

Visiting Change:

The Desert



Leah Theiss



First Lutheran

CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL

Third Sunday in Advent
December 15, 2024 | 9:30 A.M.

FIRST TIME?

Welcome to First Lutheran Church and Preschool! Everything you need for the service is in this bulletin. Feel free to follow along and participate as you feel comfortable.

Restrooms are in located in our education room. Follow the signs as you exit the sanctuary or ask one of our ushers or greeters (they will be wearing name tags).

ABOUT AVENT

In the season of Advent, we anticipate the arrival of Jesus. You'll notice new decorations including the Advent wreath which has five candles. One is lit each Sunday in Advent with the final center candle, the Christ candle, being lit on Christmas.

This Advent and Christmas we will be focusing on how Jesus visit to earth comes with major change.

KIDS

The church is for all ages. Your kids are most welcome to stay in the worship service, even when they are making noise. If you feel they need a break, there is an unstaffed nursery available in our education room.

Sunday school (age 3 through high school) meets after worship until about 11:20. Parents are welcome to join Bible study during this time.

Bringing people together, in the midst of a hectic world, for fellowship and rest.

AS WE GATHER

As we gather for worship today, we move from the forest to the desert. Deserts are not known for being places of vibrant life, yet when they do blossom they are among the most beautiful places on earth. When God visits the desert, it is time for beautiful blossoming. God's blessings as you worship with us today.

Office: (925) 671-9942 | office@flcconcord.org | flcconcord.org

PRELUDE

Gather: What
gives you joy?

Pastor: This is the day that the Lord has made.

Congregation: Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Stand

OPENING HYMN: LSB #347 Comfort, Comfort Ye My People



1 "Com - fort, com - fort ye My peo - ple, Speak ye peace," thus
2 Yea, her sins our God will par - don, Blot - ting out each
3 Hark, the her - ald's voice is cry - ing In the des - ert
4 Make ye straight what long was crook - ed; Make the rough - er



saith our God; "Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness, Mourn - ing
dark mis - deed; All that well de - served His an - ger He no
far and near, Call - ing sin - ners to re - pen - tance, Since the
plac - es plain. Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, As be -



'neath their sor - rows' load. Speak ye to Je - ru - sa - lem
more will see or heed. She hath suf - fered man - y a day,
King - dom now is here. O that warn - ing cry o - bey!
fits His ho - ly reign. For the glo - ry of the Lord



Of the peace that waits for them; Tell her that her
Now her griefs have passed a - way; God will change her
Now pre - pare for God a way; Let the val - leys
Now o'er earth is shed a - broad. And all flesh shall



sins I cov - er And her war - fare now is o - ver."
pin - ing sad - ness In - to ev - er - spring - ing glad - ness.
rise to meet Him And the hills bow down to greet Him.
see the to - ken That His Word is nev - er bro - ken.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

C: **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

(silence for reflection)

P: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

C: **Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. 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. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. 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.**

P: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die and rise for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen. Jesus has visited us with forgiveness.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 146

P: Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!

C: **I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.**

P: Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

C: **When his breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.**

P: Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God,

C: **who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever;**

P: who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free;

C: **the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.**

P: The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

C: **The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!**

KYRIE

C: Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray.

C: Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Sit

CHOIR: Where the Promise Shines

Joel Raney

CHILDREN'S CHAT

OLD TESTAMENT READING

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Isaiah 35:1-10

Connect: Have you ever seen the desert in bloom? What colors do you remember (or imagine)?

EPISTLE

James 5:7-11

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Stand

The third Sunday in Advent is when we light the pink candle. Pink signifies joy. For several centuries this Sunday has been known as Gaudete Sunday, which means "Rejoice" in Latin.



ALLELUIA AND VERSE

C: Alleluia. Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you. Alleluia.

HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 11:2-15

P: The Holy Gospel, according to St. Matthew, the eleventh chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, "'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON

"Visiting Change: The Desert"

Pastor Andy

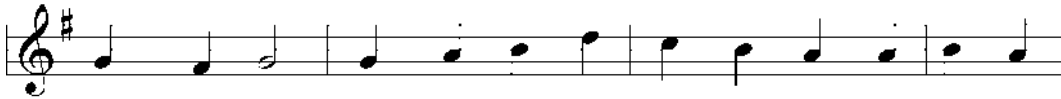
(Sermon Text: Isaiah 35:1-10)

