



# THE MESSENGER

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH OF WEST SEATTLE  
(206) 935-6530 [www.flcws.org](http://www.flcws.org) DECEMBER 2023

## THE MESSAGE AND HYMNS OF ADVENT

The season of Advent begins on Sunday, December 3, 2023. The Church has traditionally seen the season as a time of penitential preparation for the coming of Christ. Christ's coming has a threefold character, including his coming in history as a child in Bethlehem, his coming into the individual believer's heart and life, and his coming again at the end of time. The primary New Testament messenger of the coming of Christ in Bethlehem is John the Baptist, the focus of two of the gospel readings each Advent.

There may be no time of the church year with a richer selection of hymns in *Lutheran Book of Worship* than the season of Advent. We sing almost all of these seventeen Advent hymns in our congregation each year. Four hymns are worthy of special consideration for their emphasis on one of the three aspects of Christ's coming and on the season's primary messenger.

*Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel (LBW 34)* is probably the best known hymn of the Advent season. It is based on a series of seven antiphons for the days before Christmas dating from about the ninth century, each beginning with an "O." Sometime in the thirteenth century five of these were selected for this hymn, focusing on Christ's coming at Bethlehem and referencing the Messiah's scriptural titles: Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14), Lord of might (Exodus 3:15), Branch of Jesse (Isaiah 11:10), Dayspring (Malachai 4:2), and Key of David (Isaiah 22:22). Each verse concludes, "Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel."

*O Lord, How Shall I Meet You (LBW 23)*, by the great seventeenth century German Lutheran pastor and poet Paul Gerhardt, focuses more on the coming of Christ into the heart of the individual believer. After asking how we are to prepare, it prays in verse one, "Oh, kindle, Lord most holy, your lamp within my breast to do in spirit lowly all that may please you best." In verse three we hear, "Love caused your incarnation; love brought you down to me. Your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty," followed in verse five with, "Rejoice, then, you sad-hearted...Despair not; he is near you, there, standing at the door," concluding in verse six, "He comes to judge the nations, a terror to his foes, a light of consolations and blessed hope to those who love the Lord's appearing, O glorious Sun, now come, send forth your beams so cheering and guide us safely home."

Christ's coming at the end of time is the focus of *Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending (LBW 27)*. Poet Charles Wesley wrote the text based on Revelation 1:7, "Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen." (NRSV) It is paired with a majestic eighteenth century tune by Thomas Olivers.

*On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry (LBW 36)* is based on the witness of John the Baptist. Charles Coffin's eighteenth century Latin text was translated into English in the nineteenth century by English clergyman John Chandler. It includes John the Baptist's calls to, "Awake and hearken" and, "Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin; make straight the way for God within," echoing the prophet Isaiah.

May your faith be strengthened as we gather together in worship this Advent, sing these great hymns of the season, and prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

-Andrew J. King, Cantor

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



*“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” (Isaiah 40, vv.1–3)*

The season of Advent starts on December 3rd, and is a period of preparation by prayer, fasting and penitence, as we await the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas. Like Lent, the season leading up to Easter, Advent is a time of reflection and self-denial.

2023 budget update: Some members gave their pledges for the entire year at the beginning of 2023, giving us a strong start to the year. However, as the year has progressed, our general giving has fallen short. If you have not met your pledge for the 2023 budget, please make every effort to get caught up during the month of December. If you are caught up on your pledge, please consider making an extra year-end gift.

2024 pledge card update: At our December council meeting we will be working to establish our 2024 budget. If you have not turned in your pledge card, please do so as soon as possible. Your pledge card helps us to determine an accurate budget. As of this writing 19 pledge cards of the 30 distributed have been returned. Please prayerfully consider your pledge. Your generous support of our church will help in many ways, but particularly in this season of calling a permanent pastor it is vital to the future health of our church. Simply put, we will need to see an increase in pledged giving in order to fund the permanent pastor position.

Constitution updates: We met at a special congregational meeting on November 19th for the first of two votes to amend our constitution. There were three motions that covered topics including changing wording from “legally” to “properly”, combining some committees and general changes. One of the more significant changes was to decrease our council size from nine general members to six. The council felt these changes would better reflect the work that we do and streamline committee work. The second meeting will be to ratify only the constitution changes, which needs two votes. The by-laws needed one vote, which was accomplished at our November meeting.

