

**To those who are
visiting today:**

Welcome to St. John Lutheran Church! We are delighted to have you here.

If you do not have a church home, you are cordially invited to join the St. John parish family.

Sound amplifying devices,

which are electronically connected to our speaker system, are available to those who have a hearing impairment. The units are light-weight, cordless, and simple to operate.

Please speak to an usher if you would like to use one.



The Rev. Joshua Ball
Pastor
(586) 749-5286

The Rev. Anthony Keilani
Assistant Pastor

Mr. Erwin Aufdemberge
Director of Parish Music

**Prayers as you await the beginning
of the Divine Service are found
inside the front cover of the hymnal.**

**The Psalms in the front section of
the hymnal will also aid your
pre-service meditation.**

St. John Evangelical-Lutheran Church

62657 North Avenue Ray Township, Michigan 48096
(586) 749-5286

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Web site: www.stjohnray.com **E-mail:** pastorjtball@gmail.com

The Fourth Sunday in Advent – Rorate Coeli

Shower, O heavens, from above

December 21, 2025

Welcome, Visitors to St. John Lutheran Church!

Concerning the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion:

The Lord's Supper is the true Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ for repentant sinners to eat and drink.

In addition, receiving this blessed Sacrament of the Altar is a public expression that you are one with the faith that is believed, taught, and confessed by that congregation. St. John Ev.-Lutheran Church is a member congregation of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LC-MS.) Our pastors and congregations subscribe to the Confessions contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as the correct interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and faithful proclamation of the Christian faith. Therefore, communicant members in good standing of LC-MS congregations, and churches in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LC-MS, are invited to commune at St. John.

Not all Christians believe in communion practice of this kind, however we ask your kindness in respecting our practice. We rejoice at the faith of all who belong to our Lord's Church, and are glad that you are here with us today.

Adult and youth catechism instruction is always available, without obligation.

The Sign of the Cross, kneeling and other Church Customs

The hymnal places a cross , at certain points in the service where you may cross yourself. This is a very ancient and good – but *optional* – symbol and custom among Lutherans and many other Christians. Two examples are at the Invocation (“In the Name of the Father and of the , Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”) and in the final sentence of the Nicene Creed.

What does making the sign of the cross mean?

It means “I belong to the true, living God: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit”, for the sign of the cross is His sign. On the cross, God the Son willingly died in our place to pay for all our sins. God's sign was placed on your forehead and heart at Holy Baptism to “mark you as belonging to Christ the crucified.”

Please kneel where indicated *if you are able* (or stand with head bowed.)

Kneeling is a sign of humility and thanksgiving before God. Martin Luther encouraged Lutherans to follow the ancient custom of kneeling for these words in the Nicene Creed: “came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man.” Why? This outward action shows our humility and thanksgiving that God has made Himself our Brother by becoming a true Man. Those words in the Creed are, therefore, marked [▼▲] for those who desire to kneel. You could also bow your head at those words.

Another ancient and good custom is bowing the head whenever the name “Jesus” is spoken during the Divine Service. This is an outward way to give honor and glory to our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Calendar for the Week:

<u>Today:</u> 12/21	9:00 am Divine Service 10:30 am Bible Study	Altar Server: Ron Heimke	Crucifer: Ezra Ball
<u>Monday:</u> 12/22	6:00 pm Divine Service		
<u>Wednesday:</u> 12/24	4:00 pm Christmas Eve Divine Service	Altar Server: Andrew Upton	Crucifer: Ezra Ball
<u>Thursday:</u> 12/25	10:30 am Christmas Day Festival Divine Service	Server: Ron Heimke	Crucifer: Ezra Ball
<u>Next Sunday:</u> 12/28	9:00 am Divine Service	Altar Server: Ron Heimke	Crucifer: Ezra Ball
<u>Monday:</u> 12/29	<i>No Monday service until January 5</i>		
<u>Wednesday:</u> 12/31	6:00 pm New Year's Eve Divine Service	Altar Server: Ron Heimke	Crucifer: Ezra Ball

Attendance *Wednesday 12/10:* 29 *Last Sunday:* 59 *Monday:* 11

Offering 12/10: Current: \$850 Advent: \$117 Building Fund: \$75 Christmas Eve: \$50
12/14: Current: \$4,148 Advent: \$5 Building Fund: \$427 Missions: \$407 Kroger Rewards: \$37
To meet our 2024 budgetary requirements, an average weekly collection of \$3,635 is required.

In today's readings: **John the Baptizer Points Everyone to the Messiah.** The coming of God in all His unveiled power at Mount Sinai was terrifying to the people of Israel. The thundering voice of the Lord puts sinners in fear of death (Deut. 18:15-19). God, therefore, raised up a prophet like Moses—the Messiah, the Christ. God came to His people veiled in human flesh. The skies poured down the Righteous One from heaven; the earth opened her womb and brought forth Salvation (Introit) through the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of the Lord (Luke 1:39-6). The fruit of her womb is the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the One whose sandal strap John was not worthy to loose (John 1:19-28). In Jesus we are delivered from fear and anxiety. In Him alone we have the peace of God which surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:4-7).

