

December 16 and 20, 2020
4th Sunday in Advent

GATHERING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOLDEN: EVENING HYMN

HOLDEN: EVENING THANKSGIVING

HOLDEN: PSALM 141 – “Let My Prayer Rise Up”

HOLDEN: MEDIATION

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (ELW p. 116)

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. Most 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, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen.**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

In this final week of Advent, our attention is on love. The following Scripture verses may sound very familiar, so we will hear them twice. The first time is in the New Revised Standard Version. The second time you'll be reading from the Message. Listen for the call to love in these words.

Matthew 22:36-40 says, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

”Teacher, which command in God’s Law is the most important?” Jesus said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.’ This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ These two commands are pegs; everything in God’s Law and the Prophets hangs from them.”

Three blue candles and one pink candle are lit.

God, we have learned to love from being loved by you. And so today, let us enact that love. Let us live that love. We know that what the world needs now is more love. We need to remember how much you love each one of us and we must share that love with others. Amen.

FIRST READING: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you." ⁴But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Luke 1:46b-55

You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly. (Lk. 1:52)

46bMy soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

47my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed:

49you, the Almighty, have done great things for me and holy is your name.

50You have mercy on those who fear you, from generation to generation.

51You have shown strength with your arm and scattered the proud in their conceit,

52casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly.

53You have filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

54You have come to the aid of your servant Israel, to remember the promise of mercy,

55the promise made to our forbears, to Abraham and his children forever.

SECOND READING: Romans 16:25-27

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now

disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

CHILDREN’S SERMON

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38

The holy gospel according to Luke. Glory to you, O Lord.

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON – Vicar Jon Wendt

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father. Amen

It is the last week of Advent, the last week of preparation for Christmas. During this last week of preparation, I find myself worried if the house is cleaned for company (or at least clean in the view of the zoom camera). I have focus on making sure that all my family has presents, and they have been wrapped or shipped. I am checking my lists to make sure that I have thawed the turkey or ham, and that I don’t need to run to the store and pick up the last minute items. Making sure that all the cookies that needed to be baked are done, and even some that didn’t *need* to be done.

At such a time when I am so focused on making sure that all things are finalized so that I can have the smoothest and best Christmas I can, the last thing I should think about is Mary, Jesus’ mother. Yet, just like my mother during this time, I often forget how much was done in preparation for my birth, and my Christmas experiences, from a woman who gave me life. So the gospel today reminds us of how God worked miracles during this time, and how Mary was the recipient of one.

One of the purposes of my sermon is to renew our appreciation for this woman, Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Bible does say that she is the most respected of all women of all time. But it seems as if we Lutherans tend to ignore Mary. If we don't ignore Mary, then we often have a certain distrust, distance and disdain for her.

We talk plenty about many other personalities. We love to talk about the Apostle Paul and all that he stands for. We love to talk about great figures of the Old Testament such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and famous men of the New Testament such as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We enjoy talking about famous women of the Old Testament such as Rachel, Ruth and Rahab; and famous women of the New Testament like Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha, the sisters. We love to talk about people from our more recent times like Martin Luther and his wife Katherine, and about famous women of history such as Joan of Arc and Mother Theresa. But we seem to have an aversion to talk about Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I think that part of our reluctance to appreciate Mary grows out of our old fashioned, anti-Roman Catholic attitudes. In the past, Lutherans and Catholics didn't get along too well; at least they never did in my earliest experiences. The priest and pastor in the city of Mankato rarely spoke to each other. We Lutherans were taught to be suspicious of those Catholics who had Madonnas in their sanctuaries, and drove cars with statuettes of Mary on their dashboards. We were taught by our pastors that Catholics had shrines to Mary in their gardens and occasionally even prayed to Mary rather than Jesus Christ. We were taught to distrust, then distance and finally disdain the Catholics.

Of course, this didn't sit too well with me as I got older. My aunt married a Catholic, and was forced to make my cousins Catholic (as was their tradition). Yet they seemed fine to me. I even found a Catholic family who had a wonderful daughter, whom I was blessed to allow me to marry over 22 years ago. I still find them great to be with.

Our prejudice against Mary may extend way back to Ephesus. As you may recall, Mary the mother of Jesus and John moved to Ephesus after Jesus was crucified and resurrected. There are two ancient chapels in Ephesus, one for John and one for Mary, the mother of Jesus. It was at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. where the title, "theotokos," Mother of God, was first applied to Mary. Mary was called the Mother of God in the Catholic Church.

Mary became the greatest of all the saints who interceded for humankind. As the Roman Catholic Church elevated Mary in its adoration and taught their faithful to say, "Hail, Mary, full of grace," the Protestants protested against her and consequently her role in the Christian faith was minimized.

It seems to me the Catholics went to one extreme and the Protestants to another extreme. But it doesn't change the fact that Mary, mother of Jesus, was greeted by the angel Gabriel as, "favored one!" (Luke 1:28)

Like so many personalities in the Bible, we know a good deal about Mary's life. We know enough from both historical tradition and the Bible to gain a fairly broad perspective on her. The Bible does not say that Mary was of the lineage of David, but in Luke 1:32, the Bible *implies* that she was of the house of David, just as Joseph was.

