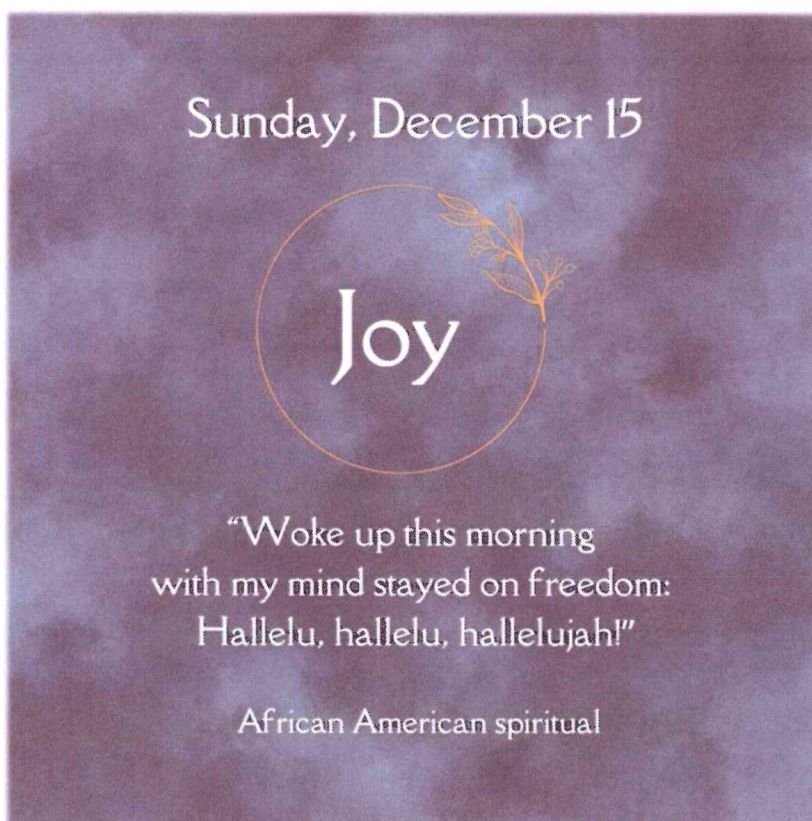


December 15, 2024

3rd Sunday of Advent



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

11 East Dawes Avenue, Somers Point, NJ 08244

Church Office: 609-927-3082 **Food Pantry:** 609-927-9982

Website: www.gracelutheranspnj.org

E-mail: office@gracelutheranspnj.comcastbiz.net

Interim Pastor † Wendolyn Trozzo, Scott J. Breiner, Music Director
Corinne Rhodes, Administrative Assistant
Alison Toth, Social Media Consultant

We welcome you to worship here at Grace!

*Note that all text written in **bold** is for congregation participation.
Our hymn songs are found in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship
red hymnal found in the pews.*

GATHERING



WELCOME
PRELUDE

Rejoice, Rejoice

Rev. Wendolyn Trozzo
by Mark Sedio

Please stand as you are able.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, alive in the world, reviving creation, arriving soon. **Amen.**

Today, as we confess our sin, we recognize how easily we overlook the gifts God gives, and we accept the sad truth that our limitations often create the conditions for sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Let us pray.

God, we want a faith that feels like more than words, but we lack your power to embody goodness. We hear your call to serve others yet feel too worn out to set the table. We hunger to taste justice but fear the burning spice of the meal. We want our place at your table but resist sitting beside a stranger. We have lost our appetites for the fullness of your grace. Forgive us and restore us with the healing wholeness of your presence.

My friends, God knows you are imperfect, but God did not invite you here today for what you have done or how you behaved. God loves you. God always cared much more for you than for your shortcomings. God forgives you all your sins.

Now repeat after me.

We accept God's forgiveness. We accept God's forgiveness.

We take our place in God's purpose. We take our place in God's purpose.

Amen. Amen.

