

Blue Christmas

Service of Hope



Peaceful Worship
For the Holy Season

In the gathering darkness of December,
we anticipate the coming again
of the Light of the world.

The hope that marks Advent's waiting
keeps us looking forward to the coming of Christ.

It could also be that the blue color
of the Advent season (which symbolizes hope)
is the very remedy we need
for what makes us feel "blue" at Christmas.



BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

December 20th, 2025

The Opening Hymn

LBW 30

“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

Reprinted with permission under One License #A-740145. All rights reserved.

Words of Welcome

Welcome to this service of longing and hope. In the long, dark winter nights, memories of past experiences and the pain of the present experiences and situations can be overwhelming. For some, Christmas Day is the most difficult. For others, it could be Christmas Eve, or New Year's Eve, or just the beginning of another lonely year. In this service we invite you to listen. We invite you to pray. We invite you to sing. We invite you to meditate on the pain and anguish you bring—and we invite you to offer your pain and anguish to the Christ Child. We trust that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone, for God walks with you. During this time we invite you to experience the Light of Christ.

Come, let us bow down in worship and kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is our God

We are the people of his pasture, the flock he cares for.

Jesus said “Come to me, all you who are weary and heavily burdened, and I will give you rest.” And so we invite you to this time of peaceful worship. Leave your busy life behind for a while.

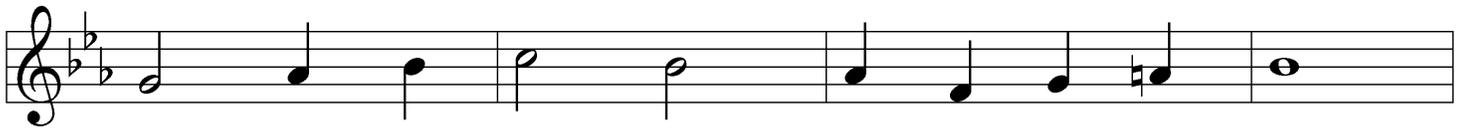
We come with heavy hearts, needing to hear God's word of hope in the midst of our longings.

Give your time to God, and rest in God for a little while.

Let us Pray. God of Mercy, hear our prayer in this Advent Season—for ourselves and for our families who live with painful memories of loss. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of Christ Jesus, who spares our life in joy and in sorrow, in death and new birth, in despair and in promise. **Amen.**

“Abide With Me”

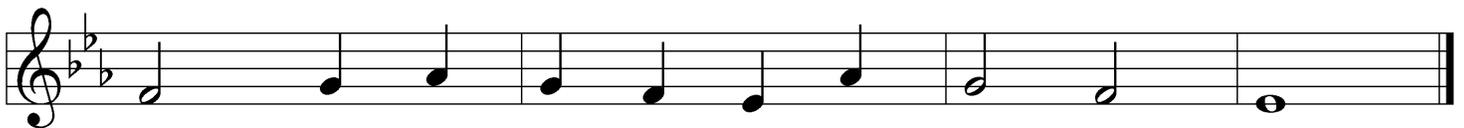
1 A - bide with me, fast falls the e - ven - tide.
 2 I need thy pres - ence ev - 'ry pass - ing hour;
 3 Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day;
 4 I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;
 5 Hold thou thy cross be - fore my clos - ing eyes,



The dark - ness deep - ens; Lord, with me a - bide.
 what but thy grace can foil the tempt - er's pow'r?
 earth's joys grow dim, its glo - ries pass a - way;
 ills have no weight, and tears no bit - ter - ness.
 shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;



When oth - er help - ers fail and com - forts flee,
 Who like thy - self my guide and stay can be?
 change and de - cay in all a - round I see;
 Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy vic - to - ry?
 heav'n's morn - ing breaks, and earth's vain shad - ows flee;



help of the help - less, oh, a - bide with me.
 Through cloud and sun - shine, oh, a - bide with me.
 O thou who chang - est not, a - bide with me.
 I tri - umph still, if thou a - bide with me!
 in life, in death, O Lord, a - bide with me.

