



Advent 3
December 13, 2020

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Making Christ Known to all Through Grace

2225 Washington Street, Lincoln NE 68502 + 402-474-1505 + www.egrace.org

WELCOME to worship

Grace Lutheran Church, a church of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, has been at the heart of the faith community in Lincoln since 1889.

- We are committed to our mission: "Making Christ known to all through Grace."
- We celebrate our purpose: "That by God's grace we have been gathered to worship, called to witness, and sent to serve."
- We seek our vision: "To become a church with a passion for fostering a welcoming community that strives for peace and a sense of belonging."

Thank you for worshipping with us today and join our community at any time!

WORSHIP notes

Remember your response is marked in **BOLD** font.

Hearing enhancement devices are available in the entry space. Ask an usher to assist you.

Restrooms are located next to our chapel on the other side of the courtyard.

INTRODUCTION to worship

"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.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

PRELUDE: "Hark, the Glad Sound", Chesterfield, setting by C. S. Lang

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord's coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need.

Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.

Amen.

WELCOME

STAND

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever. **Amen.**

Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires. *Silence is kept for reflection.*

Loving and forgiving God,

we confess that we are held captive by sin. Despite our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free—free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, ☩ comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

GREETING

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

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.**

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture, preaching and song.

SIT

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-3

A reading from Isaiah:

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.

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

Psalm: Psalm 126

Let us read responsively from Psalm 126:

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.
²**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.**
Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."
³The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are glad indeed.
⁴**Restore our fortunes, O LORD,**
like the watercourses of the Negeb.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

A reading from 1 Thessalonians:

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.

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

STAND

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

The holy gospel according to St. John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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.

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

SIT

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY (please remain seated and listen, hum or sing the hymn to yourself or reflect on the following:)

John the Baptist has not really been a source of inspiration for hymn-writers. Perhaps it was the animal skin outfit or the diet of locusts that turned them away. This hymn is really one of only a few that give mention to the camel-hair-covered evangelist, and it is an extended riff on his call to repentance. John’s announcement “Prepare the way for the Lord” is the basis for this hymn.

What faith lessons can we learn from a strange character like John the Baptist?

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an - nounc - es
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; make straight the
3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our ref - uge
4 Stretch forth your hand, our health re - store, and make us
5 All praise to you, e - ter - nal Son, whose ad - vent



that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,
way for God with - in, and let us all our
and our great re - ward; with - out your grace we
rise to fall no more; oh, let your face up -
has our free - dom won, whom with the Fa - ther



for he brings glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter there.
waste a - way like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.
on us shine and fill the world with love di - vine.
we a - dore, and Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er - more.

Text: Charles Coffin, 1676–1749; tr. composite
Music: PUER NOBIS, European tune, adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1571–1621

STAND

APOSTLE'S 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 to the living,
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.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of power and might, shine your radiance and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need. *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 who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship. Embed your word in their hearts. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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. **Your mercy is great.**

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. **Your mercy is great.**

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. **Your mercy is great.**

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. We pray for those we name before you now...Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even amid 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. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Christ.

SIT

MUSIC OFFERING: Music Offering: "O Come, Holy Light", Brian Henson, (Virtual Choir)

O come, holy Light, with longing hearts we wait.
O quickly come with radiance bright,
and shine: illuminate!

Come, Prince of Peace, and reign, and justice will prevail.
Your sovereign rule will heal all pain.
Your kingdom will not fail.

O come Redeemer, come, and end our bitter night.
Come rescue us and bring us home
to dwell with you in light.

O come, holy Light, restore, renew, set free.
O bring salvation, make all things right,
and shine eternally!

O come, holy Light.

OFFERING PRAYER

Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season. Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing. In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray. **Amen.**

DIALOG

The Lord be with you. **And also, with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should always and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus 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.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Even as we watch and wait, Christ is here as we eat and drink.

COMMUNION (remove the plastic tab to access the wafer and grape juice seals.)

