

# Community of Christ Lutheran Church First Sunday of Advent December 1, 2024, 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Pastor Stephen C. Bond



#### THE GATHERING

Welcome Pastor Steve Bond

Musical Prelude "The Star Carol" by Alfred Burt

Eric Dickey

## WE REMEMBER OUR BAPTISM

"Confession and Forgiveness"

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the living God, who has kept the promises to our ancestors, who meets us here in our expectations, and who pulls us into the future for good. **Amen.** 

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

#### Silence is kept for reflection.

O God, our truest hope, Have mercy on us. We confess the crookedness inside our hearts that leads us astray. We are fearful when the world is shaken, and we are weighed down with the worries of this life. We are complacent in the face of others' needs. Afraid of change, we stay stuck in old ruts of sin when you tell us you are doing something new. In your compassion, forgive us. Turn us back to you. Free us from our fear. Awaken us from apathy. And draw us into your promised future, made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

Beloved, God forgives us and enables us to begin again. God's messengers tell us we do not have to be afraid. In the name of Jesus Christ, who is with us and for whom we wait, your sins are forgiven, and we are free to follow in his way.

Amen.

**Gathering Hymn** 

"Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers"

**ELW 244** 

#### Greeting

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





#### Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection alert us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and redeem us for your life of justice, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **P Amen.** 

#### **Lighting of the Advent Wreath**

Lead by Eric Dickey, 8:00 a.m., and Emily Pollock, 10:00 a.m.

#### Week One - Hope

by Lisa Alleman

Light one can - dle of hope in the dark-ness, light one can - dle for me...

Hope for the suf - 'fring - hope for the shamed hope that this world will no long-er be in pain. Hope that will light up the night... Light one can - dle of hope.

#### **Childrens Sermon**

#### THE READINGS

## The First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

<sup>14</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup>In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup>In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

L The Word of the Lord C Thanks be to God!

#### Psalm: Psalm 25:1-10 (Spoken Responsively)

<sup>1</sup>To you, O LORD,

I lift up my soul.

# <sup>2</sup>My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.

<sup>3</sup>Let none who look to you be put to shame;

rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

# <sup>4</sup>Show me your ways, O LORD,

and teach me your paths.

<sup>5</sup>Lead me in your truth and teach me,

for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love,

for they are from everlasting.

<sup>7</sup>Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.

## <sup>8</sup>You are gracious and upright, O LORD;

therefore you teach sinners in your way.

<sup>9</sup>You lead the lowly in justice

and teach the lowly your way.

<sup>10</sup>All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast love and faithfulness to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.

#### The Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

<sup>9</sup>How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? <sup>10</sup>Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

<sup>11</sup>Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. <sup>12</sup>And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. <sup>13</sup>And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

L The Word of the Lord C Thanks be to God!



# The Holy Gospel: Luke 21:25-36

P The Holy Gospel according to.... C Glory to you, O Lord!

[Jesus said:] <sup>25</sup>"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. <sup>26</sup>People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup>Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup>Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

<sup>29</sup>Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; <sup>30</sup>as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. <sup>31</sup>So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup>Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. <sup>33</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

<sup>34</sup>"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, <sup>35</sup>like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup>Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

P The Gospel of the Lord! C Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

"God's Endgame"

Pastor Stephen Bond



#### **Nicene Creed**

C We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him, all things

were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven; was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day, he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

## **WE DEDICATE OUR HEARTS IN PRAYER**

**P** As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

#### A brief silence.

**AM** God of righteousness, your people live in hopeful expectation of your coming. Fill your church with renewed passion for our shared mission and deepen our relationships with other Christians and other faith traditions in our local community and across the world. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.** 

**AM** God of the cosmos, all creation shows that your presence is near. Help us sense your goodness and love in the sun and moon, in sprouting leaves and bare branches, in the roaring sea and quiet breeze. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.** 

**AM** God of the nations, your reign extends over all principalities and powers. Give leaders and all in authority hearts for justice and peace. Encourage efforts to enact policies that benefit the common good. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.** 

