



Being present

with

JOY

3rd Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2023



Ascension Lutheran Church

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Ogden, UT 84404

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Welcome to Worship...

Welcome to all God's guests, including those who call themselves "members" of this church named Ascension Lutheran Church more than 50 years ago.

A special welcome to guests who are here for the first time or who call yourselves "visitors" among the people of this community. It is at God's invitation, through worship, the Holy Spirit calls each of us to come to a place of **community, communion** and **commitment**. Each of us brings a different lens to worship, and yet, in a worshiping community, these differences become celebrations of diversity.

**Children are always welcome in worship services;
however please know a nursery space is available for
parents who need to tend to their little ones.**

Introduction

Advent can be filled with worry about finding the perfect Christmas gifts. Deep down we want people in our lives to know they are special and that we love them. But sometimes we overlook the greatest gift of all... our very presence. Our spiritual ancestors were also worried — often about survival in the midst of political occupation. And the response of the scriptures is "the Holy Living One is with you." Like a shepherd who never leaves the flock, we are held close. This season, we are invited to be the gift of presence for our loved ones, for our communities, for those who need it most.

Being Present with Joy

Welcome to Worship

P ...We can simply be a gift of presence; we can give our hearts.

Cantors *What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise One, I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.*

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

WA We unwrap a present on this third Sunday of Advent with great anticipation for the gift that God will reveal.

All **We open our hearts as we open the gift!**

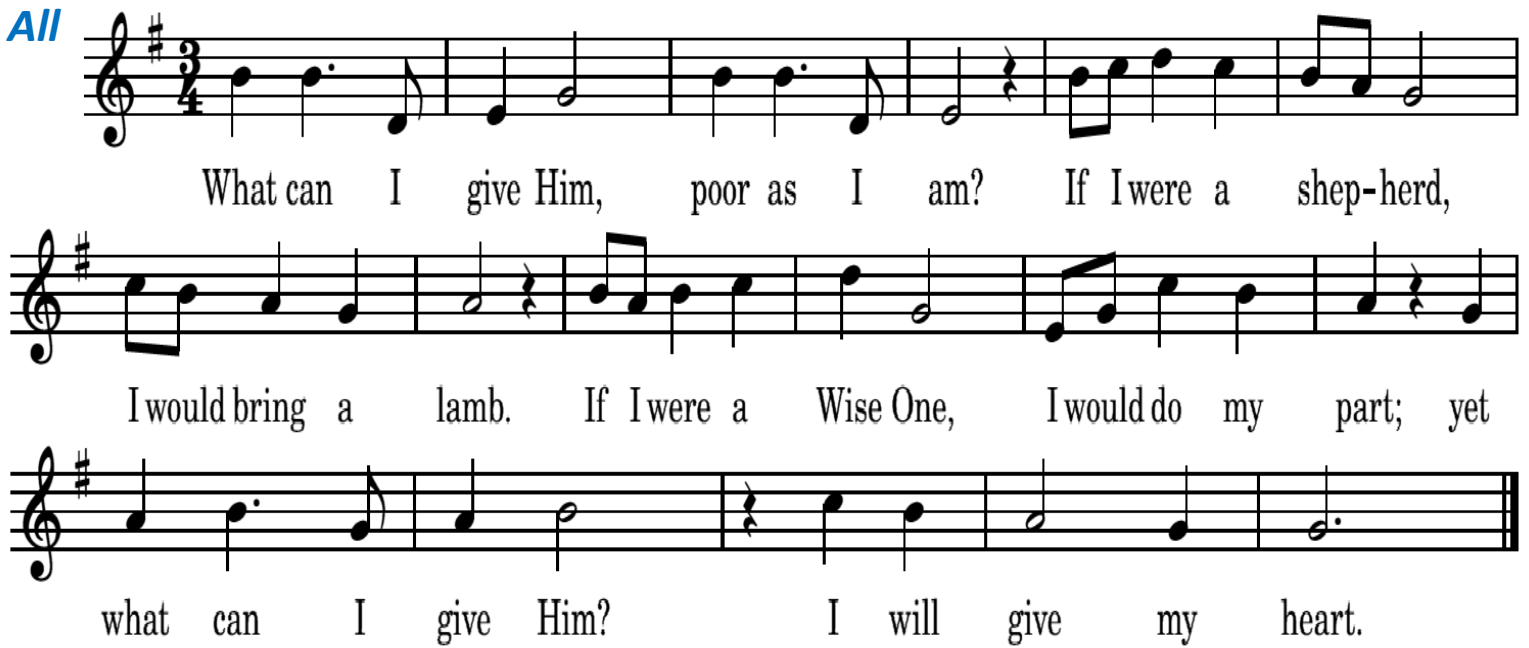
WA The promise of Joy is the Divine Gift we receive.