You can prepare for next week's Divine Service by reading: Isaiah 11:1-5; 2 Samuel 7:1-16; Galatians 4:1-7; Luke 2:22-40.
Suggested Book of Concord reading: Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VIII:77-79; XI:43-44; II:15-16.

Festive Pre-service Mini-Concerts both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Plan to arrive at church about 15 minutes early to hear Christmas selections by organ, flute, and choir.

Anthem Notes: “To A Virgin Meek and Mild” tells the story of Advent/Christmas and was written in the 1900's. Not much is known about the author. The tune, “Lo Decembre Congelat” is a Catalan tune from the Middle Ages. The arrangement is by David Johnson, contemporary Lutheran composer.

Many thanks to all who baked cookies for our annual Cookie walk and to those who purchased them. Proceeds from the sale will help fund the St. John Missions Society's on-going charitable projects. Your support is very much appreciated!

2026 Offering Envelopes are available in the Narthex. If you haven't already picked yours up, please take them home today. *Thank you.*

No Monday Divine Service on December 29. Monday evening services resume on January 5.

Confession & Absolution is available by scheduling an appointment with Pastor Ball. The rite for individual, private confession comes from Luther's Small Catechism and is found in our hymnal on Pages 292-293.

Answering Arguments Against Christianity. The Christian God is Misogynistic; The Meaning of Life Is Found in Using Technology; We Don't Need the Christian God to Be Good. Issues, Etc. is a radio talk show and podcast produced by Lutheran Public Radio in Collinsville, IL and hosted by LCMS Pastor Todd Wilken. You can listen to responses to common objections to Christianity at issuesetc.org, Amazon Alexa, Google Home, Apple HomePod, TuneIn, the LPR mobile app and a podcast provider.

The Divine Service schedule for the Holy Days of Advent and Christmas

- ◆ **Christmas Eve** – Wednesday, December 24: Candlelight Divine Service at **4:00 p.m.**
- ◆ **Christmas Day** – Thursday, December 25: Festival Divine Service at **10:30 a.m.**
- ◆ **New Year's Eve** – Wednesday December 31: Divine Service at **6:00 p.m.**



The Preparatory Office

Please stand when the bells are rung. You may give reverence to our Lord by turning to face His cross as it comes down the center aisle and by bowing as it passes.

Processional Hymn: #341 *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

The Invocation, Confession and Absolution *Please stand*

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the , Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen.

Pastor: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God, our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P: Our help , is in the name of the Lord,

C: Who made heaven and earth.

P: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C: and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Please kneel – Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

P: O almighty God, merciful Father,

C: I, a poor miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being.

The pastor stands:

P: Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the , Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen. Please stand

The Liturgy of the Word

The Introit



The Antiphon:

Cantor: Shower, O heavens, | from above,*
and let the clouds rain down | righteousness;

All: let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may | bear fruit;*
let the earth cause them | both to sprout. (Isaiah 45:8)

Psalm:

Cantor: The heavens declare the glo- | ry of God,*
and the sky above proclaims His | handiwork.

All: Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end | of the world.*
In them He has set a tent | for the sun,

Cantor: which comes out like a Bridegroom leaving His | chamber,*
and, like a strong man, runs its | course with joy.

All: Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the | end of them,*
and there is nothing hidden | from its heat. (Psalm 19:1, 4-6)

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*

And to the Holy | Spirit;

As it was in the be- | ginning,*

Is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

The Antiphon - (as above)

The Kyrie

C Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -

on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.
[The Gloria in Excelsis is omitted throughout Advent.]

The Salutation and Collect of the Day

F The Lord be with you.

, And with thy spir - it.

F Let us pray...

P: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

F A - - - men.

The Old Testament Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-19

After the reading:

P: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

The Gradual

I d: Dorian

Cantor: The LORD is near to all who | call on Him,*
 to all who call on | Him in truth.

All: My mouth will speak the praise | of the LORD,*
 and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and | ever. *(Psalm 145:18, 21)*

The Epistle Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

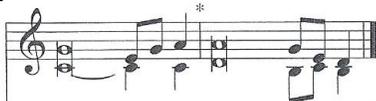
After the reading:

P: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

The Alleluia and Verse

All: 
Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

Cantor: 

You are my help and my de- | liverer;*
do not delay, | O my God! (Psalm 40:17)

All: The Alleluia – as above

Announcement of the Holy Gospel: St. John 1:19-28

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. ___ the ___ chapter. , , ,



Glo - ry be to Thee, O Lord.

