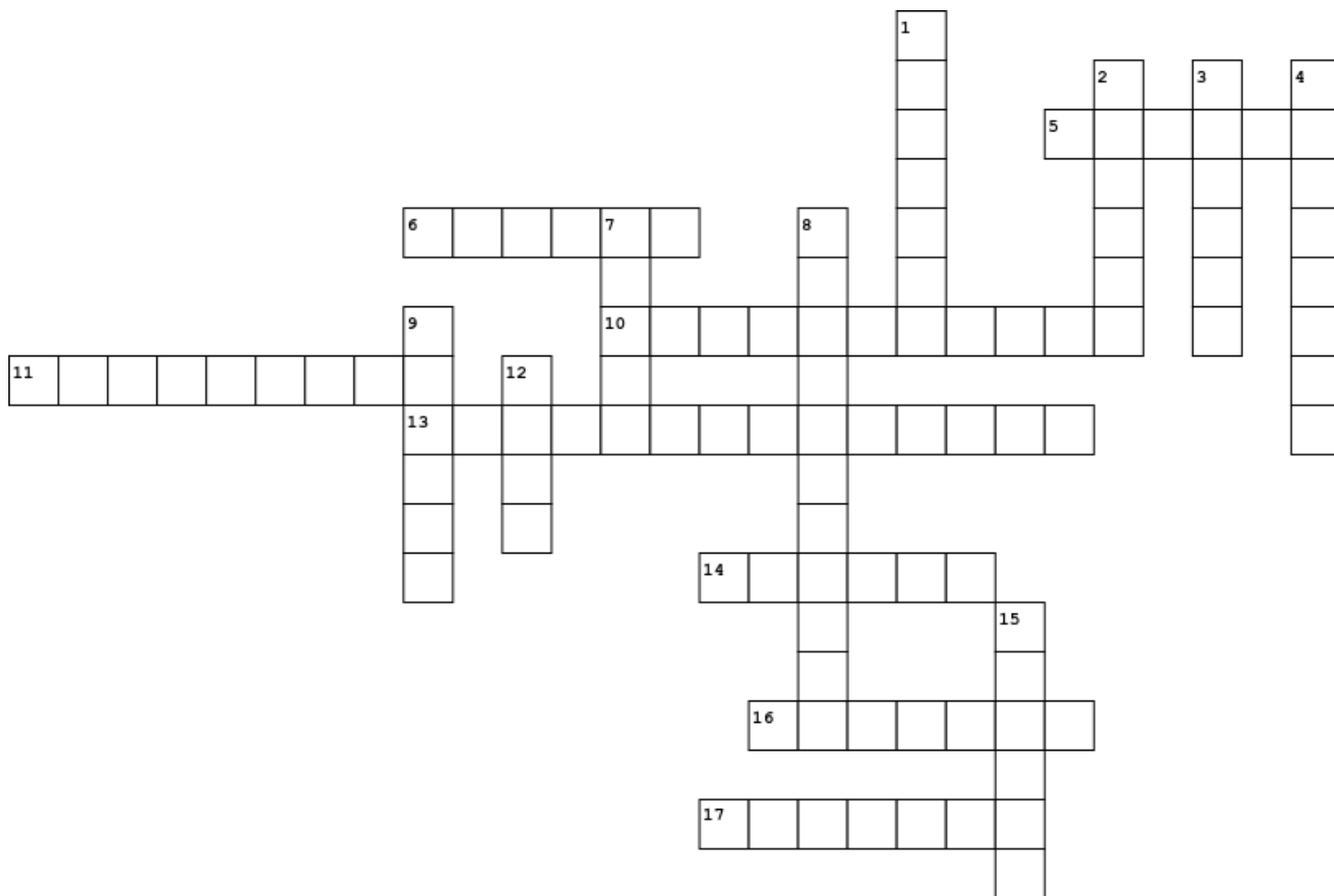


The Sixth Sunday of Advent – December 21st

Old Testament	Micah 5:2-4
Psalms	24
New Testament	Romans 12:9-16b
Gospel	Luke 1:39-55



Advent Crossword



Across

5. A sunrise Advent liturgy commemorating the Virgin Mary
6. A circle of greenery and candles to mark Advent Sundays
10. A set of stational devotions for Advent
11. Latin word for wisdom
13. "Little Christmas Eve" in Danish
14. Number of days in Christmastide
16. English hymnist who arranged "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"
17. Author of "Wake! Awake!"

Down

1. The Swedish celebration of the dawn of Christmas
2. The last eight nights of Advent
3. Prophet from the Apocrypha featured in our Bible study
4. City in France known for watchmaking
7. French village with ecumenical monastery known for simple music
8. Another word for Shepherds' Mass
9. Swedish Archbishop who wrote "O Bride of Christ"
12. The liturgical color for Advent
15. Saint who got ratted out by a flock of geese

