Faith Lutheran Church

**December 4, 2016**

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**Vipers and Adders and Asps, Oh My!**

Sharp tools strike fear in the gospel reading today. God’s winnowing fork is at hand, and the axe is at the tree’s root. Chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire. So we ask, how is this good news? If the message of John the Baptist is only destruction, what can be the point of preparing a way—or anything else? But if the axe is at the root, this is precisely the place from which a branch is promised, a shoot from the seemingly dead stump.

“I baptize you with water,” says John, but the one to come will baptize “with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11). Like water, fire destroys but also purifies. Repentance means turning toward God, pruning, clearing, straightening, washing.

John preaches to those who face the water already confessing their sins, but also to the “brood of vipers.” Why? He shouts ferocious words with the wild hope that some might hear, turn, and bear fruit, and with the hope that there is a chance for even adversaries to be transformed. Might the vipers join Isaiah’s adder and asp on the holy mountain, former predators that will hurt and kill no longer? Might the Pharisee Nicodemus eventually advocate for Jesus, and the persecutor Saul become Paul the apostle?

The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami orphaned and stranded a baby hippopotamus. Once rescued, named, and brought to an animal sanctuary, the frightened Owen ran and hid behind a 130-year-old tortoise, Mzee (“wise old man”). The next day a photograph of Owen and Mzee nestled against each other circulated around the world. Wondrously, a mammal and a reptile had started to play and become friends. In a time of devastation, this cross-species relationship brought encouragement and hope. Led by a child, we bear fruit as we welcome one another—wolves, lambs, cows, bears, snakes. Anointed with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, we learn to live in harmony as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior.

**Sunday, December 04, 2016**

Second Sunday of Advent

**Introduction to the day**

At the heart of our Advent preparation stands John the Baptist, who calls us to repent and make a new beginning. As the darkness increases we turn toward the light of Christ’s coming. For Christians he is the root of Jesse, the righteous judge who welcomes all, especially the poor and meek of the earth. We wait with hope for that day when the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and there will be no more hurt or destruction. From the Lord’s table we are sent in the spirit of John the Baptist to proclaim that in Christ the kingdom of God has come near.

*If hearing assistance is needed, please ask an usher for a personal PA receiver.*

*The ushers also have large print copies of today’s worship folder available.*

*If it will be difficult for you to stand along with the congregation during*

*any part of the worship service, please feel free to remain seated.*

*There is a nursery available during the worship service for those who wish*

*to use it. It is located at the end of the hall beyond the coat racks.*

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*We cordially greet all who have come to worship today.*

*Please register your attendance and join us in fellowship after the service.*

Prayer Requests

Temple Talk Deb Borton-McDonough

**PRELUDE**

Flutes of Faith Hallelujah Chorus (Handel)

**Gathering**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

*The assembly stands*

**Confession and Forgiveness**

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism,*

*as the presiding minister begins.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,

who comes to wake us from sleep,

who leads us into the light of grace.

**Amen.**

Let us prepare the way of the Lord

by confessing our sin against God and neighbor.

*Silence for reflection*

God of all time,

**we confess that we have not prepared**

**for your merciful reign among us.**

**We ignore our neighbors in need**

**and fail in the labor of justice and peace.**

**In your mercy forgive us.**

**Grant us wisdom to welcome your light**

**and to seek the things that will endure**

**until Christ comes again in glory. Amen.**

Comfort, O comfort my people,

says your God.

In ☩ Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven

and all things are made new.

Rejoice in this good news!

**Amen.**

**Gathering Song*#257 v. 1-4***

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**Greeting**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**Kyrie**



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**CANDLE LIGHTING LITANY**

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe.

John the Baptist calls all people to prepare the Lord’s way

for the kingdom of heaven is near.

Bless us as we light the candles on this wreath.

Baptize us with the fire of your Spirit,

that we may be a light shining in the darkness

welcoming others as Christ has welcomed us,

for he is our light and our salvation.

Blessed be God forever.

**Amen.**

We light the second advent candle, as we sing Verse 1&2 of Hymn 253, “He Came Down.”



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**Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray.

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming nurture our growth as people of repentance and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

**Word**

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

**First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10**

*In today’s reading the prophet describes the ideal ruler who will come in the future as a green shoot springing from a dead stump (David’s royal line) of Jesse (David’s father). Gifted by the Spirit, this messiah will seek justice for the poor, and the reign of this monarch will be experienced as paradise regained.*

A reading from Isaiah.

1A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
  and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
 2The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
  the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
  the spirit of counsel and might,  
  the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
 3His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.  
  
 He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
  or decide by what his ears hear;  
 4but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
  and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
 he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
  and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
 5Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
  and faithfulness the belt around his loins.  
  
 6The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
  the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
 the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
  and a little child shall lead them.  
 7The cow and the bear shall graze,  
  their young shall lie down together;  
  and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
 8The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
  and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den.  
 9They will not hurt or destroy  
  on all my holy mountain;  
 for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
  as the waters cover the sea.  
  
  10On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

Away in a Manger (traditional carol)

*Joyful Noise, handbells & Gwynne Kadrofske, flute*

**Second Reading: Romans 15:4-13**

*God’s promise to include Gentiles within the circle of God’s blessed people has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Christians live out their unity by welcoming and encouraging each other just as Christ has welcomed them into God’s family.*

A reading from Romans.

4Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. 5May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, 6so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
  
  7Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. 8For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,   
 “Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles,  
  and sing praises to your name”;  
10and again he says,   
 “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;  
11and again,   
 “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
  and let all the peoples praise him”;  
12and again Isaiah says,   
 “The root of Jesse shall come,  
  the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;  
 in him the Gentiles shall hope.”  
13May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*The assembly stands to welcome the gospel.*

**Gospel Acclamation**

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**Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12**

*Just before Jesus begins his public ministry, John the Baptist appears, calling people to mend their ways and speaking of a powerful one who is to come.*

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

1In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 3This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,   
 “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
 ‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
  make his paths straight.’ ”  
4Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.  
  7But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Bear fruit worthy of repentance. 9Do not presume 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. 10Even 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.  
  11“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*The assembly is seated*

**children’s message**

**Sermon**

*The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song*

**Hymn of the Day #255**

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**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**

As we anticipate the fullness of the presence of Christ, we join with the church throughout the world, praying for all who are in need.

*Prayers of intercession are prayed.*

*To each petition, the assembly responds:*

let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

*The presiding minister concludes the*

*prayers, and the assembly responds:*

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, those spoken aloud and those known only to you, and grant us peace through Jesus Christ, our coming Savior.

**Amen.**

**Peace**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ’s peace,*

*and may say, “Peace be with you,” or similar words.*

*The assembly is seated.*

**Meal**

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

**Offering**

*The assembly stands*

Joyful Noise & Chancel Choir Hallelujah Round of Praise

(Mozart)



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**Offering Prayer**

Savior of the nations, come.

Make your home here in us.

Feed us with your love,

that our faith shine ever new

and our lives reveal your light.

**Amen.**

**Great Thanksgiving**

**Dialogue**

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.**

**Preface**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,

that we should at all times and in all places

give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,

through our Savior Jesus Christ.

You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer,

through whom you will also make all things new

in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

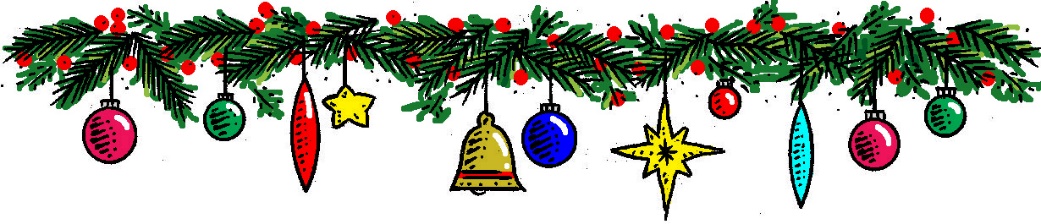
And so, with all the choirs of angels,

with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, Holy, Holy**



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**Thanksgiving at the Table**

Holy God, the Beginning and the End,

our Salvation and our Hope,

we praise you for creating a world of order and beauty.

When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair,

you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.

At this end of the ages your Son Jesus came to bring us your love

and to heal all the suffering world.

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. 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. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his life, death, and resurrection, we await his coming again in righteousness and peace.

Send your Spirit on us and on this bread and wine we share: strengthen our faith, increase our hope, and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever.

**Amen**

**Lord’s Prayer**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit,

let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

**Save us from the time of trial**

**and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,**

**and the glory are yours,**

**now and forever. Amen.**

**Invitation to Communion**

Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you.

Share in the feast of salvation.

*The assembly is seated*

**Communion**

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

****Amen

**congregational song #250**

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**congrEGATIONAL SONG #254**



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T*he assembly stands*

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ

Strengthen and keep you in his Grace.

**Amen.**

**Prayer after Communion**

God for whom we wait,

you come to us

in the broken bread and the cup we share.

Make us ready always

to welcome Christ into our hearts,

and send us forth to be your people in the world,

announcing your coming among us

in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Sending**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**Blessing**

May Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shine upon you

and scatter the darkness from before your path.

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit,

bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

**Dismissal**

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

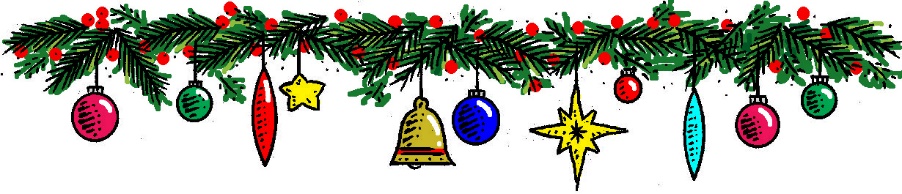
**Thanks be to God.**

**pOSTLUDE**

“On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s cry,” arr. Raymond Haan

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May the spirit of the Lord rest on us: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2)

Pastor Ellen Schoepf prellen@faithlutheranokemos.org

Secretary Katie Love klove@faithlutheranokemos.org

Director of Christian Education Melinda Schultz

Director of Music Debra Borton-McDonough

Organist/Pianist Bruce Williams

November 27th Attendance : 109

Serving Faith December 4 December 11

Acolyte Clayton Wenzel Brenna Seeley

Altar Care Karen Whitmeyer & Brielle Bowers

Communion Assistants Clayton Wenzel Brenna Seeley

Alyssa Magyar Diane Wilke

John McCracken Nathan Nelson

Greeters Dick & Sally Knoll Mike Eschelbach

Lay Assistants Alyssa Magyar Diane Wilke

Readers John McCracken Nathan Nelson

Ushers Bowers/Whitmyers Boyers/Whitmyers

Nursery Mark & Jody Marquardt Drew & Pam Williams