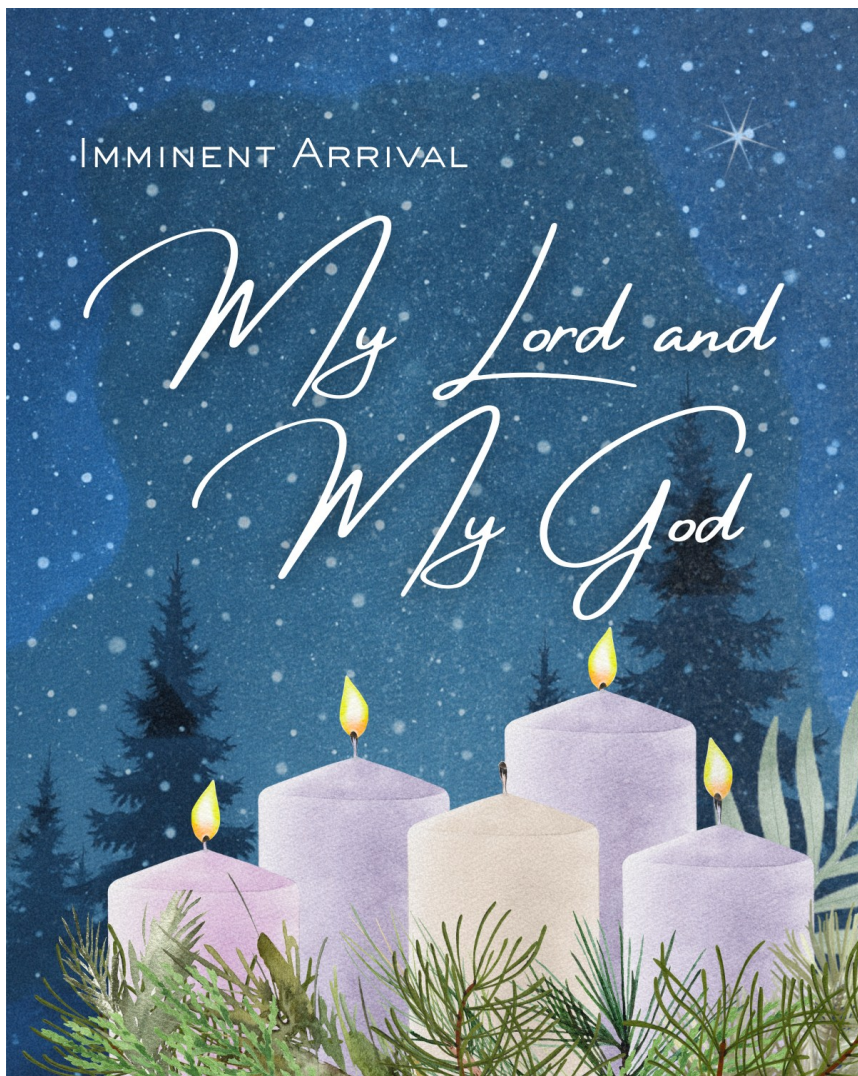


December 21, 2025

Fourth Sunday in Advent



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Welcome! Thank you for joining us for worship today. In our services we gather before our almighty God to receive his gifts and to offer him our worship and praise. Through God's powerful Word and sacraments he renews our faith and strengthens us to serve in joy.

PRAYER BEFORE WORSHIP: Blessed Spirit, as we gather for worship once again in your house we praise you for promises given and promises kept. Fill our hearts with joy and hope and peace and love as we prepare to celebrate our Savior's arrival once again. Hear our prayers and praise for his sake. Amen.

THEME OF THE DAY: December 21 is the Festival of St. Thomas, Apostle. According to church tradition, it is the day he died a martyr's death while doing mission work in India. On Easter evening, Thomas was absent when Jesus appeared to the other disciples, and he famously refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he could see and touch Jesus' wounds. After seeing the risen Jesus a week later, Thomas cried out, "My Lord and my God!"

There are still skeptics today who think that Jesus' virgin birth or resurrection from the dead are myths. It is appropriate to invite those skeptics to find out what the Bible says about those events. The Holy Spirit can work on their hearts just like he did with Thomas.

WORSHIP SERIES: Do you remember the feeling when someone important is about to arrive at your place? It's a mixture of anticipation and excitement and nervousness. During these weeks before Christmas, we anticipate the imminent arrival of Jesus. He's an important person! We are about to celebrate his birth. He could return on judgment day at any time. But in worship we realize that he impacts our lives when the Bible is read and when the sacraments are administered. Suddenly we feel the excitement of an imminent arrival.

SERVING GOD, SERVING US:

Worship Leader: Pastor Ryan Wolfe

Piano: Paige Reiners

Order of Worship

CW Hymnal, Setting Three



Lighting of the Advent Candles

M: We light four Advent candles remembering Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Mary. He came to share our humanity.

