



## THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 17, 2023 | 8:00 and 10:30am

## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Thornville, Ohio

### VISITORS

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We welcome you in the name of Christ and hope his word of forgiveness and freedom finds you while you are with us this morning. If you are visiting or are new to our church, we ask that you complete a yellow Connection Card and pass it to the center isle for collection during the Entrance Hymn. We would like to be in touch with you and to let you know more about Grace Lutheran. We are glad you are with us.

### OUR WORSHIP

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Lutherans think of worship not in terms of something we do for God, but rather what God does for us. We often call our worship a "service," and that means that God serves us in our need. At the end of his life in 1546, Martin Luther famously said, "We are beggars" before God. In our liturgy (order of worship), which includes hymns and songs, specially selected Bible readings, preaching, and Holy Communion, God serves us by delivering to us sinful human beings the good news of Jesus Christ as Savior, which we grasp by faith. We respond with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, which carries over into our everyday lives.

### PARENTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

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Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me." The presence of children in worship, even when they are noisy, is a gift to the Church and a reminder that our parish is growing. If you have to leave worship with your children, feel free to do so, but even more so, feel free to come back in!

### PRAYER BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

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*We do not presume to come to your table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and so to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him and he in us. Amen*

## ORDER FOR WORSHIP - LBW SETTING 1

*Watchword: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Behold, the Lord God comes with might.  
- Isaiah 40:3, 10 ESV*

### PRELUDE | WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS | OPENING PRAYER

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#### Confession and Absolution

#### INVOCATION

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*The people stand.*

P: In the Name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C: Amen.**

#### PRAYER OF PREPARATION

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P: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

#### CONFESSION

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P: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*The people kneel for silent reflection and self-examination.*

P: Most merciful God,

**C: we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

#### ABSOLUTION

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*The pastor stands and addresses the assembly.*

P: Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C: Amen.**

*The people stand.*

#### Gathering

#### ENTRANCE HYMN

*Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*

Green Book 60

*Connection Cards/Prayer Requests should be passed to the center isle at this time.*

#### APOSTOLIC GREETING


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P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

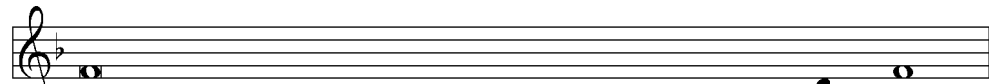
**C: And also with you.**

## THE KYRIE


A=Leader; C=all voices



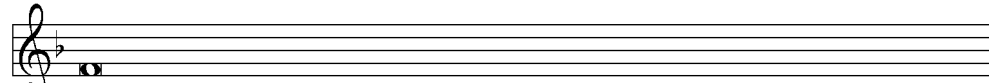
**A** In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **C** Lord, have mer - cy.



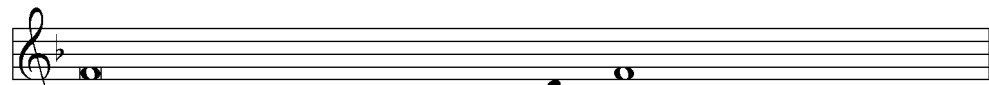
**A** For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



**C** Lord, have mer - cy.



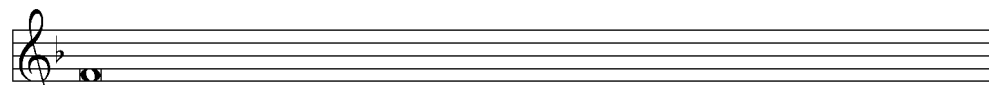
**A** For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



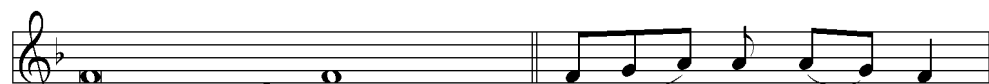
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



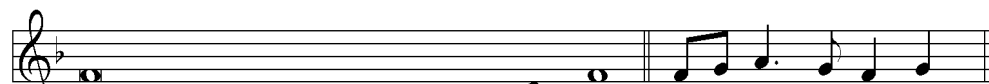
**C** Lord, have mer - cy.