OPENING HYMN *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn* **ELW #242**

GREETING

Greetings to you in the name of the triune God, the one whose word always accomplishes: The Shaper of life, the Savior of Humanity, the Spirit of Renewal.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH (*The Piskun family*)



1. When twi - light leaves the even - ing sky and night re - veals the
 2. When bit - ter days and bar - ren ground sap strength and pow - er and
 3. When rough ter - rain makes prog - ress hard, God lev - els what's in the



stars, the far ho - ri - zon hope of God comes sing - ing to our hearts.
 voice, ten - a - cious faith will hold us fast; God's hope will say, re - joice!
 way; a ten - der jus - tice will car - ry us, and care will not de - lay.

Refrain



Your love is more than words, O God, a flame you kin - dle, a seed you sow, a



rose that blooms in the snow, and we will mag - ni - fy your love.

Each of our Advent candles represents God's generous goodness, the advent of Jesus, God's greatest gift, the Spirit's fluttering flicker of joy. As we light each candle, we recognize the gifts God has given us this week.

Together we pray:

As we light the candle for hope:

God, we reach for unreasonable hope;

and you prepare an incomparable future.

As we light the candle for peace:

God, we breathe in your peaceful refuge,
for you have made a place where we can safely rest.

As we light the candle for today, joy:

Joy ebbs and flows each day, holy God.
so we pray to you in honesty.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION/PRAYER OF THE DAY

As the warmth of God's presence fills this place, we pray that the Spirit will illuminate our lives through the words we hear, the songs we sing, and the pathways of prayer engraved on our hearts.

We pray: Spirit, give us a vision of the more joyful world you quietly create. Then help us absorb your holy words; use them to propel us into your intended future. Amen.

Joy ebbs and flows each day, holy God, **so we pray to you in honesty.**
 God, illuminate us. **Illuminate us.**

PEACE The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

GREET YOUR NEIGHBOR

Take a brief moment to share the peace by greeting someone sitting near you. Verbal greetings are appropriate if you are not comfortable shaking hands or touching.

Please be seated.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

Dear friends in Christ, we gather today with the family of Jonathan Robert Bori, who have brought him to be baptized. Together, let us welcome them into this community of faith in Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. O God, **again and again in ages past you showed your mercy and grace to children. You saved the infant Moses from death with the help of his mother and sister. As you blessed Joseph and Mary and the child Jesus, bless also this family, that they may care for this child entrusted to them, bring them to the bread and cup of blessing, and help him mature in faith through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

God brings you in peace, hope, and joy to fullness of life in Christ and calls you to the waters of baptism.

God, who is rich in mercy and love, gives us a new birth into a living hope through the sacrament of baptism. By water and the Word, God delivers us from sin and death and raises us to new life in Jesus Christ. We are united with all the baptized in the one body of Christ, anointed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and joined in God's mission for the life of the world.

P: Who presents this child to receive the sacrament of baptism?

Parents and Sponsors: **We present Jonathan for the sacrament of baptism.**

P: Called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, do you desire to have Jonathan baptized into Christ?

Parents: **We do.**

Assistant: As you bring Jonathan, to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with several responsibilities: to live with him among God's faithful people, bring him to the word of God and the Holy Supper, teach him the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in his hands the holy scriptures, and nurture him in faith and prayer, so that he may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.

P: Do you promise to help your child grow in the Christian faith and life?

Parents and Sponsors: **We do.**

P: Sponsors, do you promise to nurture Jonathan in the Christian faith as you are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help him live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church?

Sponsors: **We do.**

P: People of God, do you promise to support Jonathan and pray for him in his new life in Christ?

Congregation: **We do.**

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church. Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God? **I renounce them.**

Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?
I renounce them.

Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?
I renounce them.

Do you believe in God, the Father?

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God?

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.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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.

THANKSGIVING AT THE FONT

The Lord be with you. All: **And also with you.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight.

Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family, and through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you set us free from the power of sin and death and raise us up to live in you.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life. To you be

given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

HOLY BAPTISM

Jonathan Robert, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

You belong to Christ, in whom you have been baptized.

Let us pray together. **We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give your daughters and sons new birth, cleanse them from sin, and raise them to eternal life.**

Sustain Jonathan with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. Amen.

Jonathan, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. **Amen.**

WELCOME

Assistant: Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Let us welcome the newly baptized.

We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share. Join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world.

Applause may follow as a sign of welcome. All may be seated.

