

Zion's Evangelical Lutheran Church

3rd Sunday in Advent, December 15, 2024

Pastor Caitlin M. Kurtz

Zion's worship services are live-streamed and archived on YouTube. While the focus is always on the worship leaders and the sanctuary at large, your voice and image may be included as part of the recording. If you do not wish to appear on film, please sit in, or under, the balcony and ask an usher for communion to be brought to your seat. If you have any other questions, please speak with Pastor Caitlin. Thank you for your understanding and support in spreading the Gospel message!

Welcome and Announcements and Prelude

**(Congregation please stand as able)*

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: We gather in the name of the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. C: **Amen.**

P: Today, as we confess our sins, we recognize how easily we overlook the gifts God gives. And we accept the sad truth that our limitations often create the conditions for sin.

Silence is kept for confession.

P: Let us pray.

C: God, we want a faith that feels like more than words, but we lack your power to embody goodness. We hear your call to serve others yet feel too worn out to make the food. We hunger to taste justice but fear the burning spice of the meal.

We want our place at your table but resist sitting beside a stranger. We have lost our appetites for mere thoughts and prayers, but we fail to match our intentions to our actions. Forgive us and restore us with the healing wholeness of your presence.

P: Brothers and sisters in Christ, God knows you are imperfect. But God did not invite you here today because of what you have done or how you have behaved. God loves you and always cares much more for you than your shortcomings. God forgives all your sins in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. C: **Amen.**

***GATHERING HYMN:** ELW 264 *Prepare the Royal Highway*

You are invited to face the back of the church for the opening hymn. As the cross is processed into the congregation you may continue to sing toward it.

1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.

Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.

Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
 God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
 All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
 So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

Refrain
 Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
 Music: Swedish folk tune, 17th cent. Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress

BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN
 7 6 7 6 7 7 6 6

LIGHTING ADVENT CANDLE

L: We light these Advent candles with thanks for what has been, and hope for what is yet to come. As we do, we notice the gifts God has given this week. God, we reach for unreasonable hope;

C: and you prepare an incomparable future.

L: God, we breathe in your peaceful refuge,

C: for you have made a place where we can safely rest.

L: Joy ebbs and flows each day, holy God.,

C: so we pray to you in honesty.

Choir sings an Advent verse as the candle of Joy is lit.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray. Spirit, give us a vision of the more joyful world you quietly create. Then help us absorb your holy words; use them to propel us into your intended future. In the name of Christ we pray, **Amen.**

CHILDREN'S SERMON *as the children come forward, please join in singing:*

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
 the stars in the sky looked down where he lay; the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

FIRST READING: Zephaniah 3:14-20 (*pg. 767 in pew Bible*)

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgements against you, he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

After the reading: **Congregation: Thanks be to God**

RESPONSIVE READING: Isaiah 12:2-6 (pg. 558 in pew Bible, also below)

Leader: Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.

Congregation: With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4And you will say on that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.

L: Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth.

C: Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

SECOND READING: Philippians 4:4-7 (pg. 955 in pew Bible)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

After the reading: **Congregation: Thanks be to God**

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** (tune: *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* #44 green book)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Lord to whom now shall we go?

Alleluia, Alleluia, Let Your blessings through us flow!

You have words of life eternal, help us to hear them, and to tell all

In your wisdom, make us grow; in your wisdom, make us grow.

***GOSPEL READING:** Luke 3:7-18 (pg. 834 in pew Bible)

Before reading: P: The Holy Gospel According to St. Luke, the 3rd Chapter.

Congregation: Glory to you, O Lord.

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’

And the crowds asked him, ‘What then should we do?’ In reply he said to them, ‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.’ Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, ‘Teacher, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.’ Soldiers also asked him, ‘And we, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.’

