

WELCOMING WORD *“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.*

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: The Lord has done great things for us,

C: and we are glad indeed.

L: Those who sowed with tears

C: will reap with songs of joy.

L: Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,

C: will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

OPENING HYMN #26 Prepare the Royal Highway

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.

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

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. **REFRAIN**

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. **REFRAIN**

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. **REFRAIN**

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING - The Candle of Joy

P: We want everything to look nice: the decorations of the season, our homes with their lights and tinsel, wreaths and ribbons. We want to lighten the darkness around us, bring beauty to the ugliness that wears us down. We decorate, because it is tradition. Because it lifts our hearts. Because it makes us feel like children again. We deck our halls because the Christ Child is coming.

The prophet Isaiah smiled when he said, “God will give a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, a mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.” No matter how far we feel from the spirit of the season, God promises to decorate us with love and with joy.

We light these candles as a sign of our joy in the beautiful things of this season – not just the things that glitter and flash, but the deeper things, the beauty of the heart and the soul, the beauty of love shared in service and hospitality. We light this candle of joy because our rescuer is coming.

Sung Response: #39 Joy to the World (vs 1 & 2)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king.

Let ev’ry heart prepare him room, and heav’n and nature sing,

And heav’n and nature sing, and heav’n, and heav’n and nature sing!

He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove

The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love

and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God,

C: and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 ¹The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

⁸For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. ¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 ¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28 ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."

²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the prophet?"

He answered, "No."

²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' " as the prophet Isaiah said. ²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

MESSAGE Intern Tamara Siburg

HYMN #44 *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the child is Lord of all
Swiftly winging, angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all! Christ the child is Lord of all!

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
Saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a Gospel true,
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you! Christ the child was born for you!

CONFESSION OF FAITH

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day, he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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.

OFFERTORY PRAYER: God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P: As we await the coming of Christ, we pray in hope for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people. Embed your word in their hearts. Hear us, O God,

C: Your mercy is great.

P: God of every living creature, you announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living. Hear us, O God,

C: Hear our Prayer.

P: God of all peoples and nations, you plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy is revealed through their actions. Hear us, O God,

C: Hear our Prayer.

P: God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Hear us, O God,

C: Hear our Prayer.

P: God of the powerful and helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need (*especially...*). Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God,

C: Hear our Prayer.

P: God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love. Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. Hear us, O God,

C: Hear our Prayer.

P: Confident that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we bring to you these prayers and those unspoken, in the name of Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

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. 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.

BENEDICTION *May the blessing of God our creator, the love of Jesus Christ our redeemer, and the presence of the Holy Spirit the comforter, surround you and sustain you until we gather again. Amen.*

CLOSING HYMN: #25 Rejoice, Rejoice Believers

Rejoice, rejoice, believers, and let your lights appear;
The evening is advancing, and darker night is near.
The bridegroom is arising and soon is drawing nigh.
Up, pray and watch and wrestle; at midnight comes the cry.

The watchers on the mountain proclaim the bridegroom near;
Go forth as he approaches with alleluias clear.
The marriage feast is waiting; the gates wide open stand.
Arise, O heirs of glory; the bridegroom is at hand.

The saints, who here in patience their cross and sufferings bore;
Shall live and reign forever when sorrow is no more.
Around the throne of glory the lamb they shall behold;
In triumph cast before him their diadems of gold.

Our hope and expectation, O Jesus, now appear.
Arise, O Sun so longed for, O'er this benighted sphere.
With hearts and hands uplifted, we plead, O Lord, to see
The day of earth's redemption that sets your people free!



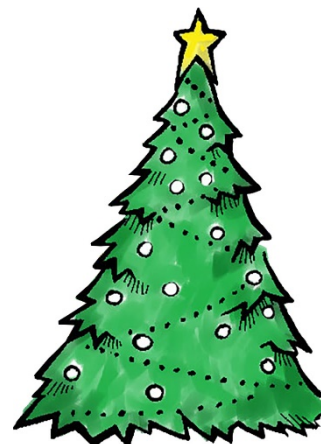
PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

Dave Chellevoid
Allen Olson (father of Ingrid Frank)
Delores Bryant
Nick Sydow (friend of Connie Curran's sons)
Brian Marshall (friend of Kim Kelliher)
Jeannie U'Ren
Mike Olson (Wendy Rasmussen's brother)
Irene Bruflat
Connie Fausett (sister of Diane Twiton & Jean Bower)
Harlan Oimoen
Grace Aavang
Dianne Haskins (friend of Char Smith)
Richard Schuhler (friend of Ron & Bonny Kellogg)