In the Bible, we first meet Mary when she was a young girl of about thirteen. For us, that means we picture a budding young girl, perhaps in seventh or even eighth grade in school. She had just gone through that change within her whereby she would be able to give birth to a child. This was a very

exciting time for her. Women would come to Mary and say, “Mary, we hear that you have become a young woman. When are you going to get engaged, Mary?” Or “When is your father, Joachim, going to make arrangements for you?”

Mary’s father arranged for his daughter to be betrothed, or engaged, to another member of the same tribe, a young carpenter by the name of Joseph. Their engagement lasted for one year. During this year that Mary and Joseph were betrothed, they prepared for their wedding, just as a young couple today would prepare for their wedding and marriage.

Mary would do things to prepare like sewing. Sewing towels and sheets to use together with her soon to be husband. And taking time to get to know Joseph. Joseph was a typical Jewish man. As a carpenter, he would prepare for marriage by building and creating things for their future house. Getting a place ready for Mary and him to start a family. He would also become acquainted with Mary, building their relationship and starting to fall in love with each other.

Jewish law took their engagement seriously. The Jewish law said that if Joseph died, Mary would be a widow. If she died, he would be a widower. If they separated, it was called a divorce, even before they were officially married.

And then comes along the angel Gabriel with news of pregnancy. Mary didn’t know what to make of it; she was puzzled, worried, and afraid. And Mary questioned, “Me? I am only engaged. I am not married yet. I don’t have a husband yet. I don’t do that hanky-panky outside of marriage. To get pregnant like that is punishable by death. I don’t have a husband. I am engaged, that is all.” Then the angel said to her, “The power of the Holy Spirit will come upon you. The Holy Spirit will be like a shadow over you.”

When Luke said, the Holy Spirit will shadow over you; that same word was used in Genesis in the creation story in Genesis 1:1. The Holy Spirit shadowed over the waters before the beginning of time, and God created life in those waters. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is now shadowed over Mary and created life in her. What is the bigger miracle? The Spirit over the waters in Genesis and God created life? Or the Spirit over the womb of Mary, creating life. Both are miracles.

So, this is the essential outline of the story of Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. She would go on to deliver the baby Jesus, watch him grow up, and eventually be there when he was crucified and died. There is much more that could be said about her. But I’ll just give us three reflections to think about when it comes to Mary.

To start, God chose a woman who was humble. Mary was not the powerful, rich, mighty woman of the times. She was not in line to take over the throne of the country. She was a commoner, low and humble. And that is who God chose to carry the person who was to accomplish God’s grand purpose for the world. If God could use this young girl to accomplish so much, imagine what God could do with each of us.

Mary also had the faith to believe in this “angel” who had come to her. Instead of arguing over the decree that she would bear a son and name him Jesus, she accepts it. She wonders how she could be pregnant, but that is all. She even says, “let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38)

She doesn’t argue like Moses, who kept saying that he wasn’t good enough and that God should choose someone better. She doesn’t ask for proof like Zechariah did when he was told that his wife

Elizabeth would have a son. She didn't even ask why she was chosen instead of someone with higher standing, like the King's daughter.

Mary simply believed that God chose her because she believed. God chooses us because we believe. It is not something we did, or how "good" we are. But because we believe. And finally, when Mary realized what God had done with her, she broke into joyous song of praise for the Lord. These great things that she had been chosen for had nothing to do with beauty, riches, nor brains. Her heart began to burst with praise because God was God. It is truly amazing what God did through Mary. And it is truly amazing what God has done and is doing through each of us. Praise be to God.

God chose a young, naïve, humble girl to be the carrier of the redeemer of the world. And God continues to amaze us today with miracles that we can't understand. During this time of Advent, when we prepare for the birth of a miracle, God chooses us like he chose Mary. God chooses the most unlikely to complete God's mission. Are you ready yet? Amen.

APOSTLES CREED (ELW p. 126)

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.

BLESSING FOR THE END OF INTERNSHIP FOR JON WENDT

Lord, we thank you for all the teachers, the synod candidacy committee, Wartburg Seminary and all those who walked with Jon to make this journey happen. We especially give thanks to the internship committee members who supported him: Melinda Lubben, Verda Scott, John Post, Shirley King, Lonnie Myrom, Lynette Demuth, Rolf Mahlberg and Erin Makela. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Lord we pray for energy, wisdom, clarity and discernment as Jon finishes two more semesters of classes, completes his final approval essay and interview and more. Use us as instruments of support and guidance. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, we pray for the congregations that Jon will serve in his ministry. We ask that you prepare a path for both them and Jon. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for wisdom and guidance for both First Lutheran and Grace Lutheran as we discern our "next steps forward together." Help us to find ways to lift each other up and spread the Good News to the whole world. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Isaiah 43:2

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Matthew 28:8, 19-20

8 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Jon, do you promise to continue to study faithfully and serve Grace and First fully. Do you promise to listen to the guidance of the synod, the seminary and your congregations with wisdom and discernment. Do you promise to faithfully listen to God’s calling in your life? If so say, “I do and I ask God to help and guide me.”

