



St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church

December 14, 2025

3rd Sunday of Advent

**Worship every Sunday
10:45 AM**

Welcome

***We welcome all visitors who come to worship with us today.
We are delighted that you have come to share in the prayer
and praise of our Lord and invite you to return and add your
voice to ours in holy celebration. If you have a special need or
prayer write it on the prayer card in the pew rack and place it
in the offering plate. Before you leave us today, we ask that
you please sign our guest book.***

**Pulpit Supply: Jay Buchanan
Church Organist/Choir Director: Patricia McConnell
Administrative Assistant: Tim Surkovich**

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St. James Mission Statement: To make disciples of Jesus Christ through Word and Sacrament by the Holy Spirit.

Announcements: If you cannot read the hymns, you can turn to the hymn in the red ELW hymnal in the pew racks.

Prelude: From Heaven Above To Earth I Come arr. Gordon Young
(*We take this time to silently prepare our hearts and minds for worship*)

PLEASE STAND

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

In the name of the Father, and of the ✙ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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

An extended silence may be kept.

Merciful God,

We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, and Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

Amen.

We Gather

*GATHERING SONG: O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

ELW 241

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O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

1 O Lord, how shall I meet you, how wel - come you a - right?
 2 I lay in fet - ters, groan - ing; you came to set me free.
 3 Love caused your in - car - na - tion; love brought you down to me.
 4 Re - joice, then, you sad - heart - ed, who sit in deep - est gloom,

Your peo - ple long to greet you, my hope, my heart's de - light!
 I stood, my shame be - moan - ing; you came to hon - or me.
 Your thirst for my sal - va - tion pro - cured my lib - er - ty.
 who mourn your joys de - part - ed and trem - ble at your doom.

Oh, kin - dle, Lord most ho - ly, your lamp with - in my breast
 A glo - rious crown you give me, a trea - sure safe on high
 Oh, love be - yond all tell - ing, that led you to em - brace
 All hail the Lord's ap - pear - ing! O glo - rious Sun, now come,

to do in spir - it low - ly all that may please you best.
 that will not fail or leave me as earth - ly rich - es fly.
 in love, all love ex - cel - ling, our lost and fall - en race.
 send forth your beams so cheer - ing and guide us safe - ly home.

Text: Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676; tr. composite
 Music: WIE SOLL ICH DICH EMPFANGEN, Johann Crüger, 1598-1662

***GREETING:**

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



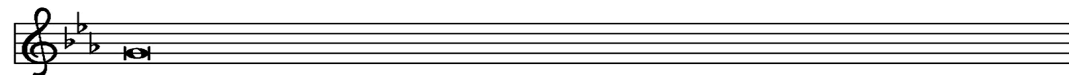
Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



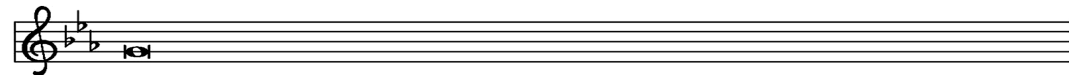
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men, a - men.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY:

P: Let us pray.

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.

* LIGHTING OF 3RD ADVENT CANDLE

***Candle Lighting Hymn to Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers**

ELW 244

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

3 The saints, who here in pa - tience their cross and suf - f'ring bore,
shall live and reign for - 'ev - er when sor - row is no more.
A - round the throne of glo - ry the Lamb they shall be - hold;
in tri - umph cast be - fore him their di - a - dems of gold.

The musical score is written for a four-part choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a basso continuo line. The lyrics are printed below the vocal line. The score ends with a double bar line.

We Listen to the Word

First Reading:

Isaiah 35:1-10

A reading from Isaiah.

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.]]

³ Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;

⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert;

⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 146:5-10

⁵ Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the LORD their God;

⁶ **who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them; who keeps promises forever;**

⁷ who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger. The LORD sets the captive free.

⁸ **The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.**

⁹ The LORD cares for the stranger; the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.

¹⁰ **The LORD shall reign forever, your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!**

Second Reading:

James 5:7-10

A reading from James:

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

* Please rise as you are able

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**



***GOSPEL:**

Matthew 11:2-11

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.



² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” ⁴ Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

⁷ 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? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ 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.’

¹¹ “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.”

The Gospel of the Lord.



Sermon

We Respond to the Word

*Hymn of the Day:

ELW 254

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus



1 Come, thou long-ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo-ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra-cious king-dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art,
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir-it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long-ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

Music: JEFFERSON, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

***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.**

***Sharing of the Peace**

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.
C **And also with you.**

We Offer Our Gifts

***Offering Prayer:**

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts; ourselves, our time, and our possessions. Use us and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the One who gave Himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

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. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. (*We pray especially for . . .*) In uncertain times, remind us of the promise spoken to our ancestors in faith. 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.