C: **We remember Jesus, whose name means Savior. He came to save his people from their sins.**

M: We hear his call to give him a place in our hearts.

C: **We light four Advent candles as a sign of our joy and hope.**

M: Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.

C: **Through your Word and Spirit may our souls be blessed.**

Four Advent candles are lit.

Hymn: By All Your Saints Still Striving

CW 892



1 By all your saints still striv - ing, for all your saints at rest,
2 All praise, O Lord, for Thom - as, whose short-lived doubt-ings prove
3 Then let us praise the Fa - ther and wor - ship God the Son



your ho - ly name, O Je - sus, for - ev - er - more be blessed.
your per - fect two - fold na - ture, the depth of your true love.
and sing to God the Spir - it, e - ter - nal Three in One,



You rose, our King vic - to - rious, that they might wear the crown
To all who live with ques - tions a stead-fast faith af - ford
till all the ran-somed num - ber who stand be - fore the throne



and ev - er shine in splen - dor re - flect - ed from your throne.
and grant us grace to know you, made flesh, yet God and Lord.
as - cribe all pow'r and glo - ry and praise to God a - lone.

Please stand.

Minister: In the name of the Father and of the \dagger Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen.

M: If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

C: **If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

M: Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

C: **Holy God, gracious Father, I am sinful by nature and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have not loved you with my whole heart; I have not loved others as I should. I deserve your punishment both now and forever. But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins with his innocent suffering and death. Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

M: Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the \dagger Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen**

Glory to God in the Highest

CW 191

The musical score is written for a single voice part in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of seven staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words spanning across bar lines. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The lyrics are: "Glo - ry to God in the high - est, glo - ry to God, and peace to his peo - ple on earth, and peace to his peo - ple on earth. Lord God, heav - en - ly King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry. Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly".

Glo - ry to God in the high - est, glo - ry to
God, and peace to his peo - ple on earth,
and peace to his peo - ple on earth.
Lord God, heav - en - ly King, al - might - y God and
Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we
praise you for your glo - ry. Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly

Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on

us. You are seat - ed at the right hand of the

Fa - ther; re - ceive our prayer. For

you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the

Lord, you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus

Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir - it in the

glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.

Glo - ry to God in the high - est, glo - ry to

God, and peace to his peo - ple on earth,

and peace to his peo - ple on earth.

THE WORD OF GOD

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Prayer of the Day

M: Let us pray.

Our Savior Jesus Christ, after your resurrection from the dead, you strengthened the faith of your apostle Thomas, and he acknowledged you as Lord and God. We pray that you would also keep us steadfast in this true and saving faith and by your Word and sacrament banish every doubt; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Be seated.

First Reading

Judges 6:36-40

Gideon asks for proof that God would keep his promises.

³⁶Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised—³⁷look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said."³⁸ And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.

³⁹Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew."⁴⁰ That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

M: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm of the Day: To You, O LORD, I Lift My Soul

Psalm 25

M: To you, O LORD, I lift my soul;

C: **In you I trust, O LORD my God.**

M: In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.

C: **I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame.**

M: Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths.

C: **Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior.**

M: Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love,

C: **for they are from of old.**

M: Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways;

C: according to your love remember me, for you, LORD, are good.

M: LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

C: Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.

M: Look on my affliction and my distress

C: and take away all my sins.

Second Reading

Hebrews 10:35—11:1

We have faith that God will continue to keep his promises.

³⁵So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷For, "In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay." ³⁸And, "But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back."

³⁹But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved. ¹Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

M: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Please stand.

Gospel Acclamation

John 20:29



Refrain



Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. **Refrain**

Gospel

John 20:24-29

Jesus continues to demonstrate that he is our Lord and our God.

²⁴Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

M: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

Be seated.

Children's Devotion

Hymn: These Things Did Thomas Count as Real

CW 468



1 These things did Thom - as count as real: the warmth of
2 The vi - sion of his skep - tic mind was keen e -
3 His rea - soned cer - tain - ties de - nied that one could
4 May we, O God, by grace be - lieve and thus the



blood, the chill of steel, the grain of wood, the
nough to make him blind to an - y un - ex -
live when one had died, un - til his fin - gers
ris - en Christ re - ceive, whose raw im - print - ed



heft of stone, the last frail twitch of flesh and bone.
pect - ed act too large for his small world of fact.
read like braille the mark - ings of the spear and nail.
palms reached out and beck - oned Thom - as from his doubt.

“Prince of Peace”

Please stand after the sermon.

THANKSGIVING

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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 into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.

**He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father Almighty.**

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Be seated.

Offering



 **Connect Card**

Our members give offerings to support God's work in our church. Offerings can be put in the basket or made online by scanning the code. Visitors may give, but aren't expected to.