Jon: **I do and I ask God to help and guide me.**

Receive the blessing: Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

OFFERING & CGC MOMENT

HOLDEN: THE ANUNCIATION/THE MAGNIFICAT

OFFERTORY – Music

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. 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.

HOLDEN: LITANY AND PRAYERS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

CLOSING PRAYERS/LORD’S PRAYER

COMMUNION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

SENDING OF COMMUNION

HOLDEN: FINAL BLESSING

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Office Hours - Monday—Thursday 8:00 am – 12:00 pm (noon) —1:00 - 4:30 pm & Friday 8:00 am—12:00 pm (noon).

Due to the rising numbers of Covid-19 infections, we will not have in-person worship or youth activities through January 19. Council will revisit this decision at their January meeting. **Services** will be on-line or drive-in. You can drive to the church on Wednesday or Sunday and listen to the service on FM 107.9 on your radio. We will have bulletins and communion supplies in the mailbox in the parking lot and by the front steps. There will be ushers to direct you.

Gift Cards will only be available in the office during office hours. Please call ahead to see if someone is available to get you cards. Thank You!

The Card Ministry members would like to thank everyone for purchasing our cards! During these uncertain times, members continue to make cards at home. Sales from the cards have helped to fund the food ministry, coat ministry and Love INC. We continue to make cards that are sent to the shut-ins. If you would like to be a part of this ministry, contact Darcy Poppema or Janet Zierke. There is a job for everyone. Join the fun!

2021 Offering Envelopes will be available for pick up in your mailbox by Wednesday, December 16. Please pick them up during office hours and reminder to not use them until January 2021 as some of the numbers that you had this year have changed. Thank you.



The office will be closed Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25 for the Christmas Holiday.

Christmas Services – Drive-In (FM 107.9) & On-Line ONLY
Wednesday, December 23

6:00 PM—Traditional candlelight communion service with Christmas hymns.

Thursday, December 24

4:00 PM—Traditional candlelight communion service Christmas hymns.

8:00 PM—Traditional candlelight communion service with Christmas hymns.

Friday, December 25

9:00 AM—Intimate traditional communion service with Christmas hymns.

2020 Offering – The last day to get your offering in for 2020 will be Monday, December 28. Please drop it off during office hours. All offering received through the mail will need to be in before Christmas. This allows us to get it deposited for this year. Thank you!

Early Risers Bible Study will not zoom for Bible study on Tuesday, December 29. See you in the new year.

Our sympathy goes to Pastors Jeanette & Cole and Landon on the death of Cole's grandmother, Ruby.



Annual Reports are due in to the church office by Wednesday, December 30.
Please get your reports in by this date as we will be sending out the reports this year and Natalie will need a few extra days to get the reports in the mail on time.
Thank you!



Members: Janice Berger, Sandy Rogers, Todd Hallstrom, Ron Almjeld, Linda Towne, Charlene Wachter, Bob Dieter, Mary Kraft, Marilyn Frisch, Julie & Denny Christensen, Dianne Sanderson, Betty Nelson

Members in Nursing Homes: Bobbie Elvin, Gene Wachter, Sandra Marsh

Members in Care Facilities: Joan Doeden, Jean Bender

Family Members & Friends: Lois Gruis, Josh Hansen (Mary Ingenthron's son), Lee Morrison (Terry Morrison's son), Henrietta Lais, Tom Morgan (Sandy Randall's dad), Peggy Konold (Norma Radenbaugh's daughter), Brad Martens (Valerie Veen's son)

Our service men and women

Our Missionaries: Chuck & Sybil Rounds in Costa Rica and Love INC.

Merry Christmas

POINSETTIAS: The poinsettias adorning our sanctuary this Christmas Season are given to the glory of God by the following people:

In memory of loved ones by Doug & Ardys Jacobson, Jeff & Lynnette Faragher & family, Glen & Lynnea Faragher & family & Mark & Susan Jacobson & family.

In memory of loved ones by Judy Selberg & family.

In loving memory of our parents, Martin & Jeanette Waage & Sam & Ruth Casper by Alan & Barb Waage.

In memory of loved ones by Lonnie & Nancy Myrom.

In memory of Albert Cross by Agnes Cross, John & Nancy Cross & family, Dan Cross & Rick & Sarah Cross.

In memory of Merlin Robinson by his family.

In memory of Gary Milbrath by his family.

In memory of loved ones by Ron & Winora Hallstrom.

In loving memory of Clarence Wasmund by Marie & family.

In loving memory of Vernon Mews by Marie.

In loving memory of Alvin & Jerry Larson & Fred & Rose Hurlbut; In honor of our men & women in the armed forces by Brenda Hurlbut.

In loving memory of Allen Hurlbut by Brenda & family.

In memory of Craig Nienkerk, Iven & Helen Wachter & Merle & Lois Nienkerk by Lori & family.