OUR DAILY CALENDAR

Wednesday, November 12th

The First Day of Advent

5:00pm Vespers Grace

Thursday, November 13th

6:30pm Advent Contemplative Evening Service St. Paul's

Sunday, November 16th

The First Sunday of Advent

8:45am Holy Eucharist St. Paul's
10:45am Holy Eucharist Grace

Tuesday, November 18th

St. Hilda of Whitby

8:30am Matins St. Paul's
9:00am Bible Study St. Paul's

Wednesday, November 19th

St. Elizabeth of Hungary

5:00pm Vespers Grace

Thursday, November 20th

St. Edmund

6:30pm Advent Contemplative Service St. Paul's

Sunday, November 23rd

The Second Sunday of Advent

8:45am Holy Eucharist St. Paul's
10:45am Holy Eucharist Grace

Tuesday, November 25th

7:30am Turkey Roasting St. Paul's
8:30am Matins St. Paul's
9:00am Bible Study St. Paul's
1:00pm Turkey Picking St. Paul's
7:00pm Thanksgiving Service St. Paul's

Wednesday, November 26th

THANKSGIVING EVE

Church Offices Closed

ADVENT

OUR DAILY CALENDAR

Thursday, November 27th

THANKSGIVING DAY

Church Offices Closed

Sunday, November 30th

The Third Sunday of Advent

8:45am	Holy Eucharist	St. Paul's
10:45am	Holy Eucharist	Grace

Monday, December 1st

ST. ANDREW, APOSTLE

5:00pm	Stations of the Incarnation	Grace
5:45pm	Holy Eucharist	

Tuesday, December 2nd

8:30am	Matins	St. Paul's
9:00am	Bible Study	St. Paul's

Wednesday, December 3rd

St. Francis Xavier

5:00pm	Vespers	Grace
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Thursday, December 4th

St. John of Damascus

6:30pm	Advent Contemplative Service	St. Paul's
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Friday, December 5th

Eve of St. Nicholas

5:00pm	Holy Eucharist	Grace
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Saturday, December 6th

6:00am	Sunrise Rorate Liturgy	St. Paul's
6:00pm	Easton Holiday Parade	Easton

Sunday, December 7th

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

8:45am	Holy Eucharist	St. Paul's
10:45am	Holy Eucharist	Grace

Monday, December 8th

THE CONCEPTION OF THE BVM

5:00pm	Holy Eucharist	Grace
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Tuesday, December 9th

8:30am	Matins	St. Paul's
9:00am	Bible Study	St. Paul's

ADVENT

OUR DAILY CALENDAR

Wednesday, December 10th

5:00pm	Vespers	Grace
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Thursday, December 11th

5:30pm	Stations of the Incarnation	St. Paul's
6:30pm	Advent Contemplative Service	St. Paul's

Saturday, December 13th Saint Lucia

8:30am	Coffee and Pastries
9:00am	Holy Eucharist

Sunday, December 14th The Fifth Sunday of Advent

8:45am	Holy Eucharist	St. Paul's
10:45am	Holy Eucharist	Grace
4:00pm	Advent Lessons and Carols	Grace

Tuesday, December 16th *The Golden Nights begin*

O Sapientia

8:30am	Matins	St. Paul's
9:00am	Bible Study	St. Paul's
5:00pm	Vespers	St. Paul's

Wednesday, December 17th

O Adonai

5:00pm	Vespers	Grace
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Thursday, December 18th

O Radix Jesse

6:30pm	Vespers/Advent Contemplative Service	St. Paul's
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Friday, December 19th

O Clavis David

5:00pm	Vespers	St. Paul's
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Saturday, December 20th Katharina von Bora

O Oriens

4:15pm	Stations of the Incarnation	Grace
5:00pm	Vespers	Grace

ADVENT

OUR DAILY CALENDAR

Sunday, December 21st The Sixth Sunday of Advent

O Rex Gentium

8:45am	Holy Eucharist	St. Paul's
10:45am	Holy Eucharist	Grace
4:30pm	Children's Program and Dinner	St. Paul's
7:15pm	Vespers	St. Paul's

Monday, December 22nd St. Thomas (transferred)

O Emmanuel

5:00pm	Vespers	Grace
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Tuesday, December 23rd
Lillejuleaften, "Little Christmas Eve"

O Virgo Virginum

5:00pm	Vespers	Grace
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Wednesday, December 24th CHRISTMAS EVE

4:00pm	The Festival Eucharist of Christmas Eve <i>With Pre-service Carols at 3:40pm</i>	Grace
7:00pm	The Festival Eucharist of Christmas Eve <i>With Pre-service Carols at 6:40pm</i>	St. Paul's
11:00pm	The Shepherd's Mass <i>With Pre-service Carols at 10:45</i>	Grace

Thursday, December 25th CHRISTMAS DAY

8:30am	Coffee Hour	St. Paul's
9:30am	Carols and Holy Communion	St. Paul's



EMMANUEL

Contact Us

You are invited to be in contact with us at any time. We especially welcome questions about the events you find in this brochure. For any inquiries, please be in direct contact with Pastor Moyers.

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church

12095 Blades Road
Cordova, Maryland 21625
(410) 364-5147
info@stpaulscordova.org
stpaulscordova.org
www.facebook.com/stpaulscordova

Sunday Eucharist 8:45am
Sunday School 10:00am

Grace Lutheran Church

111 Brookletts Avenue
Easton, Maryland 21601
(410) 822-2904
gracechurcheastonmd@gmail.com
gracelutheranchurcheaston.org
www.facebook.com/gracelutheraneaston.org

Sunday Eucharist 10:45am

The Rev. Jonathon Moyers, S.T.M., Pastor

(304) 400-5379
revjmoyers@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/shorelutherans





Annunciation, Artist Unknown, c. 1420



Shore Lutherans

Chesapeake Country Area Ministry