First Reading
Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders,
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Great will be his authority,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Second Reading
Romans 8:31-35, 37-39

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



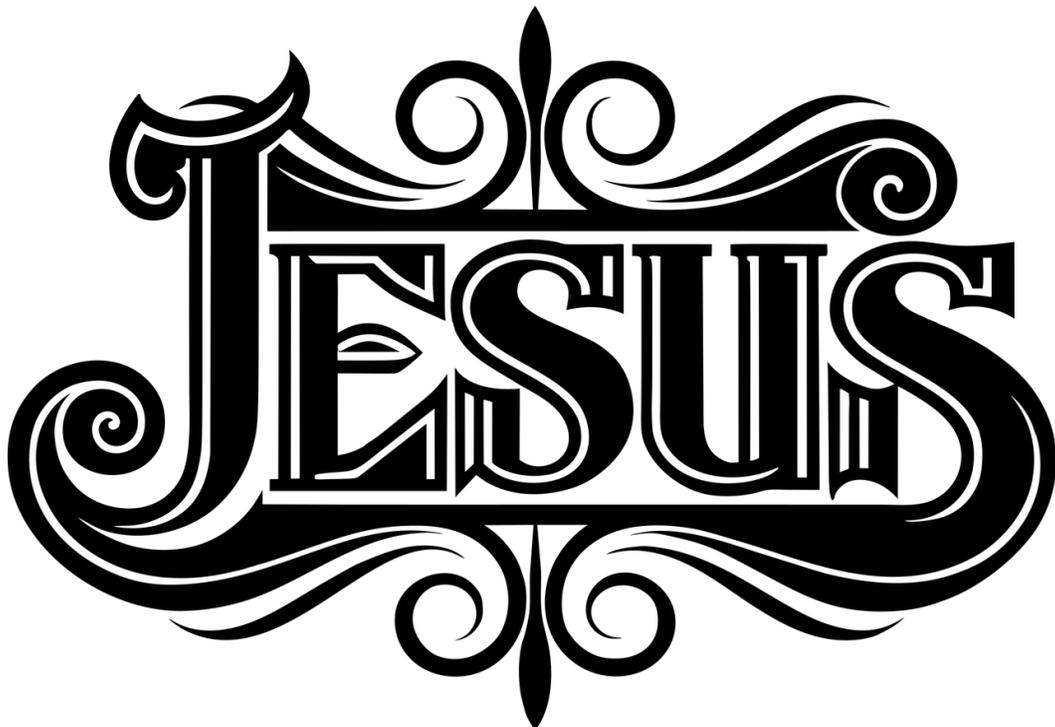
The Gospel
John 1:1-5, 10-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

**Jesus says, "I AM the resurrection and the life.
Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.**

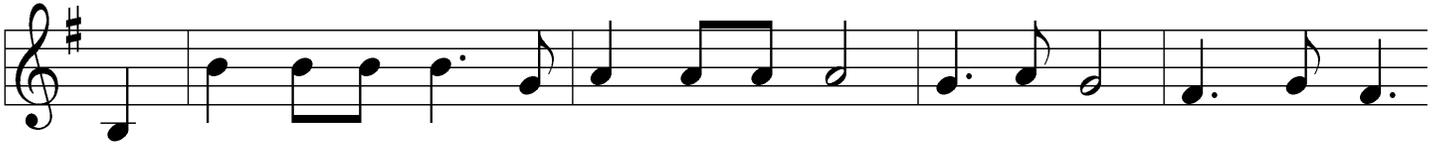


The Message
Pastor Jamie

Hymn

WOV 772

“O Lord, Hear My Prayer”



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, an - swer me.
The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: all my hope comes from God.



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and lis - ten to me.
The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: God, the well-spring of life.

Text: Psalm 102:1-2; Taizé Community, adapt.

Music: HEAR MY PRAYER, Jacques Berthier, 1923-1994 Reprinted with permission under One License #A-740145. All rights reserved.