All **And what will we do with it?**

WA The gift of joy is not the equivalent of happiness, but rather the deep conviction that we are called to be present in the work of bringing about “great things” — a better world for those who need it most.

All **We light this Candle of Joy as a sign that we will be Present with Joy in the world.**

All



What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shep-herd,
 I would bring a lamb. If I were a Wise One, I would do my part; yet
 what can I give Him? I will give my heart.

P Let us pray:
 Holy Living Light of God, you are our Joyful Presence.

All Let this joy grow in our lives each day,
 so we can be a Present of Joy to others.
 Unwrap and open our hearts.
 May it be so. Amen.

A Responsive Reading from Isaiah, the 61st chapter

The prophet Isaiah declares that there is great joy when we know, and do, what is right. This scripture was powerful in the time when the Babylonian exile was over and the Hebrew people needed the words to express their praise and thanks. And it was powerful when Jesus used these same words to refer to the heart of the purpose of his ministry. Salvation from oppression and the joy of God continue to proceed through the ages hand-in-hand. Let us read responsively:

*God has sent me to bring good news to those who are poor;
 to heal broken hearts;
 to proclaim release to those held captive
 and liberation to those in prison;
 to announce a year of favor from YHWH, and the day of God's vindication;
 to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve in Zion —
 to give them a wreath of flowers instead of ashes,
 the oil of gladness instead of tears, a cloak of praise instead of despair.*

*They will be known as trees of integrity,
planted by YHWH to display God's glory.*

***They will restore the ancient ruins,
and rebuild sites long devastated;
they will repair the ruined cities,
neglected for generations...***

***They will be known as trees of integrity,
planted by YHWH to display God's glory.***

I will joyfully exult in YHWH, who is the joy of my soul!

Isaiah 61: 1-4; 10

A Reading from Psalm 126

The Psalms are also written in the same time period — some poems of lament from exile and some written in the style of praise after the exile is over. Psalm 126 refers to the almost-unbelievable joy of returning to the homeland.

When YHWH brought us captives back to Zion, we thought we were dreaming!
Our mouths were filled with laughter then, our tongues with songs of joy.
And from the nations we heard, “Their God has done great things for them.”
Yes — YHWH has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Psalm 126: 1-3

L Word of God, Word of **Life**.

All Thanks be to God!

Offering of Song

Stefani Rhees & Madi Rhees

Mary, Did You Know?

Gospel Acclamation

Please stand in body or spirit.

Em - man - u - el, _____ Em - man - u - el, _____

_____ His name is called _____ Em - man - u - el: _____

_____ God with us, _____ re - vealed in us! _____

_____ His name is called _____ Em - man - u - el. _____

Gospel Reading

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st chapter.

All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Luke is the Gospel author we draw from this week. The account of Mary visiting Elizabeth is the context for a description of joy that resides even in the midst of uncertainty and possible harm to Mary, the young pregnant woman at the margins of society. She believes with her whole heart that the child in her womb is just as the angel has declared... a gift from God, of God, the holiest of matter.

As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why am I so favored, that the mother of the Messiah should come to me? The moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed that what our God said to her would be accomplished!"

Mary said:

"My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,
and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.
For you have looked with favor

upon your lowly servant,
and from this day forward
all generations will call me blessed.
For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,
and holy is your Name.
Your mercy reaches from age to age
for those who fear you.
You have shown strength with your arm;
you have scattered the proud in their conceit;
you have deposed the mighty from their thrones
and raised the lowly to high places.
You have filled the hungry with good things,
while you have sent the rich away empty.
You have come to the aid of Israel your servant,
mindful of your mercy —
the promise you made to our ancestors —
to Sarah and Abraham
and their descendants forever.”