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

After the reading: P: The Gospel of our Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

***HYMN OF THE DAY:** *We Will Magnify Your Love* (next)

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1. When twi - light leaves the even - ing sky and night re - veals the
 2. When bit - ter days and bar - ren ground sap strength and pow - er and
 3. When rough ter - rain makes prog - ress hard, God lev - els what's in the



stars, the far ho - ri - zon hope of God comes sing - ing to our hearts.
 voice, ten - a - cious faith will hold us fast; God's hope will say, re - joice!
 way; a ten - der jus - tice will car - ry us, and care will not de - lay.



Your love is more than words, O God, a flame you kin - dle, a seed you sow, a



rose that blooms in the snow, and we will mag - ni - fy your love.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

P: With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

C: 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.

Note: the word "catholic" here means the church around the world.

OUR OFFERINGS: OUR TRUST, PRAYERS & GIFTS

***PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

(after hearing, "Lord in your mercy," respond: **Hear our Prayer**)

(after hearing the final prayer petition, "Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy." respond: **Amen**)

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

P: The peace of Christ be with you. **C: And also with you.**

CHOIR ANTHEM

OFFERING WITH OFFERTORY

During this portion of the worship service, we offer to God a portion of what God has first given us, trusting that God will use these gifts to do God's work in the world. We offer thanks to God with financial gifts, song, and prayer. Or you can scan this QR code to go to our electronic giving website: <http://www.zionsjonestown.com/giving/>, where you can choose to give either through PayPal, or Simply Giving, which is our regular electronic offering service, offering both one-time, and regular, automatic options.



***POST OFFERING VERSE** (tune: *What Child Is This*)

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; Come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings; Let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high, The virgin sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, The babe, the son of Mary!

***OFFERING PRAYER**

P: Together we pray. Holy Spirit, bless these small gifts we offer. **C: You set the table with plenty of love.**
P: Prepare room in your home **C: for my neighbor and me.**
P: Prepare a place in your vision **C: for my neighbor and me.**
P: Prepare a seat at your table **C: for my neighbor and me.**
P: Holy Spirit, you bless these gifts we offer. **C: You set the table with plenty of love.**

***THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

*P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**
P: Lift up your hearts. **C: We lift them to the Lord.**
P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: God, yours was the First Thought; before any human lived or knew your name, you whispered, and creation built itself around your words. Before your ancient people knew the depth of your love, you promised them goodness, and led them to freedom. **C: Your love grows unseen.**

P: Before the world knew your face, your own child was born in a quiet stable.
C: Your love blooms in the dark.

P: Before we knew the depth of your love, your child died, crucified, and you forgave, and new life grew in the grave.

C: Your love echoes in the silence.

P: Once you made Mary agelessly blessed. Once you transformed turncoat disciples into the family of the forgiven. You wrote the words for their hope, and they sang the song of joy. What you have done for them you have also done for us. So we sing your praise.

***HOLY, HOLY, HOLY** (Tune: *Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella*)

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly One... God of pow - er, God of might. Heav'n and
earth are full of your glor - y. Ho - sa - na in the high - est. Blessed! Blessed
is the one who comes... Blessed! Blessed! in the name of God.

***WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

On a night of betrayal, Jesus pulled close friends closer to eat with them one last time. He took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. Jesus, we remember you died. **C: We remember.**

P: We remember God's love sparked life in your dead body. **C: We remember.**

P: We remember you shall return to empty every grave. **C: We remember.**

***LORD’S PRAYER**

P: Grounded in these promises, we pray the way 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.

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: Come, taste the goodness of God’s mercy and marvel in what God has done for you.

This is the Lord’s table where all are welcome. At the ushers instruction, you are invited to come forward, pick up either a pre-filled grape juice cup, or empty communion cup, and kneel or stand at the communion railing. (gluten free wafers are available for those who need that , please let Pastor know when you are communing) Here, you will first receive the bread, and then either a blessing of your grape juice, or the wine poured into your glass. After consuming both elements, return to your seat by the side aisle, placing your empty glass in the tray.