(pull back top seal) The Body of Christ

(pull back bottom seal) The Blood of Christ

STAND

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Gracious and abundant God, you have done great things for us, and we rejoice.

In this bread and cup, you give us life forever. In your boundless mercy, strengthen us and open our hearts to the world's needs, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

God sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, ✠ now and forever. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE "Comfort, Comfort, These My People", Freu dich sehr, setting by Johann Pachelbel

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WORSHIP SERVANTS:

Worship leader:	Rev. Eric Leshner
Organist/Pianist:	Anne Melang-Thoren
	Jennifer Aliwarga-Carlson
Cello:	Wendy Apple

WORSHIP SPACE:

After worship we will need four volunteers to sanitize the nave. Remain up front for further instructions.

PRAYER CONCERN(S):

All victims of the Covid-19 virus, sick and suffering, refugees, natural disaster victims, climate change, social injustice, our nation and all of creation.

WORSHIP RESTRICTIONS:

The following *temporary* changes will occur for the foreseeable future:

- As always, if you are ill or at risk, **please stay at home** and watch the service online.
- Wearing a **face covering that covers the mouth and nose is required** while you are in the building. A disposable mask will be provided if you do not have one.
- We will enter the building through the **North doors**. The doors will be locked at 9:10. All other doors will be locked.
- At the north door you will be given a **bulletin**. You will **take this home with you** after worship. Do not leave it in the building.
- There will hand sanitizers at the entrance door to the sanctuary. **Sanitize your hands** prior to entering the worship space.
- **Sit** only with persons from **your own household**.
- During worship we ask you to **refrain from physical contact** especially as you greet one another. Practice good “physical distancing”. Use a wave in place of a hand shake. 6 feet is the minimum. 12 feet is recommended.
- There will be **no offering**. There will be an offering basket located at the entrance door to the sanctuary.
- There will be **no sharing** of the peace.
- There will be **no singing**. You can hum or sing quietly to yourself.
- The presiding minister will **not greet** you after worship.
- There will be **no** assisting minister, reader, or acolyte
- There will be **no nursery** available.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prescott Christmas Boxes

The Social Ministry Committee will be filling 30 Christmas boxes again this year and would very much appreciate your help. We appreciate your generous support of Prescott School. The last day for donations is December 14th.

Items needed:

- Canned corn and green beans
- Gravy
- Instant mashed potatoes
- Dressing
- Sweet Potatoes {large cans}
- Fruit
- Jell-O
- Cooking Oil
- Jellied Cranberry sauce
- Cake mixes
- Frosting

There will be a box at the north entrance of the church to collect your items and at the east entrance if you drop items off during the week. Thanking you in advance of your continued support of Prescott School.

Advent Midweek Services will be held **in-person and online** on December 16 starting at 7:00 pm in the nave. This year's theme is "Prepare the Royal Highway"

Christmas Eve service will be held **in-person and online** beginning at 6:00 pm in the nave. Due to health restrictions the attendance will be limited to 50. You will need to make a reservation for this service. Contact Pr. Eric via voicemail at **402-474-1505 ext. 3** or email at **pr.eric@egrace.org** with your name and number attending.

Christmas Day service will be held **in-person and online** beginning at 10:00 am in the nave.

Lessons and Carols service will be held **in-person and online** on December 27 at 9:00 am in the nave.

2021 Offering Envelope boxes are available in the atrium after worship today or during the week.

The Lutheran magazine and **Daily Devotionals** are available in the narthex.

Masks

If you need to be in the church building please contact the office ahead of time so we know you are in the building and/or need access to the building. When you are here and within six feet of others then please wear a mask. Thanks!

CALENDAR FOR THE WEEK

December 14:

Lincoln Literacy	9 am
Boy Scouts	7 pm

December 15:

Al-Anon	9:30 am
WELCA 6	7:00 pm

December 16:

Worship	7 pm
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December 17:

Quilting	9:00 am
Lincoln Literacy	9:00 am
NA	7:00 pm
Bell Quartet B	7:00 pm

November 20:

Worship	9 pm
Bell Quartet A	9:45 am