Luke 1: 41-55

P The Gospel of our Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.

[You may be Seated](#)

Message

Pr. Debra Jimenez

the Magnificat

The Annunciation
Luke 1:26-38

Cantors:

An angel went from God to a town called Nazareth,
to a woman whose name was Mary.

The angel said to her, "Rejoice, O highly favored, for God is with you.
You shall bear a child, and his name shall be Jesus,
the Chosen One of God Most High."

And Mary said, "I am the servant of my God, I live to do His will.

The Magnificat

Luke 1:46-55



1.3. My soul pro - claims your
2. You have cast the might - y



great-ness, O God, and my spir - it re-joic - es in
down from their thrones, and up lift - ed the hum - ble of



you, You have looked with love on your
heart, You have filled the hun - gry with



ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life through.
won-drous things, and left the wealth - y no part.



Great and might - y are you, O Ho - ly One,
Great and might - y are you, O Faith-ful One,



strong is your kind - ness ev - er - more.
strong is your jus - tice strong your love,



How you fa - vor the weak and low - ly one,
As you prom-ised to Sar-ah and A - bra - ham,



hum - bling the proud of heart.
kind - ness for - ev - er - more.

Apostles' Creed

P Let us join together with the saints across the ages confessing our faith with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

You may be Seated

L With joy and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world,
 and all who await God's day of restoration.

Right here and right now we o-pen our sen-
 ses to see and per-ceive the gifts we've been giv-
 en, to know and be-lieve that what we must do is
 o-pen our hearts to let all gifts flow through.

(each prayer petition ends with)

L: Merciful God,

All: **Receive our prayer.**

Sharing the Joy of Christ

Please stand in body or spirit.

In our continued physical distancing out of love for the health of one another, we will share the joy of our risen Lord by “speaking” that joy through sign language.

P Christ become Joy with you.

All And also with you.

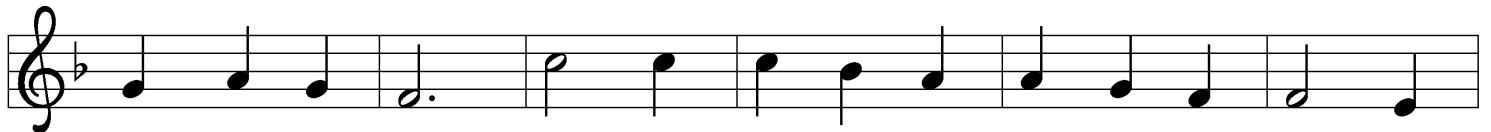
Offering

You may be Seated

While we still will not physically pass the offering plates we will continue to have the plates available at the entrance to receive your offerings and will lift them up in thanksgiving before the throne of grace.



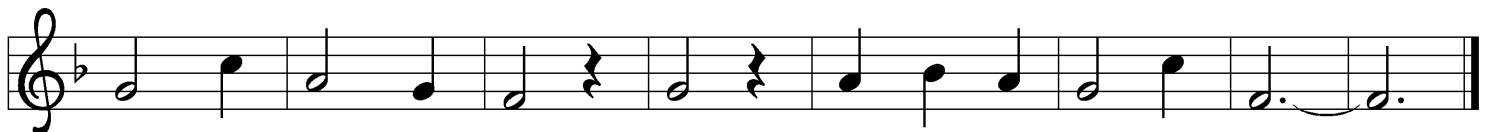
1 Love has come— a light in the dark - ness! Love shines forth in the



Beth - le - hem skies. See, all heav - en has come to pro - claim it;



hear how their song of joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to



you, a Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.

Offertory Prayer

P God of our waiting and watching, we offer the gifts of our hearts and our lives to the service of all your people.

All Prepare the way before us as we meet you in this simple meal, through Christ Jesus, our pathway and our joy.

Confession and Assurance

Please stand in body or spirit.

P God of joy,

All We cut ourselves off from being present with you.

We distance ourselves from the joy that is ours as your heirs
in the family of God.

It seems too wonderful a gift!

Yet, the Shepherd comes to find us, leading us gently back into safety,
back into care, back into relationship.