**A** For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. **C** Lord, have mer - cy.



**A** Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. **C** A - men

The Advent candle is lit during the Prayer of the Day

## PRAYER OF THE DAY



**P** The Lord be with you. **C** And al - so with you.

**P:** Let us pray. Almighty God, you once called John the Baptist to give witness to the coming of your Son and to prepare his way. Grant us, your people, the wisdom to see your purpose today and the openness to hear your will, that we may witness to Christ's coming and so prepare his way; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C:** Amen.

*The people may be seated.*



## The Liturgy of the Word

### THE FIRST LESSON

Malachi 3:1-7

**L:** A reading from Malachi.

*God promises to send a messenger before Him. His words will judge us but also refine us.*

<sup>1</sup>"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. <sup>2</sup>But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. <sup>3</sup>He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in

righteousness to the Lord. <sup>4</sup>Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. <sup>5</sup>Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

<sup>6</sup>For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. <sup>7</sup>From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?'

L: The Word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God.**

## PSALMODY

Psalm 111

*The verses are chanted alternately by the cantor and the congregation.*



<sup>1</sup>Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the Lord with | my whole heart,\*  
in the assembly of the upright, in the | congregation.

<sup>2</sup>**Great are the deeds | of the Lord!\* They are studied by all  
who de- | light in them.**

<sup>3</sup>His work is full of majes- | ty and splendor,\* and his righteousness  
en- | dures forever.

<sup>4</sup>**He makes his marvelous works to | be remembered;\*  
the Lord is gracious and full | of compassion.**

<sup>5</sup>He gives food to | those who fear him;\* he is ever mindful | of his covenant.

<sup>6</sup>**He has shown his people the power | of his works\*  
in giving them the lands | of the nations.**

<sup>7</sup>The works of his hands are faithful- | ness and justice;\*  
all his command- | ments are sure.

<sup>8</sup>**They stand fast forev- | er and ever,\* because they are done  
in | truth and equity.**

<sup>9</sup>He sent redemption to his people; he commanded his cove- | nant forever;\*  
holy and awesome | is his name.

<sup>10</sup>**The fear of the Lord is the begin- | ning of wisdom;\* those who act  
accordingly have a good understanding. His praise en- | dures forever.**

## THE SECOND LESSON

Philippians 4:4-7

L: A reading from Philippians.

*Are we anxious? We find comfort in the message that the Lord is at hand and will hear us.*

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

L: The Word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God.**

## THE VERSE

*The people please stand.*



P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter.

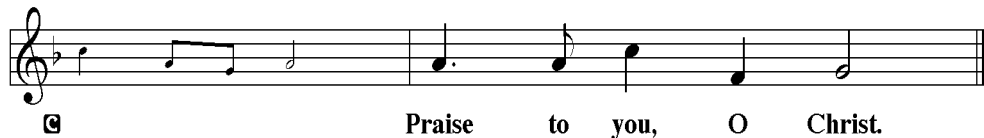


<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

<sup>8</sup>He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

<sup>19</sup>And this is the testimony of 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, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." <sup>22</sup>So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to 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, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" <sup>26</sup>John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, <sup>27</sup>even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." <sup>28</sup>These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

P: The Gospel of our Lord.



SERMON

Pastor Tom Jacobson

*The people may be seated.*

*The people stand.*

THE NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

*After each petition:*

A: As we prepare the way of the Lord, **C: hear our prayer.**

P: Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C: Amen.**



# The Liturgy of Holy Communion

## THE PEACE

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P: The Peace of the Lord be with you always.  
C: **And also with you.**

*The people greet one another in the name of the Lord and then are seated.*

## OFFERING

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*Stationary plates have been placed in the sanctuary for giving offerings before or after service. Online giving through the church's website is also highly encouraged. Quiet music will play to provide a time for prayer and reflection.*

*Choir Anthem (10:30 only): "Goin' To Bethlehem"*

## OFFERTORY RESPONSE

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*The people stand.*

☞ Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our  
cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the  
seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.  
Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the

prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your  
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

## THE OFFERTORY PRAYER

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A: Let us pray. Merciful Father,  
C: **we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us — our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

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☞ The Lord be with you. ☞ And al - so 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 him thanks and praise.