Ginger Quaderer (Diane Mueller's cousin)
Agnes Robertson (friend of Holly Thompson)
Makenzee Smith
Brock Howe
Mary Krantz
Ruth Ann Nemet
Sally Gaard (friend of Margie Kahl)
Laurie Duden (Brenda Martin's aunt)
Bill Steinhauer
Peter Toniazzo
Shirley Thompson
Bernadine Johnson
Glenn Thronson

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHRISTMAS AT ELC will be held virtually this year. Our musicians are recording festive music at home, and the Benefit concert will stream live on **Sunday, December 20, 6:00pm on Facebook Live**. It will be available on ELC's website following the concert. Access it the same way we access the Sunday worship services <https://www.facebook.com/elcmthoreb>. We are requesting donations for our local Neighbors Helping Neighbors (formerly the Community Clothes Closet/MH Food Pantry). **Donations can be mailed to Neighbors Helping Neighbors, PO Box 196, Mt. Horeb, WI 53572**. Any checks sent to ELC with NHN on the memo line will be forwarded. We look forward to sharing our music in a unique way this season.



CHRISTMAS PHOTOS NEEDED To help bring our families closer during this difficult time, we would like to invite everyone to share a photo of your family. In your photo, your family should share a special Christmas tradition at your home (past or current time). We will create an ELC slideshow to be shared during the season. Examples of photos: your decorated tree, setting up a Nativity Scene, baking cookies together, making lefse, any tradition your family does together. Please email your family photos to brenda.martin@elcmthoreb.org by Dec. 12th.

FUSE NIGHTS on ZOOM Youth, who are 9th - 12th graders are welcome to join our high school group on ZOOM, Tuesdays, December 8th and 22nd, at 7 pm. Focus will be Christmas online games and other favorites. (JackBox, Among Us) Invite your friends to join us.

BUCKY BOOKS - ONLINE ONLY Thank you for supporting our fundraiser this fall. We were informed that Bucky Books can still be available for online orders, through our link below till mid-January. Please share the link with family and friends. Books are shipped directly to your home. Books sell for \$35 each. Profits help our youth with future summer programming. Thank you for continued support.

*** ORDER ONLINE AT: <https://www.buckybook.com/evangelical-lutheran-church-mt-horeb>

SUNDAY SCHOOL on ZOOM- Join us on ZOOM, 9:00 - 9:30 am, on Sundays. We will have a break from our ZOOM times on December 27 & January 3rd. We will resume our online time on January 10th.

ELC 'COFFEE TIME' on ZOOM - Join us on Wednesdays at 10 AM each week to catch up with our church family. Time to connect and see each other! Zoom link is emailed each week. If you need the link, contact Pastor John, Tamara or Brenda.

CONFIRMATION on ZOOM 7th & 8th graders will meet for class on the 9th, at 7 PM. Christmas Zoom Party on Dec 16th at 7 pm.

ELC: VOLUNTEERS PLEASE SIGN UP TO HELP AT THE CLOTHES CLOSET LATER IN THE MONTH

Members of ELC staff the Clothes Closet the last week in December and the entire month of January. If you might be able to help, click on the sign-up link on the elcmthoreb.org website under the "Serve" tab. Precautions like wearing masks and limiting the number of shoppers and volunteers in the facility are in place to keep both patrons and workers safe. If you would like more info, call or email Kate Hook (katehook63@gmail.com or 608-327-9944)

DEVOTIONS FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 13, 2020

SHARE: What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

READ: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding

Monday, Psalm 125, The Security of God's People

Tuesday, Acts 3:17-4:4, Peter's Ministry

Wednesday, Mark 9:9-13, The Coming of Elijah

Thursday, Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26, God's Covenant with David

Friday, Hebrews 1:5-14, The Son is Superior to Angels

Saturday, John 7:40-52, Division Among the People

TALK: Consider some of these ideas: *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him" John 1:6-7 The Gospel of John does not begin with the nativity story of Jesus' birth but instead is a cosmic telling of how Jesus is Gods Word made human (flesh), and that we all may know this through Johns testimony and witness.*

- How are you being called to bear witness and testify to for Jesus in your life?
- How might you answer the question, "Who are you?"
- How does your answer to "Who are you?" relate to how you will bear witness and testify to Jesus in your life?
- Why do you think it is important to witness and testify to Jesus in your life and in the world?

PRAY: Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESS: May you see Jesus in the face of those you meet this day. Amen!