

*“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.”*

*John 1:6-8*

**St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Third Sunday of Advent – December 17, 2023**

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Rev. Katie McNeal, Presiding Minister

Maizy Fisher, Director of Music Ministries

*We are delighted to have you worship with us this morning!  
Know that you are welcome here just as you are.*

*If you are looking for a church to call home, why not consider making this one your own? If this is your first time visiting us, please fill out the visitor information card stapled to your bulletin. Everything you need to follow worship can be found in this bulletin. As you are comfortable, please rise when there is an \* and join in the congregational responses, noted in **bold**.*

*All songs are marked with numbers. The red book in the pew has all the songs. Look for the large number in the upper corner of the page to find the correct song.*

*During the time of **Peace**, you are invited to turn to those around you and offer a word of peace. We suggest a handshake and saying, "Peace be with you." You are also welcomed to offer another gesture of peace (wave, fist-bump, smile, etc.). Hand sanitizer is available in each pew.*

*At the time of **Offering**, you are invited to share a gift. You may also offer updates to our ongoing prayer list using the yellow cards in the pews and placing them in the offering plates. Visitor information cards and member attendance cards (attached to the front of the bulletin) may also be placed in the offering plates.*

*At the time of **Holy Communion**, all are welcome to come forward via the center aisle, receive the elements, and return via the side aisles. We begin at the front of the right side, commune all on the right side, then we will invite the left side forward. When you come forward, you may receive the bread from the pastor (gluten free wafers are available), then pre-filled cups with wine or grape juice from the assisting minister. You may consume the elements after receiving them then place the empty cup in the tray held by the acolyte. Those who do not receive Holy Communion are welcome to come forward for a blessing.*

*If you need a restroom, restrooms are located on the bottom floor at the far side of the building from the elevator. Restrooms may be accessed either via the stairs in the rear of the sanctuary, the stairs by the Greeting Area, or the elevator.*

*As you prepare for worship, you are invited to fill out the blue prayer request forms located in each pew. The cards will be collected during our hymn of the day, and prayers will be offered during the prayers of intercession.*

## **PRELUDE and ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

We gather today. **It is time to worship!**

We listen for God. **It is time to hear!**

We receive God's grace. **It is time to be loved!**

We leave in peace. **It is time to serve others!**

As we wait for Jesus' arrival, Emmanuel, God-with-us, is already here in this time and place.

### **\*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

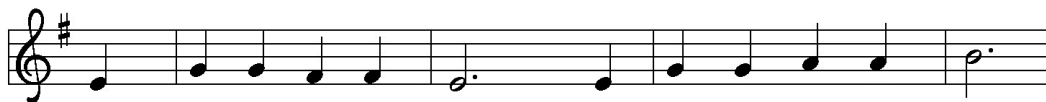
Sometimes we forget that God is already here. Sometimes we think that we have nowhere left to turn. Sometimes we feel frozen or are rushing with no time to rest; and it feels like life is happening to us too quickly or like our lives will never change. Sometimes it feels like we are out of time for forgiveness. But for God, there is always time for forgiveness. God, Emmanuel, is already here. God's love is with us. And so we trust God, and we confess our sins together.

**Holy One, We have not stayed awake.**

**We have missed you when you appeared in our neighbors, in strangers half a world away,  
in the suffering planet.**

**We have wasted the time and the skills that you gave us and assumed we were powerless  
to mend the breaches in our world.**

**Sometimes, we even gave up on your mercy, justice, and love. God, is it too late for us?  
Speak tenderly to our anxious hearts. Tear open the heavens and heal what we have done.**



- 1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
- 2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
- 3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.  
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.  
Re - new us with your sav - ing pow'r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

People of God, God's judgment is certain and God's forgiveness is lightning fast. Hear this good news: in the name of Jesus Christ, all your sins are forgiven. Forgiveness gives us the courage we need. Wherever we wait for God's time to come, we will witness wonders.