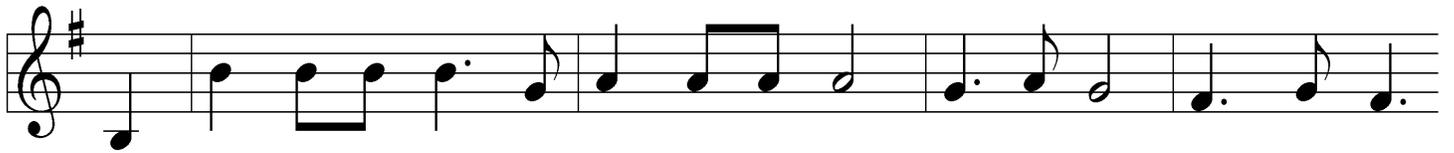
Text and music © 1982, 1991 Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc., agent, 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638.

www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

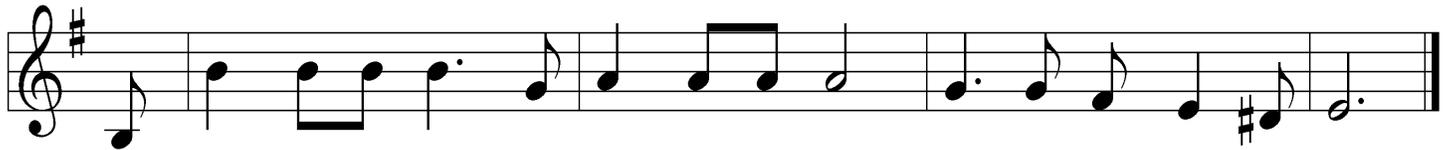


The Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray... Merciful God, you know us inside and out. In your mercy forgive what we have been, and direct what we shall be, so that we can delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.

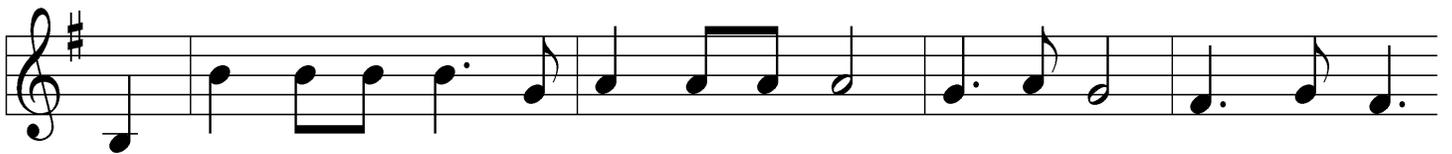


O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, an - swer me.

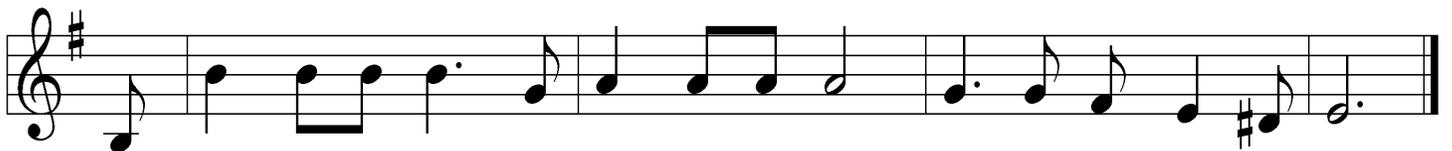


O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and lis - ten to me.

There are times when all we see is darkness; we cry out “The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me!” But God says, “I shall never forget you! I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands!” By the grace of Christ we are accepted and loved by God.

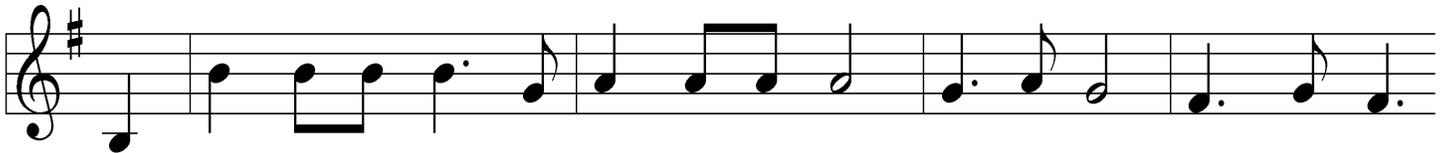


O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, an - swer me.