We ask members and visitors alike to fill out the connection card and place it in the basket now or as you leave. Please share your prayer requests that we can pray for you.



 **Give Online**

Please stand.

Prayer of the Church

M: Eternal Father, throughout the centuries you repeated and affirmed your promise to send the offspring of the woman to crush the serpent's head. Through your prophets of old, you continually directed the eyes of your people to the advent of their Savior.

C: **We praise you, O Lord, for keeping your promise and sending your Son to destroy the works of the devil.**

M: As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our King, use your mighty Word to shatter our pride and to rouse us from spiritual slumber and apathy.

C: Move us to take to heart the words of John: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

M: You sent your Son to redeem us from sin. Let this good news be our joy and strength. Use it to cheer the lonely, encourage the fearful, and give hope to the despairing. In these days before Christmas, spare us from the stress of deadlines and the frenzy of commercialism.

C: Fill our lives with the message of your peace and the music of your grace.

M: Direct our eyes not only to the manger but also to the skies, where we will see your Son coming again, not as a lowly child but as the Lord of lords.

C: Lift up our hearts in joyful anticipation of that day.

M: Hold in your care, Lord, those who are experiencing physical and emotional pain and all who are afflicted by disease or facing death. Pour out your compassion on the grieving and comfort the mourners who miss someone they loved.

C: Move us to pray for these brothers and sisters and to help when we can.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

M: Come quickly, Lord Jesus, in your grace, in your power, and in your glory.

C: Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.

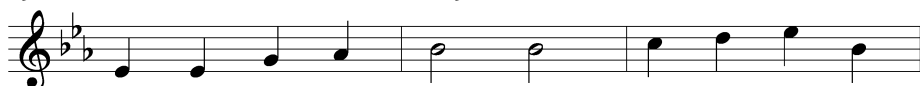
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and + give you peace.

C: Amen.

Hymn: God's Own Son Most Holy

CW 321



1 God's own Son most ho - ly came a ser - vant
2 Still he comes in preach - ing, truth e - ter - nal
3 Still he comes pro - vid - ing proof of love a -
4 Come, then, O Lord Je - sus, from our sins re -



low - ly, came to live a - mong us,
teach - ing: "Turn a - way from e - vil;
bid - ing: he whose death has freed us
lease us. Keep our hearts be - liev - ing



came to suf - fer for us; bore the cross to
turn to me, my peo - ple. I pro - nounce you
gives him - self to feed us, thus to us ex -
that, your grace re - ceiv - ing, we may here con -



save us, hope and free - dom gave us.
sin - less; trust in my for - give - ness."
tend - ing peace and joy un - end - ing.
fess you till in heav'n we bless you.

Silent Prayer and Announcements

Acknowledgments

Setting Three from Christian Worship
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Fellowship & Spiritual Growth

Sunday morning, all are invited to enjoy fellowship in the entry between services. Sunday JAM for children ages 3yrs to 6th grade starts at 9:10am in the kindergarten room. Adult Bible study begins at 9:15 in the fellowship hall downstairs.

For Worship Next Week Sunday

Worship theme: Christ the Savior is Born

Bible Readings: Isaiah 63:7-9, Galatians 4:4-7, Matthew 2:13-23

Hymns: 332, 355, 330, 340

WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

FOR OUR GUESTS

We are glad that you joined us to worship our Savior today. If you have questions about our church or service simply ask an usher or someone near you. We're happy to help!

Please take note of a few helpful things:

- ✦ Restrooms with diaper-changing tables are located straight down the hall opposite the sanctuary entrance.
- ✦ Our sanctuary is equipped with a "loop" system for hearing assistance. Please set hearing aids to the "T" position or ask an usher for a headset.
- ✦ You will find a connection card in your pew. Please share names, contact information, and prayer requests.
- ✦ Salem members give an offering to support the work we do for the Lord. Guests are not expected to give anything, but if you wish to make a donation you can place it in a basket as it's passed during the service or give online.
- ✦ Our services are streamed live on our YouTube channel. If you would prefer not to be on camera, please sit in the seats located beneath the balcony.

FOR THOSE WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

We love to see families worship together and we welcome children to sing, pray, and grow with us in our services.

We provide a few special worship aids and helps for families:

- ✦ Children's bulletins & activity bags are available in the entry, just to the left of the office hallway. Ask an usher if you need help finding them.
- ✦ If your child needs a quiet space, you can use the fireside room down the hallway across from the restrooms. The service is streamed live into the room.
- ✦ Children of all ages are invited to come to the front of church for the weekly children's message. Parents are welcome too!

**Salem Lutheran Church exists to glorify God
by teaching his timeless Truth, that all may
grow in grace and faith to share tomorrow's eternity.**