**Amen.**

**\*GATHERING SONG *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn* (ELW 242)**



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for  
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -  
 3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when  
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for  
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is  
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so  
 dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.  
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;  
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.  
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -  
 mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -  
 Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in  
 Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and  
 kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to  
 won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and  
 sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.  
 shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.  
 weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.  
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

## LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

God is outside our days, weeks, and months.

God is beyond time.

When God draws near, our schedules and certainties can be disturbed.

As we light another candle on this wreath,

may God disrupt our time as only God can – to teach us, to free us, and to be near us.

*Light the third candle during the singing of the hymn.*

### ADVENT SONG *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* (ELW 240)



- 1 Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 3 Light three can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra - el, God ful - fills the prom - ise.  
He shall feed the flock like a shep-herd, gent - ly lead them home-ward.  
Lift your heads and lift high the gate-way for the King of glo - ry.

Let us pray: Praise to you, O God, who holds our joy and sorrow.

You bring water to parched ground and life out of death.

Bless us as this light grows, and send sorrow and sighing to flee away.

Give us strength and patience, trusting that you are true to your promises.

Transform the lives of all who suffer with your wonders near at hand.

**Amen.**

## THE MAGNIFICAT (Luke 1:46-55)

*All*

1., 3. My soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my  
2. You have cast the might - y down from their thrones, and up -  
spir - it re - joic - es in you. You have looked with love on your  
lift - ed the hum-ble of heart. You have filled the hun - gry with  
ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life through.  
won-drous things, and left the wealth-y no part.  
Great and might - y are you, O Ho - ly One,  
Great and might - y are you, O Faith - ful One,  
strong is your kind-ness ev - er - more. How you fa - vor the  
strong is your jus - tice, strong your love, as you prom-ised to  
weak and low-ly one, hum - bling the proud of heart!  
Sar - ah and A - bra - ham, kind - ness for - ev - er - more. D.C.

### \*PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

**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.**

*Silence for reflection*

**READING: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

A reading from Isaiah.

- <sup>1</sup>The 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;  
<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
<sup>3</sup>to 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.  
<sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.  
<sup>8</sup>For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
<sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.  
<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Silence for reflection*

**\*GOSPEL READING: John 1:6-8, 19-28**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” <sup>23</sup>He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ ”

as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” <sup>26</sup>John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ**

**\*SONG OF PRAISE**

Hal-le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal -  
- le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le -  
lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah.

**CHILDREN’S SERMON**

**SERMON**

*Silence for reflection*



**\*HYMN OF THE DAY *Lost in the Night* (ELW 243)**

*(Blue prayer cards are collected)*



1 Lost in the night do the peo - ple yet lan - guish,  
2 Must we be vain - ly a - wait - ing the mor - row?  
3 Sor - row - ing wan - d'ers, in dark - ness yet dwell - ing,  
4 Light o'er the land of the need - y is beam - ing;



long - ing for morn - ing the dark - ness to van - quish,  
Shall those who have light no light let us bor - row,  
dawned has the day of a ra - diance ex - cel - ling,  
riv - ers of life through its des - erts are stream - ing,



plain - tive - ly sigh - ing with hearts full of an - guish.  
giv - ing no heed to our bur - den of sor - row?  
death's deep - est shad - ows for - ev - er dis - pel - ling.  
bring - ing all peo - ples a Sav - ior re - deem - ing.



Will not day come soon?	Will not day come soon?
Will you help us soon?	Will you help us soon?
Christ is com - ing soon!	Christ is com - ing soon!
Come and save us soon!	Come and save us soon!

**\*APOSTLES' CREED**

Let us confess our faith in the words of the Apostles' 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 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.**

## \*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration. *A brief silence for reflection*

Emmanuel, give us strength to pray for our world without ceasing. Fill us with a spirit of gladness as we bear witness to the great things you have done. Open our hearts to those who serve as truth-tellers in our church and in our society. Bless leaders in church and society in their task of proclamation. Amplify voices of peacemakers, advocates, and those whose voices are marginalized. Protect wooded areas from deforestation and disease. Keep us grateful for the gifts of oxygen, food, shade, and shelter. Come among us and hear us O God.