AM God of change, you accompany us through life's transitions. Be near to all who are changing jobs, moving, welcoming children, or facing the loss of loved ones. Sustain those who are ill or suffering; Tom Jennings, Sue & Jim Enk, Christal & Chad Pritchard, Frank O'Konski, Larry Geer, Luke Holtz, Susie Donnal, Ron Hetherwick, Martina Benton, Janet Dellinger, Jake Cope, Debbie Carman, Alexa Ayres, Cory Kaczor, Eric Lewis, Phillip Hart, Harold Shoupe Jr., Jacki

Sutter, Jacquelyn Krohn, Eli & Alexis Bibler and baby to be.... and all those we remember in silence. In times of change, remind us of your steadfast love. Lord, in your mercy, receive our prayer.

**AM** God of community, your Spirit holds us together. Sustain our care for one another. Inspire us to seek new ways to live together and to embrace the diversity of thought and identity in our communities. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.** 

**AM** God of memory, we give you thanks for faithful ones who have died. Tend to our grief and sorrow with renewed trust in your promise of abundant and eternal life. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.** 

**P** Savior of the nations, come and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.** 

#### THE MEAL

All Christians are welcome to commune at our Altar. You do not have to be a member of this congregation to receive Communion. Grape juice is available in the inner ring of glasses for those desiring it. A "gluten-free" host option is available upon request as well.

#### **Sharing of the Peace**

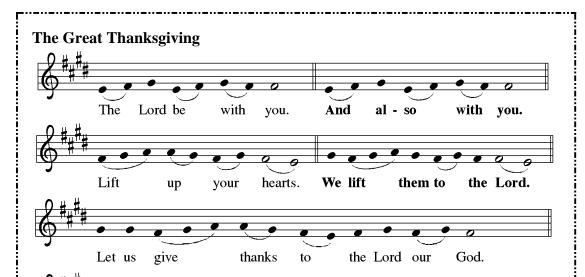
**P** The Peace of the Lord be with you all! **C** And also with you! *Share an expression of peace with your neighbor, please.* 

The congregation continues to stand during Tithes and Offerings if you are able.

Our Tithes and Offerings Bring your gifts to the Altar, or you may offer gifts in the tray located at the rear of the sanctuary. Thank you.

#### **Offering Prayer**

**AM** Lord Jesus, our portion and our cup, you offered yourself in love for the world, and in this meal, you nourish us with your life. Fill us with your abundance, that we may feed the hungry and welcome the stranger, trusting in your name. **Amen.** 



to give our thanks and

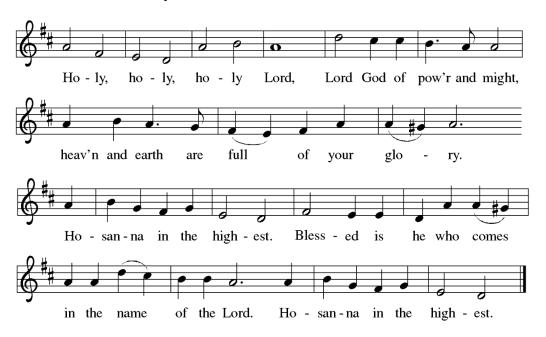
praise.

# \*\*The Eucharistic Prayer Continues.....

It

is

right



#### The 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. Jesus said, 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. Jesus said, Do this for the remembrance of me.

#### The Lord's Prayer

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray...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.



## **Post Communion Blessing**

#### **Prayer after Communion**

**AM** Generous God, we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name. **Amen.** 

#### **Prayer at the Sending of Communion**

**P** Gracious God, whose mercy endures from generation to generation: As Mary set out to visit Elizabeth before she gave birth to her son, bless those who go forth to share your word and sacrament with our sisters and brothers who are sick or homebound. In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those to whom we bring this communion, that through the body and blood of your Son, we may all know the hope of your promised coming in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** 

#### THE SENDING

#### Milestones & Announcements:

#### The Blessing

**P** God of endings and beginnings, God in the darkness and the light, God, our hope for the journey, + bless and keep you now and forever. **Amen.** 

**Sending Hymn** 

"People, Look East"

**ELW 248** 

#### **Dismissal**

**AM** Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel. **Thanks be to God. AM** And next week, **C Bring a friend!** 



# "Making Jesus Known"

Welcome to Community of Christ! Our family welcomes you to the house of the Lord today! We ask God to bless His Holy Word and Sacrament today so that his people might receive strength for living out our days! If you are looking for a church home, we hope you will consider Community of Christ!