P People of God, know this... there are gifts with your name on them -
gifts called Grace,

called Forgiveness,

called "Assurance."

They are yours whenever you accept and open them.

They are already and always there for you.

You do not have to be good enough to get them.

They are yours already because that is the nature of our loving God,
God-with-us, Emmanuel.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

All Glory to God, Amen

You may be Seated

The Great Thanksgiving and Words of Institution

To the tune of What Child is This?

P ♪ ♪ The Lord be with you. ♪ ♪

All *And with you too.*

We lift our hearts to God.

P *Let us give thanks.*

All *Its right to do*

We open our hearts to let gifts flow through.



P

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Almighty God, Gift-Giver of all that exists.

You formed us in your image
and breathed into us the breath of life.
When we turned away, and our love failed,
your love remained steadfast.

You delivered us from captivity,
made covenant to be our sovereign God,
and spoke to us through your prophets.

And so,
with your people on earth
and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

All  *Praise God, Praise God of pow'r and might,* 
Praise God whose presence shines through our night.
Praise God of glory, hosannas sing,
reflecting the sacred story.

P

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.

Your Spirit anointed him

to preach good news to the poor,

to proclaim release to the captives

and recovering of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

and to announce that the time had come

when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners

and made with us a new covenant.

When the Lord Jesus ascended,

he promised the gift of his presence with us always,

in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

The Invitation

P In this meal, righteousness and joy meet together.
Come, take your place at the table.

Note: the communion cups on the periphery of the tray contain red wine while the cups in the center contain white grape juice.

Gluten Free wafers available –ask the communion attendant

Communion Songs

You may be Seated

I Wonder as I Wander



1 I won - der as I wan - der, out un - der the sky, how
2 When Mar - y birthed . . . Je - sus, all in a cow's stall, came
3 If Je - sus had . . . want - ed for an - y wee thing, a
4 I won - der as I wan - der, out un - der the sky, how

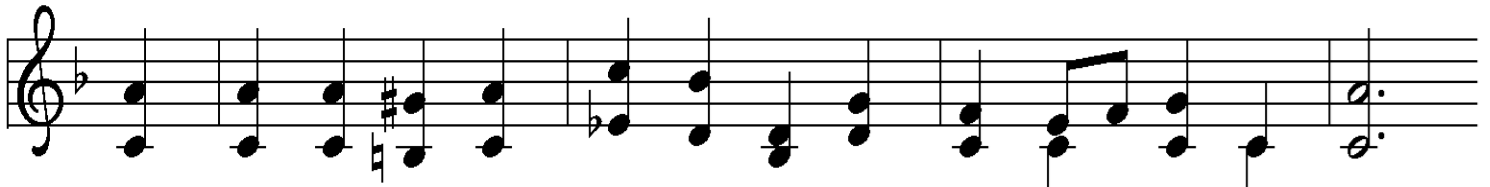


Je - sus the Sav - ior did come for to die for poor ord'-n'ry peo - ple like
wise men and farm - ers and shep - herds and all, and high from the heav - ens a
star in the sky or a bird on the wing, or all of God's an - gels in
Je - sus the Sav - ior did come for to die for poor ord'-n'ry peo - ple like



you and like I. I won - der as I wan - der, out un - der the sky.
star's light did fall; the prom - ise of the a - ges it then did re - call.
heav'n for to sing, he sure - ly could have had it, 'cause he was the king.
you and like I. I won - der as I wan - der, out un - der the sky.

O Little Town of Bethlehem



1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
2 For Christ is born of Mar - y, and, gath - ered all a - bove
3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is giv'n!
4 O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - d'ring love.
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heav'n.
cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.



yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light.
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
No ear may hear his com - ing; but, in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;



The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
and prais - es sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!
where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
oh, come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Im - man - u - el!

Post Communion Blessing and Prayer

Please stand in body or spirit.

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

All Amen

P Eternal God,
We give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have made the
Gift of your Presence known to us.

