

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH and ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Our Mission: Learn God's Truth, Share Spirit's Healing, Follow Jesus' Ways.
Third Sunday of Advent, December 14, 2025
Virtual Prayer and Preaching Worship

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**The CHURCH'S GATHERING**

**CONFESSION and FORGIVENESS**

We bless the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,  
whose home is heaven and earth,  
whose salvation is sure. **Amen**



Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.  
*Silence is kept for reflection.* Long-expected God, **we confess that we look to ourselves for the peace and security only you can provide. We reach for swords and spears, reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war. We become impatient while waiting and weary of keeping awake. Free us from self-reliance, and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors. Increase our trust in God's timing, and awaken us to your advent among us, that we may abound in the hope you have promised. Amen**

God judges us not as we deserve, but according to God's own righteousness. You are freed and forgiven, saved by ☩ grace, and ready to welcome the Savior. **Amen**

**GREETING and PRAYER of the DAY**

We bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

**Oh, come, let us worship and praise our God.**

Emmanuel, come; **hear our prayer.** *A brief silence.* Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

**GOD'S WORD**

**READING: Isaiah 35:1-10** *Contemporary English Version*

*The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.*

This is a reading from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 35.  
Here is a message for all who are weak, trembling, and worried:

"Cheer up! Don't be afraid.

**Your God is coming to punish your enemies.  
God will take revenge on them and rescue you."**

The blind will see, and the ears of the deaf will be healed.

**Those who were lame will leap around like deer;  
tongues once silent will shout for joy.**

Water will rush through the desert.

**Scorching sand will turn into a lake,  
and thirsty ground will flow with fountains.**

Grass will grow in deserts,

**where packs of wild dogs once made their home.**

A good road will be there,

**and it will be named "God's Sacred Highway."**

It will be for God's people;

**no one unfit to worship God will walk on that road.**

**And no fools can travel on that highway.**

No lions or other wild animals will come near that road;

**only those the LORD has saved will travel there.**

The people the LORD has rescued

**will come back singing as they enter Zion.**

Happiness will be a crown everyone will always wear.

**They will celebrate and shout**

**because all sorrows and worries**

**will be gone far away.**

This is God's Word, our hope.

### **HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11**

*John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.*

This is the Holy Gospel as the Word was given to Matthew, the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter.

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you.'

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

This is the Good News of Christ's victory!

**HYMN of the DAY: # 264 "Prepare the Royal Highway"**

- 1 Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near!  
Let ev'ry hill and valley a level road appear!  
Then greet the King of glory, foretold in sacred story:  
Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!
- 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!  
Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!
- 3 Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised king!  
Your king, yet ev'ry nation its tribute too may bring.  
All lands will bow before him; their voices join your singing:  
Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!
- 4 His is no earthly kingdom; it comes from heav'n above.  
His rule is peace and freedom and justice, truth, and love.  
So let your praise be sounding for kindness so abounding:  
Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772-1847; tr. Lutheran Book of Worship  
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**MESSAGE:**        *Hope*        *silence for reflection follows*

**The CHURCH PRAYS**

**PRAYERS of the PEOPLE**

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

*A brief silence.*

God of power and mercy, we praise you for Jesus and his acts of healing and liberation. Lead us to proclaim the good news from generation to generation, that all may place their hope in you. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

When lands are parched and dry, bring rain and snow.; where wilderness is barren, sow seeds of life. Fill the lands with trees that grow, plants that flower, and creatures that thrive, as nature proclaims the wonder of your works. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

When there is injustice or corruption among nations and leaders, root it out. Turn their attention to inequity and the cries of the poor. Instill a deeper sense of compassion and care in all who govern. Protect those caught on the world's battlefields. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