*Those who are worshipping at home this morning are invited to **pray this prayer**, trusting that Christ’s spiritual presence is with you at all times and places. If you would like Pastor Caitlin to bring communion to your home, call her at 717 865 3652 and she will be glad to do so.*

“Loving Jesus, since I cannot at this moment receive you in bread and wine according to your promise in the sacrament of Holy Communion, I ask you to come to me in Spirit. Feed me, for I am hungry; strengthen me, for I am weak; enliven and sanctify me with Your sacred Body and Blood. Deliver me from all sin and make me always obedient to Your commands. Let me never be separated from You, my Savior, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit live and reign one God forever and ever. Amen.”

LAMB OF GOD (tune: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*)

O Lamb of God you take a-way our sin; have mer-cy on us, give_ us your
 peace. Pre -pare us to re- ceive_ your grace and teach us how to fol - low your ways. Re-
 joice! Re-joice! E - man - u - el has come to you, O Is - ra - el.

COMMUNION HYMNS: #725 *Blessed Be the God of Israel*
 (blue book) #730 *My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness*
 #744 *Soon and Very Soon*

***POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

P: God, what you have planned for us unfolds slowly.

C: Your love is often unrecognizable, unappreciated, gentle and unnoticed.

P: But in this place we have noticed that which we often don’t see.

C: We have tasted your unspoken goodness. And now we will magnify your love.

***BENEDICTION**

P: This world longs to know that God’s love is more than words. Here, you have shared the advent of God’s goodness, a foretaste of the feast to come. You carry the blessing of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now go into the world, expecting God’s justice, and nurturing God’s peace.

C: God, we will magnify your love.

***SENDING HYMN: ELW 267 Joy to the World**

As the cross is processed to the rear of the sanctuary as we sing, you are invited to turn your body towards the rear, symbolic of our desire to follow Christ out into the world.

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
 3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the

ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him
 songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
 fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -

room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
 plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

and heav'n and na - ture sing, and

sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heav'n and na - ture sing,

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748 Music: English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792-1872 ANTIOCH CM and repeat

***DISMISSAL**

P: Go in peace, Christ is with you. C: **Thanks be to God!**

We're glad you're here! Whether today is your first day at Zion's, or your thousandth, we're glad you're here, and we look forward to worshipping with you. If you're new, or it's been a while, we invite you to fill out one of the "We're glad you're here" white envelopes located in the pew back to ensure our records are correct, and so we can connect with you further. Completed cards can be placed in the offering plate. Thank you, and welcome!

This week we especially remember in our prayers: Andy Bomberger, Nancy Bowman, Pastor Ted Hummel, hurricane victims and all victims of violence.

Every Week at Zions: @ 10:30 Worship, 9:15 Sunday School
Wednesday night 5:30 meal, 6:15 Rejoicing Spirits worship, 6:50 Bible Study

This Week at Zions:

Dec. 16, Monday @ 6:30 pm Church council meeting @ Debbie Long's home

Dec. 17, Tuesday @ 9:00 am Quilting

Dec. 18, Wednesday @ 5:30 community meal, 6:15 pm Rejoicing Spirits worship, 6:50 Bible Study, 7:30 adult choir rehearsal

Dec. 19, Thursday @ 10:00 am Pre-School event

Next Week at Zions:

Dec. 23, Monday @ 6:30 Mission Ministry Committee meeting

Dec. 24, Tuesday @ 6:30 pm Christmas Music Meditation

Dec. 24, Tuesday @ 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Service

No Quilting or Wednesday Activities this Week. Merry Christmas!

No Sunday School Next Sunday: December 29!

Joins us at Zion's for Christmas Eve! Piano and organ music meditation begins at 6:30 pm. Candlelight worship begins at 7:00 pm. The service will be livestreamed on YouTube! It's a lovely experience to attend evening worship, hope you can make it!

We invite you to celebrate Jesus' birth by caring for babies and toddlers in need: We will have a diaper and wipe collection on Christmas Eve. These will be donated to JOY Pantry and distributed to families in our community.