**All Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to
give ourselves as a gift of joy to others.
In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.**

You may be Seated

Stewardship of Life and Ministry Announcements

Benediction & Sending

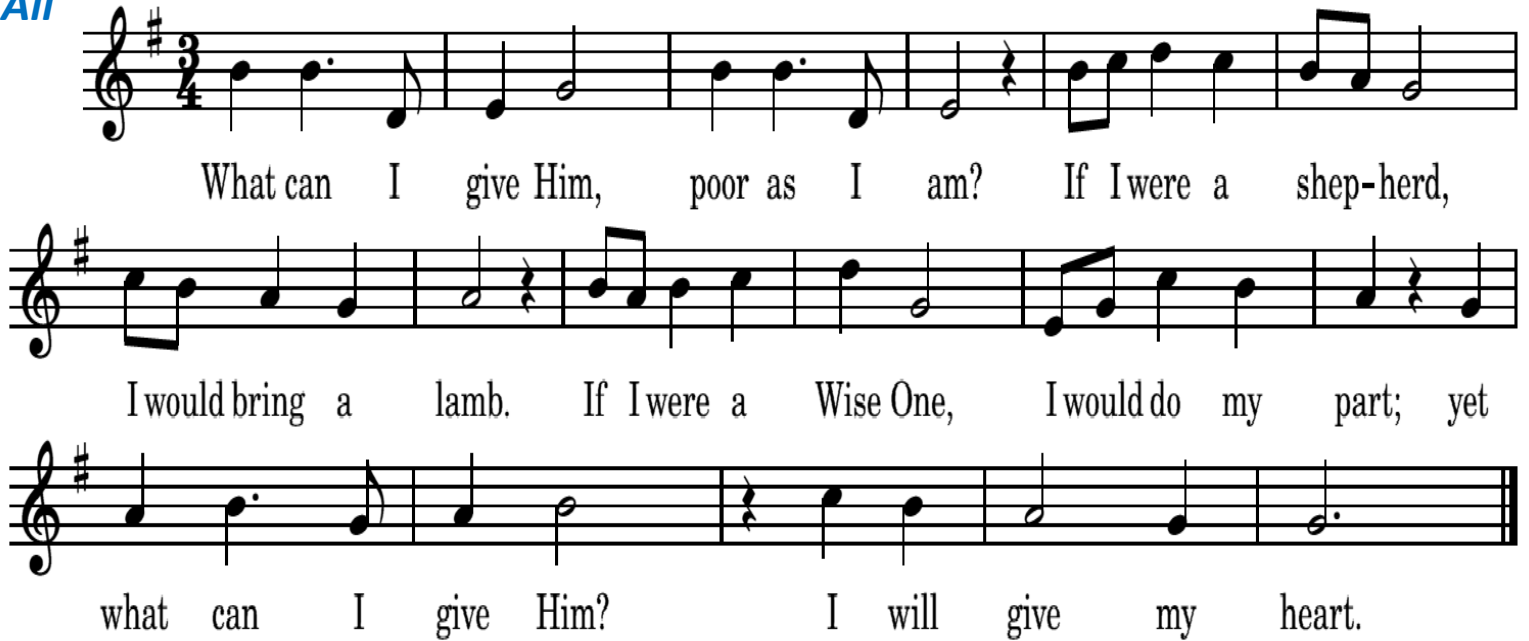
Please stand in body or spirit.

P So now go and be truly present
so you may be a gift of presence for others.
That's all that is expected —
that the gift that is YOU
is the best gift you can give.

In the name of the Holy Presence,
the Divine Gift,
and the ✝ Spirit of Joy
that is just waiting for us to unwrap abundant life.

All Amen

All



What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb. If I were a Wise One, I would do my part; yet
what can I give Him? I will give my heart.

Dismissal

P Go in joy. Keep Awake!

All Thanks be to God.

“No matter how busy one’s day is with chores or service,
or even religious duties,
we must stop and become aware,
in the present moment,
of God right here, right now.
Throughout the week, pause just for a moment
to ‘practice the presence of God,’
so as to be filled with joy.”

“[adapted from Amy Oden, *Right Here, Right Now*]

Readings for next Sunday,
December 24th
4th Sunday of Advent

First Reading:

2 Samuel 7:1-11

Psalm:

Psalm 89:1-4

Second Reading:

Romans 16:25-27

Gospel:

Luke 1: 26-38

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