Response to the Gospel

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.



Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

The Nicene Creed: Confessed by all.

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation ▼ came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man; ▲ and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy *Christian and Apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life , of the world to come. Amen.

*The ancient text reads: one holy *catholic* and apostolic Church.

Hymn: #356 *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*

The Preaching of the Gospel

Hymn of the Day: #357 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

The Prayer of the Church - *Please kneel*

The Offering

The Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist

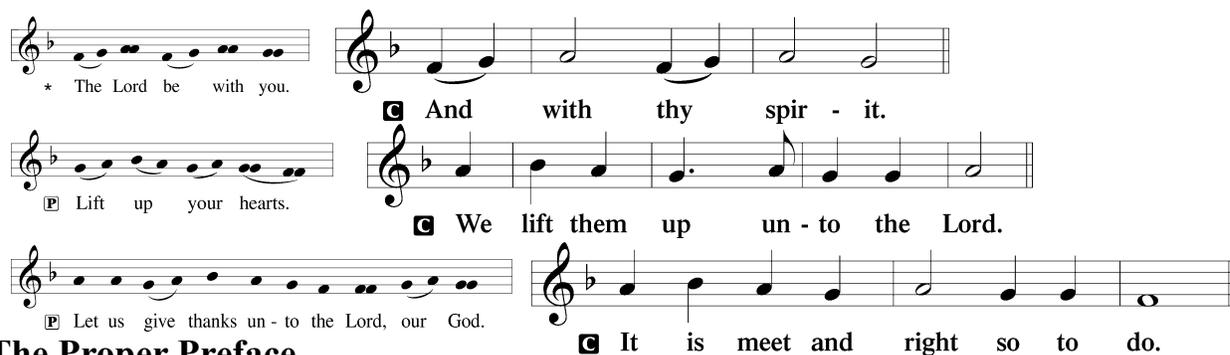
Please stand when the offering is brought forward.

The Offertory



C Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -
 new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -
 way from Thy pres - ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it
 from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va -
 tion, and up - hold me with Thy free spir - it. A - men.

The Preface



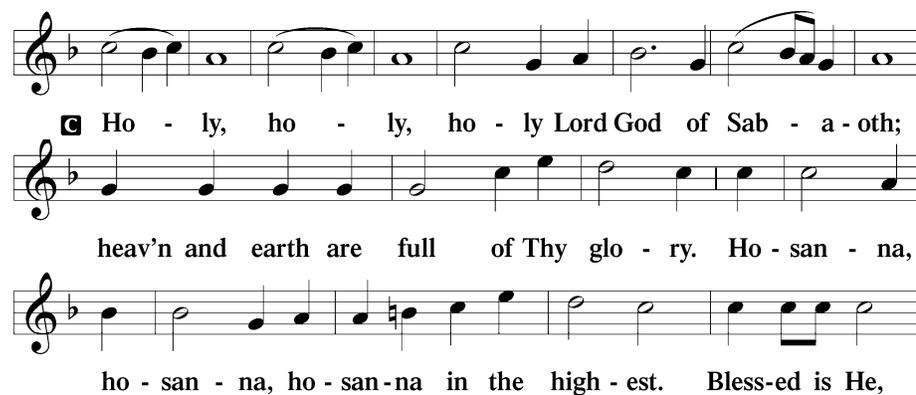
* The Lord be with you. **C** And with thy spir - it.
P Lift up your hearts. **C** We lift them up un - to the Lord.
P Let us give thanks un - to the Lord, our God. **C** It is meet and right so to do.

The Proper Preface

It is good, right, and salutary ... evermore praising You and saying:

The Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy)

It is appropriate to kneel for the Sanctus and to remain kneeling until the distribution.



C Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;
 heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry. Ho - san - na,
 ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is He,

bless-ed is He, bless-ed is He ; that com-eth in the name of the Lord.

Ho-san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san-na in the high - est.

The Our Father (*spoken by all*)

C: 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.

The Verba Christi (*The Words of Christ* by which He instituted the Blessed Sacrament)

The Pax Domini (*The Peace of the Lord*)

☐ The peace of the Lord be with you al - ways.

☐ A - men.

The Agnus Dei (*Lamb of God*)

☐ O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak-est a-way the sin of the world, have mer-cy up - on us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak-est a-way the sin of the world, have mer-cy up - on us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak-est a-way the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace. , A - men.