The NL Ministerium is hosting a Longest Night/Blue Christmas worship service on Sunday December 22 at 7 PM at Ono United Methodist Church. This service especially welcomes those who find 'the joy of Christmas' difficult, but still long to hear the Good News of the Christmas story. Whether you're grieving the loss of a loved one, struggling financially or physically, feeling overwhelmed by the heaviness of the world, weary, or experiencing any other difficulty, this service summons you to come just as you are to encounter the hope of Christ in candlelight, prayer, and music.

Thank You to Tom and Pat Keefer and Debbie Long for lighting our Advent Wreath this week!

Bell gifts Reminder: "Bell" gifts are due back, wrapped, by Sunday, December 22. Again, thank you!

THANK YOU for your generosity with Angel Tree gifts for NL students. Together with other congregations in the ministerium, we delivered truckloads of presents this week. We are grateful for your partnership in ministry.

As you think about Christmas and end-of-year gifts, we ask you to consider supporting Zion's with a special gift. Together, we have done incredible ministry in Christ's name this year--helping to open the Northern Lebanon Clothing Closet, creating and sending forth 40+ quilts to families affected by disaster, teaching scripture to people of all ages in Sunday School, Men's and Women's Bible studies, Zion's Preschool, Babies and Bibles, and Release Time, providing support, counseling, and prayer shawls to individuals in crisis, and extending welcome to individuals with special needs at Rejoicing Spirits and the DDS dance...just to name a few. We are grateful for your gifts of time and money that have helped make these ministries possible, and ask for your help to finish the year strong. **THANK YOU** for your generosity and support

This year's Christmas tree is adorned with quilted squares crafted by the quilting group, Peace Through Pieces. Each square has a dove on it to symbolize peace—a reminder that Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). A quilt uses many different kinds of material, sometimes even scrap pieces which some might deem as junk, that are then carefully stitched together to create something beautiful. So too, God uses each of us, with all of our faults, and brings us together as members of the Body of Christ, united to bring love and peace to the world.

Weekly Sunday School classes begin at 9:15 AM each Sunday, for children as young as three, up through adults. See Pastor Caitlin for more information about classes.

Adoption Swaption, a local, non profit, Christian organization that helps foster and adoptive families with children's clothing, toys, food, and more, has outgrown the current building in Lickdale and is looking for another building with parking spaces in the local area. If you know of a church or other establishment that has space to rent, would you please contact Pastor Caitlin.

2025 offering envelopes are ready for new members and people who have recently used envelopes to give. Envelopes are located on the windowsill outside of the Church Secretary's Office. If you don't see your name and would like an offering envelope, please contact Kerri Price or the Bonny, Church Secretary.

Worship Bags for Children have been refreshed! These bags are designed to help young ones engage in the worship service, and are now divided by age (0 - 4 and 5+) They can be found in the upstairs narthex area by the double doors. After worship, please return them there. If they need new materials, please place them by the mailboxes outside the secretary's office.

Serving at Zion's	Today	Next Sunday
Lector	John Mohn	Ed Ludwig
Prayer	Linda Toth	Leah Wolfe
Children's sermon	Nancy Ludwig	Joanna Guldin-Noll
Comm. Assts.	Ed & Elaine Ludwig	Linda Wenrich, Deb Long
Greeter	Stephanie Livingston	Elaine Ludwig
Acolyte	Madelyn Rittle	Annabella Hess
Crucifer	Daryl Hess	Rob McQuaide
Altar Guild	Bucks family	Strattan/Wenrich
Elevette	Noel Strattan	Steve Bucks
Dec. Ushers	Rob McQuaide, Xander McQuaide, Logan Livingston, Al Reiner	

MUSICIAN: Maryann Guldin SOUND: Houser family ZION'S OFFICE: 717-865-2848 zions@comcast.net	VIDEOGRAPHER: James Cascarino PASTOR: Caitlin M. Kurtz PASTOR'S OFFICE: 717-865-3652 pastorckurtz@gmail.com
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