HYMN

I'm Going on a Journey

ELW #446

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-20

The prophet Zephaniah's message is mostly one of judgment for sin. This reading, however, which comes from the conclusion of the book, prophesies joy for Judah and Jerusalem. Judgment has led to repentance, and God's salvation is at hand.

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing
¹⁸ as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.

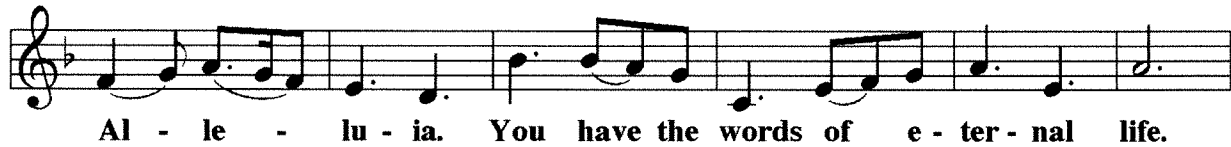
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.

²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Please stand as you are able.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



The Holy Gospel according to Luke the 3rd chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity, and vocational integrity.

⁷ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" ¹¹ In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Please be seated.

SERMON

Rev. Wendolyn Trozzo

Please stand as you are able.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

ELW #244

Please be seated.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

God, we have turned to you today for a bit of quiet, a sliver of sabbath, a small moment to set down what we carry as we consider your word.

And into this minute of rest, you send your prophet with an axe for the root of the tree, and kindling for the burning fire.

Your call to action is surprising, and we are not always ready.

Yet we know we must help build the road where your people travel toward justice.

Our offering is received.

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

Lord Jesus Walk With Me
Soprano: Ruth Bowden

by David Lantz III

Please stand as you are able.

PRESENTATION OF GIFTS *Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful*

WOV #35

OFFERING PRAYER

Together we pray.

Holy Spirit, please bless these small gifts we give. **You set the table with plenty of love.**

Prepare room in your home **for my neighbor and me.**

Prepare a place in your vision **for my neighbor and me.**

Prepare a seat at your table **for my neighbor and me.**

Holy Spirit, you have blessed these gifts we give. **You set the table with plenty of love.**

Please be seated.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

At the end of each prayer petition when the worship assistant or pastor says, "Lord, in your mercy," please respond with "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.**

HOLY COMMUNION

GREAT THANKSGIVING

God is with you. **And also with you.**

Offer your hearts to God. **We do, because we know God cares for us.**

We give thanks to God. **God always deserves our thanks and praise.**

God, yours was the first thought; before any human lived or knew your name, you whispered, and creation built itself around your words. Before your ancient people knew the depth of your love, you promised them goodness, and led them to freedom. **Your love grows unseen.**

Before the world knew your face, your own child was born in a quiet stable. **Your love blooms in the dark.**

Before we knew the depth of your love, your child died, crucified, and you forgave, and new life grew in the grave. **Your love echoes in the silence.**

Once you made Mary agelessly blessed. Once you turned turncoat disciples into the family of the forgiven. You wrote the words for their hope, and they sang the song of joy. What you have done for them you have also done for us. So we give you praise.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

On a night of betrayal, Jesus pulled close friends closer to eat with them one last time. Jesus taught them, Jesus served them, Jesus took bread and said, This is my body, given for you, so you can eat it whenever you are hungry and every time you are hungry you can know my love.

Then Jesus took a cup filled with wine, and said, My forgiveness is more than words. This is my blood, poured out for you, so you can drink it to know that I forgive every sin.

This is the body of Jesus, the blood of Jesus.

Jesus, we remember you died. **We remember.**

We remember God's love sparked life in your dead body. **We remember.**

We remember you shall return to empty every grave. **We remember.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

And we remember these gifts as we pray the way Jesus taught us.

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

God feeds us with tender mercy. Come to the table.

COMMUNION HYMN

*Lamb of God
O Bread of Life from Heaven
I Come With Joy*

WOV #39

ELW #480

ELW #482

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

EVERYONE IS INVITED to receive Holy Communion. The ushers will invite worshippers forward to fill the altar railings. Once you have received the wafer and the red wine/white grape juice, place your empty cup in the tray and return to your pew. As places open up, worshippers will fill them in so that communion is a continuous process. If you do not wish to receive communion, or are worshipping with children who have not had First Communion, we welcome you to come forward for a blessing; as you kneel at the railing, cross your arms over your chest to show your preference to the pastor.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God, what you have planned for us unfolds slowly.