**We WELCOME YOU** to worship with us at one of our TWO worship services. Join us at 8:00 a.m. or 10:00 a.m. in person or on Facebook Live. We look forward to seeing you and as always BRING A FRIEND!!!!

# 2024 Congregational Meeting!

**NEXT SUNDAY!** December 8, following the 10:00 a.m. service. Please plan to attend!

Altar Flowers are given by Chris & Natalie Rilling to the Glory of God and families everywhere ♥

"More Than Wishful Thinking: An Exploration of Christian Hope" Advent Adult Sunday School Series: Hope is a funny word. Sometimes we use it with bold confidence in spite of impossible odds: "Even though he was wrongfully imprisoned, he held onto hope that he would be vindicated and set free." Sometimes we use it as a polite way of expressing doubt, like when you say, "I hope it doesn't rain today," while the sky darkens with threatening clouds from the west. Emily Dickinson famously said that hope was "the thing with feathers that perches in the soul—and sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all..." And of course, as one hero in the Star Wars movies says about fighting against the Galactic Empire, "Rebellions are built on hope." That's a lot of range for one word to have to cover—and maybe it can be confusing for us as Christians to know what we are

talking about when we say we are people of *hope*. This Advent season especially is one marked by both waiting and hope (which, fun fact, use the same word in Spanish!), as we hear the centuries-long hopes of prophets and exiles who waited and hoped for homecoming, for restoration, and for the arrival of the promised Anointed One (Messiah/Christ) of God. We also hear in these weeks the hope we have for God's new creation when all things are made new. So, what does it mean for us to be people of hope, and how is it different from just "wishful thinking" or mere optimism? That's what we want to explore in this December's Adult Sunday School series, running on December 1, 8, 15, and 22 between services. On all of those dates except the 22<sup>nd</sup>, we'll be in the fellowship hall, and on Dec. 22 we'll move to the Council Room to allow the kids to have the larger space for the Birthday Party for Jesus! We *hope* you'll join us around the table for good conversation and learning together this Advent in the Adult Class!

#### New Thursday Bible Study Series: "Things Seen and Unseen"

Starting this December, we'll begin a new series in our Thursday Afternoon Bible Study, co-led between Pastor Steve and Vicar Natalie, exploring angels and other spiritual beings in the Bible, what we do (and don't!) know about them, and what difference their existence makes in our lives. Have you ever been curious about what angels look like, or where some people get the idea of "guardian" angels from? Don't know your "cherubim" from your "seraphim"? Wonder why the first words out of the angels' mouths in the Bible are so often, "Do not be afraid!"? Join us on Thursdays beginning in December and running into the new year as we explore Things Seen and Unseen: An Introduction to Angels in our Thursday Afternoon Bible Study, at 1:00 p.m. in the Council Room, starting Dec. 5 after our series on Galatians concludes! We'd love to have you around the table!

## Sunday School "Birthday Party for Jesus" on Dec. 22 at 9:00 a.m.!

While our Sunday School classes for kids have been meeting every Sunday throughout the fall, we're doing something special on the Sunday before Christmas—our annual "Birthday Party for Jesus" event at 9:00 a.m. (between services) on Sunday, Dec. 22 in the fellowship hall! (Grown-ups, you'll find the Adult Sunday School class in the Council room on that day!) Join us and kids of all ages for songs, fun, food, and a chance to celebrate together as we say, "Happy birthday, Jesus!"

**Thank you!!** Thank you to Carol Wiemken for covering the time in the church office so Michelle can enjoy some vacation time with family.