As the year comes to a close, I am grateful to the many people who serve the needs of our church and community. I am thankful that we have had such faithful preaching from our supply pastors over this past year. Our coffee hours have offered a welcome opportunity for fellowship with one another and with visitors to our church. May God bless you during this Advent and Christmas season.

-Janine Douglass, President



## CALL COMMITTEE

*“Lord Jesus, You are our great High Priest, who intercedes with the Father on my behalf. During Your earthly ministry You called some to be your apostles, and still today You call some to be pastors in Your Church – to proclaim the Gospel of forgiveness of sins, to baptize, to nourish Your people with Your Holy Supper, and to minister in countless ways to Your flock.*

*Grant pastors fidelity to Your Word, wisdom by Your Spirit, and strength from above, that they may carry out their calling faithfully. Make them, a fearless confessor of Your truth. Keep them from error in their teaching and from scandal in this life. Give them courage to admonish those who stray, compassion to bind up the brokenhearted, and discernment to apply the Law and Gospel to all appropriately. May they protect your flock from ravaging wolves and shepherd Your lambs into green pastures. Amen.”*

*“Pastor's Prayer”*

*Lutheran Book of Prayer. St Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1941.*

In the first half of November the church council affirmed the call committee’s decision to name the Rev. Dr. Bryon Hansen as our candidate of choice. We are pleased that he accepted the continuation of the call process. Rev. Hansen grew up in Western Washington, and is a pastor in the ELCA, ordained in 1986. He has served congregations in Troy and Deary, Idaho; Florence and Portland, Oregon; Auburn, California; and Seattle, Washington. He went to Western for his undergrad and received his MDiv from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkley. In 2013 he received his Doctorate from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Over the next few months, the congregation will be invited for a series of gatherings to meet the candidate, and for the candidate to get to know us. Rev. Hansen will also preside over services so we can have an opportunity to hear the Word from the candidate.

If all goes as planned, the congregation will then meet and formally vote on extending the call to the candidate. A two thirds majority is required to extend the call. The candidate then has 30 days to accept the call or refuse the call. We are hoping to that by Lent we will have a new permanent Pastor for First Lutheran. Thanks be to God!

-Matthew Kahn, Call Committee Chair



# STEWARDSHIP

When our kids were young, our family looked forward to the Advent Fair in the church parish hall, where the Sunday School and Confirmation classes met for craft hour. One of those crafts has stood the test of time - our advent wreaths. Now we enjoy unpacking them each year and placing new candles into the wreaths.

Each Sunday in Advent, we light an additional candle. Some years we try for nightly devotionals with the candle lighting. Advent has weekly themes as follows:

- First Sunday: HOPE (The Prophecy Candle)
- Second Sunday: PEACE (The Bethlehem Candle)
- Third Sunday: JOY (The Shepherd's Candle)
- Fourth Sunday: LOVE (The Angel's Candle)

The center candle – The Christ Candle – we light on Christmas morning to remember the birth of the Messiah.

During this season of Advent, my prayer is for the future and health of our church through strong stewardship through the end of the year. Stewardship comes in many forms - volunteering of time and talents, supporting our church, our homebound members and our call process with prayer, and strong financial giving. As we move through the process of calling a permanent pastor, we will need to give generously in order to be the beacon of HOPE, PEACE, JOY and LOVE for many years to come.



-Janine Douglass, Council President

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**FOOD BANK COLLECTION:** The West Seattle Food Bank box and all collections are in room C. Suggested Food Bank donations for December are non-perishable holiday foods: potatoes, gravy, turkey, vegetables, baking ingredients, etc., although any non-perishable foods, personal products, or grocery store gift cards are welcomed. Compass Center is in need of new socks for men and women. Your much needed donations are taken to the West Seattle Food Bank, Compass Housing Alliance and Mary's Place as they come in.

**HOLY EUCHARIST – Communion:** Those who are baptized in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and believe are welcome to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. If you are not able to walk up to communion but would like to receive, talk to one of the ushers before the liturgy.

**WHY COMMUNION REGISTRY?** Our Constitution limits voting to members who commune at least 3 times each quarter and contribute at a given level. The Worship Registration form is an objective way the Council can document who meets the communion requirement. Thank you for your cooperation.