Emmanuel, give us strength to pray for our world without ceasing. You love justice and promise your favor to those who are oppressed, brokenhearted, and incarcerated. Grant wisdom and compassion to those who work for public safety and all who work within prisons, jails, and courts, that mercy may increase and violence wither away. Provoke us toward love and good deeds for all who are in need, especially Bob, Geneva, Cherry, Winnie, Henry, Harry, Roy, Ellen, Ruth, Sally, Katie, Debi, those on our prayer list, and all whom we remember in our hearts. Come among us and hear us O God.



Emmanuel, give us strength to pray for our world without ceasing. With gratitude we rejoice in the saints who witnessed to your life in all circumstances, in whom your Spirit was not quenched, even in death. Through them, teach us always to hold fast to what is good. We gather these prayers together, with the prayers on the hearts of this congregation today (*blue prayer cards are read*). God of hosts restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.



## \*EXCHANGE OF PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

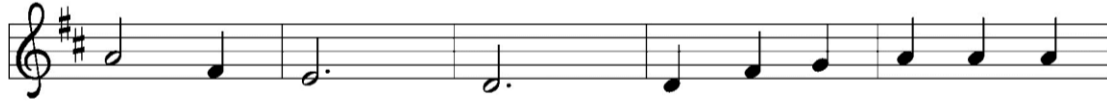
Let us share Christ's peace with one another.

## OFFERING

**OFFERTORY HYMN *I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light* (ELW 815) rise on 3rd vs.**



1 I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to  
2 I want to see . . . the bright-ness of God. I want to  
3 I'm look - ing for . . . the com - ing of Christ. I want to



fol - low Je - sus. God set the stars to give  
look at Je - sus. Clear Sun of righ - teous-ness,  
be with Je - sus. When we have run . . . with



light to the world. The star of my life is Je - sus.  
shine on my path, and show me the way to the Fa - ther.  
pa - tience the race, we shall know the joy of Je - sus.

*Refrain*



In him there is no dark-ness at all. The night and the



day are both a - like. The Lamb is the light of the



cit - y of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Je - sus.

**\*OFFERING PRAYER**

We give thanks together for all God's gifts as we offer them back to God.

Loving God, for the time we have, we say: **Thank you.**

For the gifts we offer, we say: **Thank you.**

For the chance to help others, we say: **Thank you.**

For the people whose lives will be better because of these gifts, we say: **Thank you.**

For the ways you are changing the world, we say: **Thank you.**

We pray in the name of Jesus, who appears wherever people need our help.

**Amen.**

## \*GREAT THANKSGIVING

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.**

God our Creator, the abundance of your goodness overflowed into creation—  
earth, sky, water, plants, animals, and human beings  
all came to be and you called us good.

Down through the generations,  
your goodness continued to flow:  
in friendship with humanity, in acts of liberation, in provision for your people.  
In all of this, you prepared a way.

And so, with joyful hearts, we join the angels in their song:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -



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

Finally, when the time was right,  
you entered our human existence in Jesus,  
who was born humbly,  
who spent his life with the unlikely and unloved,  
who healed and taught and preached the good news of your way.

On the night when he was betrayed,  
he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying,  
“Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this in 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 in remembrance of me.”

Whenever we share this bread and cup,  
Jesus is here with us, in this moment, in this time and place.  
Whenever we share this bread and cup,  
God takes us out of time  
and joins us with God’s people in every time and place.  
Whenever we share this bread and cup,  
we proclaim the mystery of faith.  
**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Send the Spirit of your presence on us now, O God,  
so that we too will overflow with goodness.  
Strengthen us by this meal,  
so that through us,  
your presence will flow out  
in what we do and say.  
In this, we prepare the way for your arrival again,  
when you will return to remake all of existence  
into your kingdom of perfect mercy, justice, and love.  
**Amen.**

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

**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**

### **\*INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

The time is now! Come and take your place at the table.