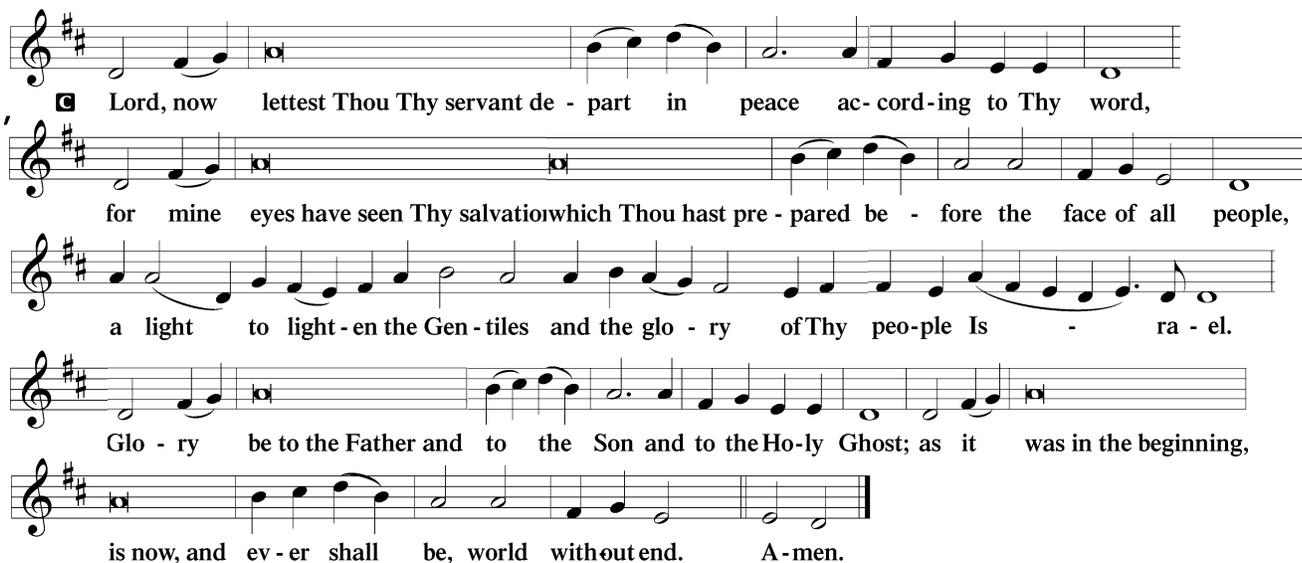
The Holy Communion — Hymn sung during distribution of the Sacrament:

#343 *Prepare the Royal Highway*

Prayers for before and after receiving the Sacrament are found inside the front cover of the hymnal.

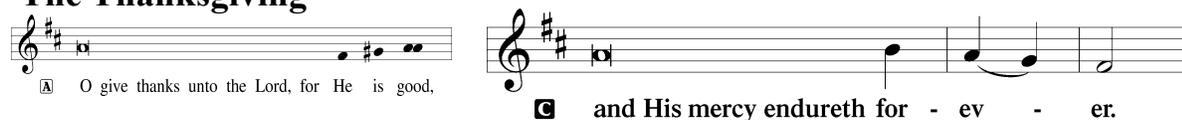
Please stand when motioned by Pastor

The Nunc Dimittis



Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant de - part in peace ac - cord - ing to Thy word,
for mine eyes have seen Thy salviati which Thou hast pre - pared be - fore the face of all people,
a light to light - en the Gen - tiles and the glo - ry of Thy peo - ple Is - ra - el.
Glo - ry be to the Father and to the Son and to the Ho - ly Ghost; as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ev - er shall be, world without end. A - men.

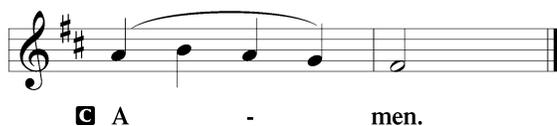
The Thanksgiving



O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,
and His mercy endureth for - ev - er.

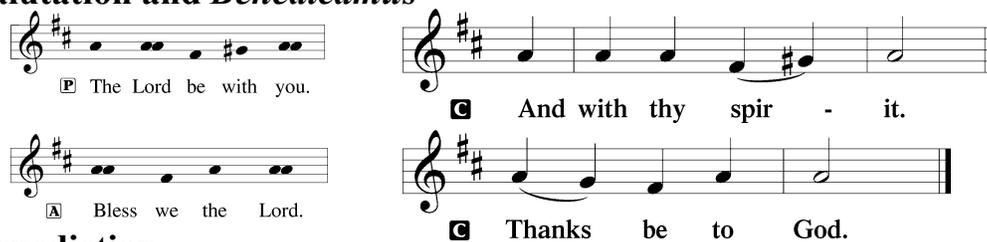
The Post-Communion Collect

P: We give thanks to You, Almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift; and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



A - men.

The Salutation and *Benedicamus*



The Lord be with you.
And with thy spir - it.
Bless we the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The Benediction

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance on you and , give you peace.



A-men, a-men, a - men.

Silent Prayer

Recessional Hymn: #934 *My Soul Now Magnifies the Lord*

, *Soli Deo Gloria* ,