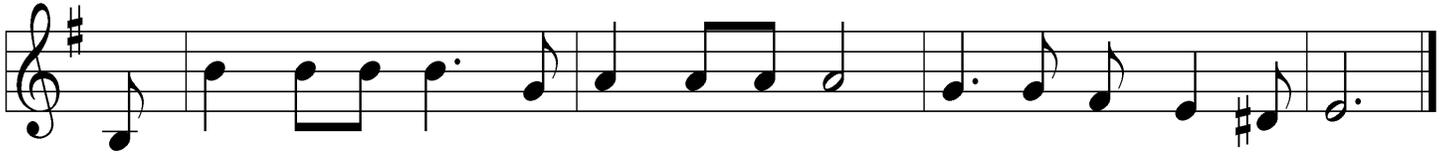


O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and lis - ten to me.

Merciful God, in the stillness of our souls we listen for your voice to know again that you are God. Quiet our restless hearts with the knowledge that you should stand with us in the shadows, keeping watch over your own. Reawaken our faith and light the lamp of hope within our hearts.



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, an - swer me.



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and lis - ten to me.

O Lord our God, you see and know and feel the pain of the world. Look upon us when we feel alone and wrap s in your love, that in the midst of pain we can know your presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, an - swer me.
The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: all my hope comes from God.



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and lis - ten to me.
The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: God, the well-spring of life.

A Liturgy of Remembering

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved who died. We pause to remember their name, their face, their voice, the memory that binds them to us in this season.

(light the first candle of the Advent Wreath)

Let God's eternal love surround them.

We light this second candle to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, asking that from God's hands we receive the gifts of peace and hope.

(light the second candle of the Advent Wreath)

Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember these past weeks and months; the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the poignancy of reminiscing, the hugs and handshakes of family and friends, all those who stand with us. We give thanks for all the support we have known.

(light the third candle of the Advent Wreath)

Let us remember that God defeats the darkness.

We light this fourth candle to remember our faith and the gift of hope which the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God who shares our life promises us a place and time when suffering and pain will be no more.

(light the fourth candle of the Advent Wreath)

Let us remember the One who shows us the way, who brings the truth, and who bears the light.

Again Jesus spoke to them saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of eternal life.” (John 8:12)

That’s the message of Christmas! Jesus, the light of the world is born in Bethlehem in order to dispel the darkness of this world and the darkness in our lives. Let’s invite Jesus to bring healing and hope into our lives, today and forevermore.



Communion

Benediction

The Light of Christ dwells in you now and always,
lighting your way to eternity. Glory be to God!
Glory to God in the highest!

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”



1 Oh, come, oh, come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
 2 Oh, come, oh, come, great Lord of might, who to your tribes on
 3 Oh, come, strong Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's
 4 Oh, come, blest Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by your
 5 Oh, come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
 Si - nai's height in an - cient times once gave the law
 tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save
 ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,
 heav'n - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
 in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.
 and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!
 and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.
 and close the path to mis - er - y.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.



MISSION STATEMENT

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church provides an inviting environment for spreading God's Word through worship, teaching, and fellowship to address the spiritual needs of our congregation and community.
Open - Inviting - Alive in Christ!

Pastor Rev. Jamie Retallack (716-848-9683)
Pastors Emeriti -Rev. John Swanson -Rev. John Scarafia
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
55 Pleasant Avenue, Lancaster, NY 14086
Office 683-8972 (Mon-Wed-Thurs 10am-3pm)
www.stjohnslanc.org
stjohnslancaster55@gmail.com

Congregation Council

Janet Sincebaugh (President)
Carol Graham (Vice-President)
Karen McClintock (Secretary)
Kathryn Snyder (Treasurer)

Pauline Bauer	Jeff Miller
Sam Gierlinger	Rich Rice
RaeAnn Jakubowski	Paul Rudz
Jamie Kloc	Kelly Sieracki
Marjorie Kruger	

Printed/projected materials used in this bulletin are included by permission of licenses: Worship elements: From Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS000634 and Music: One License #A-740145. All rights reserved.

Bible Passages unless otherwise noted: New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition (NRSVUE) Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.