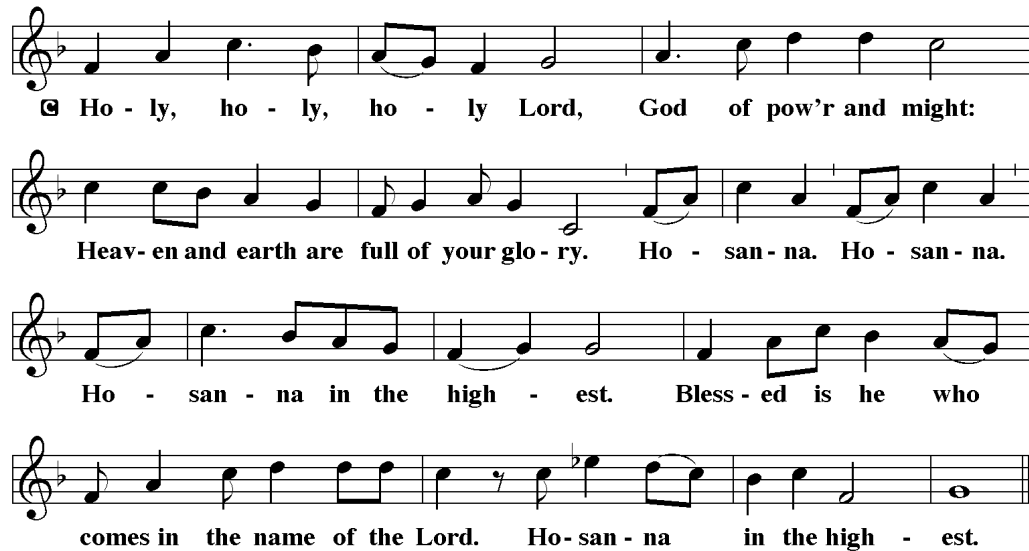
## THE PREFACE

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P: It is indeed right .... we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## THE SANCTUS

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☞ Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might:  
Heav-en and earth are full of your glo- ry. Ho - san - na. Ho - san - na.  
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.

## THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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P: Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth. In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son, that all those who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life. We give thanks to you for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may receive our Lord with a living faith as he comes to us in his holy supper.

**C: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

P: 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.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

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P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C: 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.**

## THE FRACTION

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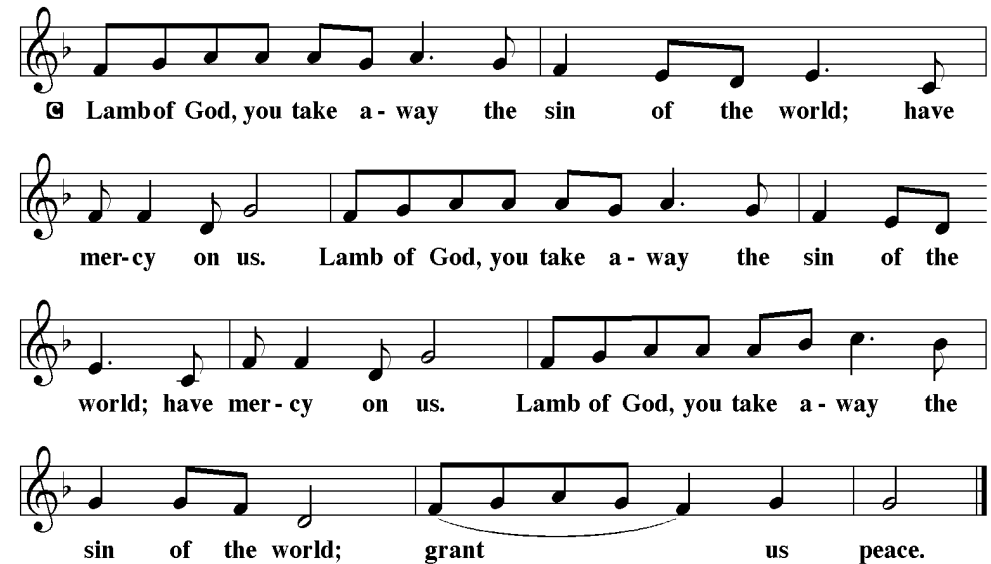
P: Our Lord, Emmanuel, shares his life with us.