#### **Advent Midweek Worship with Holden Evening Prayer**

We call Jesus the "Prince of Peace," and we sing that on the night of his birth "all is calm, all is bright."

But quite often our lives are especially hectic and stressful in the weeks before Christmas, aren't they? From gift-buying and cookie baking to parties and concerts,

from decorating our houses and family gatherings, we can feel flustered and frazzled during the "most wonderful time of the year" rather than at peace. So, we want to invite you to a weekly chance to hit the pause button on the craziness and be re-centered on the Good News of God's coming to us in Christ, with our three Advent midweek services using Holden Evening Prayer.

On Dec. 4, 11, and 18 (each are Wednesdays) at 7:00 p.m., join us for a beautiful and contemplative sung setting of Evening Prayer and reflections on the Word that will ground us in our hope for Jesus' coming. If you've never experienced this setting for evening worship, you'll definitely want to try it, and this is a fantastic event to invite friends and neighbors to, as well! Join us this Advent!



Blue Christmas Service Offers Comfort and Hope—Dec. 22 at 3:00 p.m. The holidays can be a difficult time for people, especially if they're dealing with grief and loss. Whether still working through a recent death, feeling renewed sadness over a long-time loss, or just struggling while others seem full of Christmas-time cheer, this can be a heavy season of

the year. So, we'll continue a tradition we've done for the last several years here at Community of Christ by hosting a Blue Christmas service—a time of worship that offers comfort for those who need it, particularly at this time of year, and that connects our faith in God-with-Us who came among us in Bethlehem with our lived experience of loss and grief. This year's service will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 22, and is open to any and all who would find it helpful. You are welcome to invite friends, relatives, neighbors, or community members who might need a moment this season for grief to be named and comfort to be given, here at Community of Christ.

A Cherished Tradition - The Annual Covenant Renewal: Community of Christ

From the very beginning, the founding pastor and leaders of our congregation established a tradition of annually affirming our commitment to the work God is doing through this community. Starting today, Sunday, December 1, all who gather in worship, whether in person or online, will have the opportunity to renew this

covenant. More details will be shared during the Sunday morning services. We encourage you to reflect on this covenant and recommit to your participation in the life and ministry of Community of Christ.



Community of Christ will host three worship services on Christmas Eve: 4:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m., & 11:00 p.m. Each worship service will include Christmas carols, candlelight (and glow sticks for the kids), and Holy Communion. Invite a friend to worship with you this season!



## \*\*Adopt a Resident at the Lutheran Home of Mercy!\*\*

Thank you to those who have adopted a resident! Your thoughtful gift can make a significant difference in their lives.

\*\*Important Details: \*\* Gift Submission Deadline: Sunday, December 8th. Please DO NOT wrap gifts, as they need to be inventoried. Instead, please place them in one Christmas gift bag. After dropping off your gift(s), please write the date on your pink or blue paper to help us track and confirm that all resident gifts are accounted for. Thank you for your generosity!



#### Salem Gifts for Children

This year, as in past years, Community of Christ has the opportunity to reach out and bless the children of our sister church, Salem Lutheran Church, in north Toledo, Pastor Mike ANGLES TREES from Salem provided us with a list of children's names and their gift requests. Both have been incorporated into an

envelope and are displayed on the bulletin board in the Gathering place. Here are some important dates for the project:

- See the bulletin board in the Gathering Place with Salem Angel requests.
- Select your "Angel" and enter your name and phone number on the pink or blue Angel slip on the board. Take the envelope behind the pink or blue slip with you. It has all the information you need regarding the gift request.

#### Please do not remove the pink or blue slips or relocate them on the board as this is our inventory method.

- Shop for your "Angel" and leave your gift under the Christmas tree in the sanctuary.
- Sunday, December 15th, 2024, is the last day to return your gifts. Please have them under the tree **no later than 11:30 a.m.** Ken and I will be transferring your gifts to Salem that day!