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, John of the Cross and . . .*). 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 remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

*The Lord's Prayer

**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.**

We Are Sent

*Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

*Sending Song: Hail to the Lord's Anointed

ELW 311

NEXT PAGE

*Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God!

Recessional Of The Father's Love Begotten arr. Kevin Hildebrand

Hail to the Lord's Anointed



1 Hail to the Lord's a - noint - ed, great Da - vid's great - er Son!
 2 You come with res - cue speed - y to those who suf - fer wrong,
 3 You shall come down like show - ers up - on the fruit - ful earth;
 4 Kings shall fall down be - fore you, and gold and in - cense bring;



Hail, in the time ap - point - ed, your reign on earth be - gun!
 to help the poor and need - y, and bid the weak be strong;
 love, joy, and hope, like flow - ers, spring in your path to birth.
 all na - tions shall a - dore you, your praise all peo - ple sing.



You come to break op - pres - sion, to set the cap - tive
 to give them songs for sigh - ing, their dark - ness turn to
 Be - fore you on the moun - tains shall peace, the her - ald,
 To you shall prayer un - ceas - ing and dai - ly vows as -



free, to take a - way trans - gres - sion and
 light, whose souls, con - demned and dy - ing, are
 go; and righ - teous - ness in foun - tains from
 cend; your king - dom still in - creas - ing, a

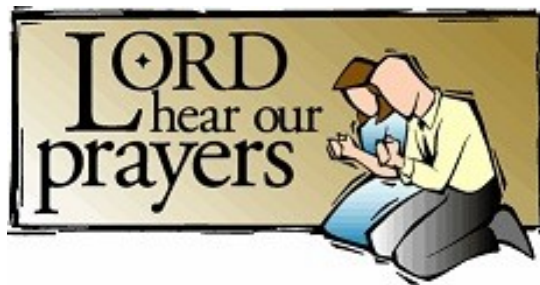


rule in eq - ui - ty.
 pre - cious in your sight.
 hill to val - ley flow.
 king - dom with out end.

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN THE CASE OF A PASTORAL EMERGENCY,
In the event of a Pastoral Emergency, please contact Pastor Eli Hess
Work: 814-943-3972

The church office email is stjamesaltoona@gmail.com The church's
website is www.stjamesaltoona.org
On Facebook—St. James Lutheran Church—Altoona, PA



Our Prayer List:

Tim Surkovich	Jeff Bickel	Bill Wilt	Bob Holsinger Sr
Staff Sgt John Hiles	Donna Foster	Donna Wilt	Bob Holsinger
Carolyn Feather	Bill Dambeck	Judy Dambeck	Evelyn Holsinger
The soul and family of Debbie Thomas		The soul and family of Debra Morgan	
The soul of Marian "Toots" Holsinger		The soul of Deborah Manbeck	
The soul of Sylvia Malsatzki			

(Names for inclusion on our parish prayer list can be submitted to the church office. The name will remain on the list for one month. At the end of that period please advise the church office, if you would like the name to be continue for another month.)

Those serving in our military.



UPCOMING MEETINGS, EVENTS & IMPORTANT DATES:

**Food Drive for St Lukes Last Day
Sweets and Treats
St Luke's Community Lunch**

**Dec 14
Jan 4 10 AM
Jan 14 PM**

- **NOTE: Worship Services will be held in the Sunday School Room until Palm Sunday!**
- **NOTE: Christmas Eve Service will still be held in the Sanctuary!**



**Saint James is collecting donations of food for the
Saint Luke Food Pantry
until December 14th. **LAST DAY TODAY****

**Please place your donations in the box by the front
entry of the church by the stairs.**



SWEETS AND TREATS

**THE FIRST SUNDAY OF
EACH MONTH.**

**OUR NEXT SWEETS AND TREATS WILL
BE: January 4, 2026
Provided By: Mark Hoover**

* We are always looking for volunteers to sponsor Sweets and Treats. If you're interested there is a sign up sheet in the Sunday School Room. Your support is appreciated!

Please consider volunteering and signing up to sponsor Sweets and Treats. We are signing up volunteers for 2026.



ST LUKES COMMUNITY LUNCH

Jan 14th 12 PM

- **Hosted by St James Lutheran Held 2nd Wednesday of each month in the St James Social Hall**



**Third Sunday
of Advent**

Joy

Those whom the LORD
has ransomed will
return and enter
Zion singing,
crowned with
everlasting joy;
they will meet with
joy and gladness,
sorrow and
mourning will flee

Isaiah 35:10



St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church

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**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.