When people are imprisoned or held captive, break the chains and offer release. Strengthen the work of the church in restorative justice, breaking cycles of poverty, and welcoming the immigrant, especially we pray for Global Refuge and Lutheran Social Services. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. In uncertain times, remind us of the promise spoken to our ancestors in faith. We pray for ELCA Bishop Yehiel Curry, Bishop Bill Gohl, Ebenezer Grace Worship, those hospitalized or recuperating at home, John, Greg, Lori, Mary Lue, Lynn, Linda, Will, our at-home worshippers, ... God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

As we await your coming, we give thanks for the faithful who have lived and died in faith, especially Mary, mother of Jesus, and John of the Cross. May their boldness of faith inspire our witness and work. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. **Amen**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Blessing God's holy name, we 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**

### **SPIRIT'S SENDING**

#### **PRAYER for MISSION**

Holy God, **hear our prayer.** *A brief silence.* God our hope, **in the Word made flesh, you share with us joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share and welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus. Amen**

**BLESSING and PEACE**

May God who comes among us, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit,  
grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness,  
and good news to share today and always. **Amen**

The peace of Christ is with you always. **And also with you.**

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John of the Cross, renewer of the church, died 1591

John was a monk of the Carmelite religious order who met Teresa of Àvila when she was working to reform the Carmelite Order and return it to a stricter observance of its rules. He followed Teresa's lead and encouraged others to follow her reform. He was imprisoned when he encountered opposition to the reform. His writings, like Teresa's, reflect a deep interest in mystical thought and meditation. In one of John's poems, "The Spiritual Canticle," he cried, "Oh, that my griefs would end! Come, grant me thy fruition full and free!"

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Today's Sponsorships

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*Altar Flowers are Given to the Glory of God*

In Honor of Amy Stockdale's birthday.

Given by her mother, Irma Stockdale.

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Worship Folders are Given to the Glory of God

In Honor of Ruth May's December 18th birthday.

Given by her cousin, Carole.

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Attendance for December 7, 2025: 68

### ***Learning, Serving, and Fellowship Opportunities***

**Sponsorships Available:** Altar flowers for 8:45 am. worship on 12/21 & 1/4 (contact the church office). Altar flowers for 10:15 am. worship on 12/28 (contact Nancy Barnes).

**Christmas Holiday Closing:** The church office and St. Peter's Elementary School will be closed from December 22, 2025 – January 2, 2026.

**Christmas Eve Worship:** 7:00 pm. and Candlelight worship at 10:30 pm.

**Christmas Caroling:** Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. from Epiphany Lutheran (4301 Raspe Ave., 21206). Join us as we wander through the Cedmont community singing carols for our neighbors. We'll meet in the courtyard at 7 pm. for a hot beverage and collect our song sheets.

**Blue Christmas:** Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at 7 pm. at Epiphany Lutheran (4301 Raspe Ave., 21206). For those who experience sadness during this Advent season, please join us for an uplifting service.

**New Year's Eve Service:** Wednesday, December 31<sup>st</sup> at 7 pm. at Epiphany Lutheran (4301 Raspe Ave., 21206). Begin your evening with thanks for the blessings in 2025 and prayers for a blessed 2026. After worship we will have a champagne reception with champagne and sparkling cider toast!

**Epiphany Day Celebration:** Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. at Epiphany Lutheran (4301 Raspe Ave., 21206). Come and celebrate the arrival of the Magi with worship and lite meal following.

**St. Peter's Family Goods Center:** If you are interested in volunteering for the Family Goods Center, please contact Bill Lauer. This is a great opportunity for service hours for your middle or high school student, and volunteer hours for SPES families. Please place donations in the shopping cart in the Narthex.

**On-line Giving:** As an alternate way of submitting your offering, you can make donations on-line through PayPal! Login to your PayPal account and search for our tag: @Spl367 or St. Peter's Lutheran Church and Christian Day School.

***News from St. Peter's Elementary School and PACE***

Open enrollment for the 2026-27 school year begins in January! Contact the office at 410-665-4521 if you have questions or want to schedule a tour. Referrals are always welcome!

Our annual Christmas pageant will be held on Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. New this year – all grades will be participating!