Thanks for helping to bless these children at Christmas! Shelly & Ken Hayes





Looking for a meaningful Christmas gift while supporting our church? We've got the perfect solution! Reserve your copies of A Wondrous Night and Tiny Candle at the kiosk. Chad will have books available in the fellowship hall on December 15th. These heartwarming children's books, sharing the Christmas story, are written by Sandy Ackerman and illustrated by Todd Ackerman—mother and brother of Chad Ackerman. After covering costs, all proceeds will be donated to Community of Christ. If you'd like your books sooner, contact Chad at 1chadackerman@gmail.com to make arrangements.

#### Prices:

- A Wondrous Night\* \$14.95
- Tiny Candle\* \$16.95

Fellowship invites you to join us for a **Toledo Walleye Hockey** game on January 5th, 2025 @ 5:15 p.m.! Tickets are just \$17 per person. (No online sign-up this time.) To reserve your spot, please sign up at the kiosk and submit your payment by December 22nd. Cash is the easiest option, but if you need alternatives, see Chad Ackerman. You can also drop the exact amount in a marked envelope with Michelle in the office. Don't miss out—sign up today!

#### Join Us for our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Christmas Caroling!

**Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>.** Please join us as we go out and spread Christmas joy to some of our shut-ins and community members. No experience is required! No talent is required! The words for the carols will be provided so no need to worry about not knowing the words. Start time is currently being worked out and after spreading Christmas joy we'll share in some holiday cheer with pizza and snacks at the Swagler's home. Please sign-up sheet at the kiosk.

#### Monthly Singing Visit to Blue Creek Nursing Home—Dec. 10 at 10:00 a.m.

Every month, volunteers from Community of Christ gather at Blue Creek Nursing Home (11239 Waterville Street here in Whitehouse) on the *second Tuesday* at 10:00 a.m. to share a brief (30 min) time of singing, prayer, and fellowship. We can use singers every month, whenever you are able, but especially in December we would welcome extra voices as we sing Christmas carols and songs of the season with the residents. If you want to join us, you can just meet us at Blue Creek on December 10 at 10:00 a.m., or if you have questions, see Cinda Pontsler, Cheryl Fischer, or Pastor Steve!

#### \*\*We Welcome Volunteers of All Ages!\*\*

There are many ways to serve at Community of Christ, including as a Door Greeter, Lector, Bulletin Distributor, Acolyte, Worship Assistant, Camera Operator for live streaming, or helping with Communion Set-up and Clean-up.

To volunteer, simply visit [www.commofchrist.org](http://www.commofchrist.org), click on \*Volunteer for Worship\*, select the ministry area you'd like to serve, then choose the date(s) you are available. After selecting your time slot, click on the

"Sign Up" box, scroll to the bottom, and click "Submit and Sign Up.
"You will receive a confirmation email and a reminder shortly before your

assigned date. \*\* Important: \*\* If you need to cancel, please arrange for another volunteer to cover your position, and update your cancellation in Sign-Up Genius so that others can see the availability. Training is available at any time! Contact Laurie Mauro at (419) 877-5366. We look forward to serving with you!



# NORTH -END TEEN ART SHOW

# WEDNESDAY, DEC. 11 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

At Hope Lutheran Church, the young people and adult leaders from Salem's Teen Program will showcase their work from the past year. All proceeds from young artists' work will go to them. Adult work will go towards the program.

You can RSVP to: PastorSalemLutheranChurch@gmail.com





Salem: The Church with a Real Heart in the Heart of the Innercity



Available on the net at www.commofchrist.org



OR you can us your cell phone camera to access our website with our QR code!

# What's Happening This Week?



Did one of our Bible readings capture your attention today? Was there a story you could picture in your mind? Did a phrase from a hymn or a thought from the sermon start some new ideas or inspire some reflection? Did a Scripture passage spark a question for you to think about? Use this space here as an open canvas for your faithful imagination: you can draw a picture of something you pictured, write a question, take

notes from the message or scriptures, or doodle your faith into a visible form here. Then, either take it with you or leave your thoughts and images here to be shared in an ongoing collection here at Community of Christ!