**COMMUNION CHANGES:** On Sunday, December 3rd, and the first Sunday of each month, multiple cup communion will be offered, in addition to intinction. The three person limit at each side of the communion rail has been removed

**DEO GLORIA CANTORES:** Choir rehearses on Thursdays, from 7:30 to 9:00 pm each week. If you are interested in joining the choir, please contact Dean Hard or Andrew King at the church office.



# PARISH PRAYERS

*Remember in prayer before God those whom He has made your brothers and sisters through baptism.*

Pray for members and friends of our congregation that God will bless and strengthen them in these days: Nancy Lawson, Holly Petersen, Natalie Nesvig, Leah and Melissa Baker, Felicia Wells, Eileen & Dave Nestoss, Kyra Stromberg, Peter and Dana Morrison, Paula and The Rev. Douglas Lindsay, Karen Granger, Shirley Graham, Angel Lynne, Martin and Lauri Nygaard, Connie Baker, Ernie Hopson, and Maryann Petersen.

Pray for the shut-ins that the light of Christ may give them joy: Joan Olson, Bob & Mona Ayer, Jeannine Lingle, Robert Schorn, Lou and Lori Landino, and Melanie Johnson.

Pray for our bishops Elizabeth Eaton & Shelley Bryan Wee; our presiding ministers Philip Lee, Barry Fritts, Bryon Hansen, Douglas Lindsay, Jack Richards, Horacio Castillo, and Philip Nesvig; our choirmaster Dean Hard, our cantor Andrew King, and all who faithfully assist with worship. May they be strengthened in faith, love and the holy office to which they have been called. Pray for our church council and our call committee, that God will guide and strengthen them in these days.

Pray that God would give us hearts to find joy in service and faithful stewardship. Pray that God would work within you to become a good steward of your time, talents, and finances. Pray to strengthen our commitment to stewardship in our congregation.

Pray for the hungry, ignored, abused, and homeless. Pray for the mercy of God for these people, and for all in Christ's church to see and help those who are in distress.

Pray for our country, for unbelievers, the addicted, the sexually abused and harassed, and the unemployed.

Pray for people around the world who suffer from the effects of war, terrorism, natural disasters, poverty, and abuse, especially the people of Ukraine, Israel, Palestinians, Afghanistan, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, and all who live in fear.

Pray that God will bless you through the lives of the saints: Nicholas, Bishop of Myra (342); John of the Cross, renewer of the Church (1592); Teresa of Avila, renewer of the Church (1582); St. Thomas, Apostle; St. Stephen, Deacon and Martyr; St. John, Apostle and Evangelist; The Holy Innocents, Martyrs.

## *A Treasury of Prayers*

O God, our Father in heaven, grant unto Thy beloved congregation that...she may take no offense at the lowly presence and despised word of her only King, the Just, the Helper, Jesus Christ, but rejoice in his wonderful advent, and receive and accept Him in pure and ready hearts, gladly rejoicing in Him, and rendering all praise and glory to Thee for ever more. Amen.

J. K. Wilhelm Loehe (1808-1872)

*A Christmas Tradition At  
First Lutheran Church of  
West Seattle*

*Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>  
at 11:00 pm*

*A celebration of Christmas  
Eve with A Candle Light Ser-  
vice of Lessons and Carols,  
with Holy Communion*

*The service will feature the  
singing of traditional carols;  
a candlelight procession of  
choir, acolytes, vergers, cler-  
gy and handbells; anthems  
sung by the Deo Gloria Can-  
tores; and organ music  
played on the magnificent  
Noack Organ, one of the fin-  
est organs in the Pacific  
Northwest.*

*Christmas Day, December 25<sup>th</sup>  
at 10:30 am*

*A celebration of the Birth of  
Christ with A Festival Lit-  
urgy and Holy Communion.*

*These services will be celebrat-  
ed within the old world beauty  
of this historic West Seattle  
church with its massive pillars,  
arches, vaulted beamed ceiling  
and awe-inspiring stained glass  
windows.*

*Join us for  
Christmas Eve  
and  
Christmas Day  
As part of your Christmas  
Tradition.*

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DECEMBER 2023



First Lutheran Church of West Seattle  
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