**Amen.**

### **DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION**

*Through this meal, we know forgiveness, life, and salvation as the blessings of God's sacramental grace. In response to Jesus' invitation, all are welcome to come forward and experience the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine of communion. Those who do not receive the elements of bread and wine are invited to come forward for a blessing. Grape juice and gluten free wafers are available.*

### **COMMUNION SONG *Lamb of God***



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;

2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;

3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.

you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.

e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

**COMMUNION HYMN *Christ, Be Our Light* (ELW 715)**



1 Long - ing for light, we wait in dark - ness. Long - ing for  
 2 Long - ing for peace, our world is trou - bled. Long - ing for  
 3 Long - ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long - ing for  
 4 Long - ing for shel - ter, man - y are home - less. Long - ing for  
 5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,  
 hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone  
 wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,  
 warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,  
 hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.  
 has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.  
 bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.  
 shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.  
 to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.



*Refrain*  
 Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

**\*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

God for whom we wait, in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when the hungry will be fed with good things. Send us forth to make known your deeds and to proclaim the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

## \*BLESSING

God our Creator, who made the starlit sky, blesses you. God blesses you.

**God blesses you.**

Jesus our Redeemer, who arrives at just the right time, blesses you. Jesus blesses you.

**Jesus blesses you.**

The Holy Spirit our Enlivener, who sparks hope for the hopeless, blesses you. The Holy Spirit blesses you.

**The Holy Spirit blesses you.**

You are blessed in the name of God the Three in One. **Amen.**

## \*SENDING SONG *Joy to the World* (ELW 267)



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -  
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their  
3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -  
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the



ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him  
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and  
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings  
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -



room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture  
plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing  
flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is  
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his



sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.  
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.  
found, far as, far as the curse is found.  
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

## \*DISMISSAL

As you leave this place, remember whether you are waiting for a new beginning or just waiting for something to end, God is sustaining you.

Keep alert; trust Emmanuel; seek peace, And rejoice, God is with you.

**Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE



## Assisting in worship today:

**Assisting Minister: Denise Hager**

**Acolyte: Anna K**

**Young Reader: Abigail C**

**Usher: Dave Knauff**

**Offering: Jules K & Abigail C**

**Advent Wreath Lighters: Niklewicz Family**

**Attendance Last Week: 62 + 5 zoom**

### Notes for the day's texts:

John the Baptist, in his own way, calls for rejoicing by his acknowledgment that he is *not* what we are waiting for. John, like us, has a mission to bear witness, but when he says "I am not," we hear a clear contrast to all the ways Jesus will identify himself with the Father: "I am the bread of life." "I am the resurrection." "I am the good shepherd." All these things Jesus will be for God's people, but John's job is simply to bear witness to the light.

How do we bear witness, while still waiting? Or can joy in the midst of waiting be that very witness? In Advent we are not called to act as though we do not know how this story ends, as though Jesus' birth and life, death and resurrection, are still before us. But we *do* know that sense of longing for God's salvation to be fulfilled, and the temptation to imagine that we have to save ourselves, instead of waiting for God's purposes to be worked out in God's time. John reminds us that there can be joy in taking our proper place, pointing to Jesus without needing to *be* Jesus.

### Today's Music

*Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn.* Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950, Music: Marty Haugen. GIA Publications, Inc..

*Magnificat* (from Holden Evening Prayer): Text and Music: Marty Haugen, GIA Publications, Inc. © 2016

*Lost in the Night.* Text: Nordic hymn; tr. Olav Lee, 1859-1943, alt., Music: Finnish folk tune. Augsburg Fortress / Public Domain.

*I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light.* Text: Kathleen Thomerson, b. 1934, Music: Kathleen Thomerson. Celebration.

*Christ, Be Our Light.* Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957, Music: Bernadette Farrell. OCP (Oregon Catholic Press).

*Joy to the World.* Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748, Music: English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792-1872. Public Domain.

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### Next Week's Readings

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 *The Lord's promise to David*

Luke 1:46b-55 *You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly*

Romans 16:25-27 *The mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ*

Luke 1:26-38 *The angel appears to Mary*