Your love is often unrecognizable, unappreciated, gentle and unnoticed.

But in this place, we have noticed what others do not see.

We have tasted your unspoken goodness.

And we will magnify your love. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please stand as you are able.

SENDING

BLESSING

Where is the care in this world? Where is the faith we were promised? Where is the hope we desired, when peace moves into our homes, and joy is a constant presence, and justice is for everyone?

God, this world waits to know that your love is more than words.

People of God, you have already shared the advent of God's goodness. You carry the blessing of God - God, the First Whisper; Jesus, the Living Promise; Spirit, the Speaker of Hearts. Now go into this world expecting God's justice and nurturing God's peace.

God, we will magnify your love. Thanks be to you! Amen.

SENDING HYMN*Joy To The World*

ELW #267

*Please be seated. Enjoy the postlude music.
and meditate on how God spoke to your heart today.*

POSTLUDE*Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers*

DISMISSAL Go in peace. Encourage one another in Christ.
Thanks be to God.

*We are glad for your presence today.
We hope you come again soon!*

We thank all those serving in worship today:

Worship Assistant: Kevin Thomas

The flowers' sponsor this week is: Corinne Rhodes, in loving memory of her mother, Gwen, on what would have been her 87th birthday.

The bulletins' sponsor this week is: Roberta Blumenthal

Home Reading of the Week:

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Food Pantry Item for December:

Paper Towels and Kleenex/Tissues

These may be placed in the designated basket in the narthex.

WELCA is collecting donations of hats, mittens, and gloves for children in need this winter. Your donations are greatly appreciated and may be placed in the designated basket in the narthex.

BLUE CHRISTMAS: December 19th at 7:00 PM

This is a service of comfort provided especially for anyone who is experiencing grief over a loved one's death, job loss, divorce, chronic disease, stress, or other challenges that cause one to ache.

GRAB BAG CHRISTMAS PAGEANT:

December 22 at 10:15 AM Worship Service

Children and adults of all ages will enjoy participating in this fun, interactive Christmas story! Be ready to laugh and get into the Christmas spirit!

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SCHEDULE:

7:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service (Parents may bring children's favorite blanket for Pastor's special children's sermon.)

9:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Choir

This service will be livestreamed.

HAPPENINGS AROUND GRACE THIS WEEK

December 15, 2024-December 22, 2024

3rd Sunday of Advent 12/15/24

8:00AM Spoken Worship

8:45AM Adult Forum

10:15AM Traditional Worship

Baptism of Jonathan Bori

12:30PM 100th Anniversary Gala

Atlantic City Country Club

4:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous

MONDAY 12/16/24

9:00AM-11:30AM Food Pantry

10:00AM Clergy Bible Study

7:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous

TUESDAY 12/17/24

9:00AM-11:30AM Food Pantry

6:30PM Narcotics Anonymous

7:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous

WEDNESDAY 12/18/24

9:00AM-11:30AM Food Pantry

11:30AM Bayside Duplicate Bridge

6:00PM AA Book Study

7:00PM Narcotics Anonymous

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Mon-Tues 10:00AM-3:00PM

Thurs-Fri 10:00AM-3:00PM

THURSDAY 12/19/24

9:00AM-11:30AM Food Pantry

12:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous

5:00PM Choir Rehearsal

7:00PM Blue Christmas

Worship Service

7:00PM Al-Anon

FRIDAY 12/20/24

10:30AM Grace Stitchers

7:30PM Alcoholics Anonymous

SATURDAY 12/21/24

No events.

4th Sunday of Advent 12/22/24

8:00AM Spoken Worship Service

8:45AM Adult Forum Group

10:15AM Traditional Worship

Grab Bag Pageant

4:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous

SHORE DINER

Present this bulletin on a Sunday and Shore Diner will donate 20% to Grace Lutheran Church. Present this on any other day, and we will donate 10%.

Shore Diner
6710 Tilton Road
Egg Harbor Township, NJ 08234
609-641-3669