**C: Hosanna in the highest!**

*The people may be seated.*

## LAMB OF GOD

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☞ Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have  
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the  
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; grant us peace.

## DISTRIBUTION

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Lutherans teach that Holy Communion (the Lord's Supper) was instituted by Jesus Christ himself for us to eat and drink. As his words declare, with bread and wine, he imparts to us his body and blood, and with it the grace of God. This sacrament is God's way of giving us the good news of Jesus in a concrete, physical way as we continue our pilgrimage on earth. We are rightly prepared to receive this great gift when we come before God with humility and faith. All are welcome to receive the Lord's Body and Blood who are baptized and believe that Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is truly present in, with and under the forms of bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

To receive Holy Communion, come forward in two lines (10:30) or one line (8:00) as the ushers direct you. With open hands, you will receive the bread from the pastor or assisting minister. For those not able to receive regular bread, some gluten free wafers are available. Then proceed to receive the wine from an assistant on your side of the sanctuary. Take an empty cup, which will be filled using a pouring chalice. For those not able to receive wine, there are some pre-filled cups of grape juice available. After receiving the Lord's Supper, the communicant may say "Amen" and return to your pew for prayer. Those choosing not to receive Holy Communion may come forward for a brief prayer and blessing. You may indicate that by crossing your arms over your chest.

*Hymns during distribution: Green Book 36, 32, 42*

## POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

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*The people please stand.*

**P:** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**C: Amen.**

## POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE

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**C** Thank the Lord and sing his praise; tell ev-'ry-one what he has done.



Let all who seek the Lord re - jice and proud-ly bear his name.



He re - calls his prom - is - es and leads his peo - ple forth in joy with



shouts of thanks - giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

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**A:** Let us pray. We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life; and we pray that in your mercy you would strengthen us, through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

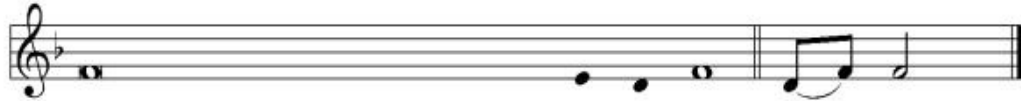




# Sending

## THE BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

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☩ The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

A: Go in peace. Serve the Lord!

C: **Thanks be to God!**

## SENDING HYMN

*Low, How a Rose Is Growing*

Green Book 58

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## THE POSTLUDE

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*We are sent into the world to proclaim God's grace in word and deed.*

## PRAYER AFTER WORSHIP

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*Almighty God, grant that the words we have heard this day with our ears may be grafted onto our hearts through your grace, that they may produce in us the fruit of a good life, to the praise and honor of your name, through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord. Amen*

**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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www.gracethornville.org  
The Rev. Dr. Thomas Jacobson, Pastor



**COMMEMORATIONS:**

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As Christians in the twenty-first century, we are called to remember that God's people of the past form a great "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1). In that spirit, we commemorate memorable Christians of the past, usually on the day of their death. Though imperfect, their witness inspires us today as we run the race of faith. This week, the Church commemorates:

Dec. 21 ST. THOMAS, APOSTLE

*Christ  
Is Coming!*

**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR 4 ADVENT (December 24 10:30am)**

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Deuteronomy 18:15-19  
2 Peter 3:8-14

Psalm 66:1-12  
Mark 1:1-8

**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR CHRISTMAS EVE (December 24 5 & 9pm)**

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Isaiah 9:2-7  
Titus 2:11-14

Psalm 96  
Luke 2:1-14

**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR CHRISTMAS DAY (December 25 10:30am)**

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Isaiah 52:7-10  
Hebrews 1:1-12

Psalm 98  
John 1:1-14