SERMON HYMN

LSB #423 Jesus, Refuge of the Weary



1 Je - sus, ref - uge of the wea - ry, Blest Re - deem - er.
2 Do we pass that cross un - heed - ing, Breath - ing no re -
3 Je - sus, may our hearts be burn - ing With more fer - vent



whom we love, Foun - tain in life's des - ert drea - ry, Sav - ior
pen - tant vow, Though we see You wound - ed, bleed - ing, See Your
love for You; May our eyes be ev - er turn - ing To be -



from the world a - bove: Of - ten have Your eyes, of - fend - ed,
thorn - en - cir - cled brow? Yet Your sin - less death has brought us
hold Your cross a - new Till in glo - ry, part - ed nev - er



Gazed up - on the sin - ner's fall; Yet up - on the
Life e - ter - nal, peace, and rest; On - ly what Your
From the bless - ed Sav - ior's side, Grav - en in our



cross ex - tend - ed, You have borne the pain of all.
grace has taught us Calms the sin - ner's deep dis - tress.
hearts for - ev - er, Dwell the cross, the Cru - ci - fied.

Stand

NICENE CREED

C: I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth
and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made;
who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures
and ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of the Father.
And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead,
whose kingdom will have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified,
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church,
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
and I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life † of the world to come. Amen.

Rest: Do you
own any
desert plants?
Which kinds?

THE PRAYERS

After each petition:

P: ...Lord, in Your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Pray with us this week. For today's prayers and more, please see the First Notes newsletter.

LORD'S PRAYER

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.**

LITURGY OF GENEROSITY

P: We have a generous God! We give thanks to the Lord for all He has given us.

C: We give back to the Lord with joy and thanksgiving.

P: We wisely steward all of His good gifts.

C: The gifts of our time and energy.

P: The gifts of our talents and skills.

C: The gifts of our relationships and finances.

P: Lord, may each of these gifts you have entrusted to us be used for the good of Your people and to Your glory.

C: We have a generous God. Amen.

Scan the QR code on the right with your phone's camera to access First Lutheran's Giving page:



PREFACE

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

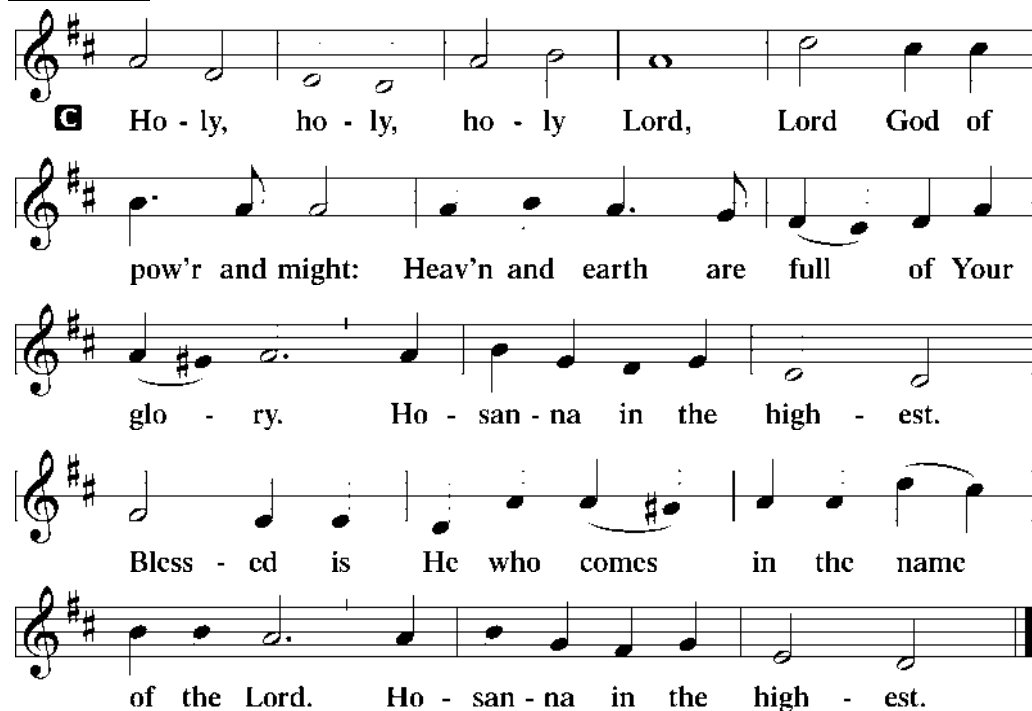
C: **We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: **It is right to give Him thanks and praise.**

P: It is truly good, right, and salutary... evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of
pow'r and might: Heav'n and earth are full of Your
glo - ry. 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 OUR LORD

P: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My \ddagger body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in My \ddagger blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST

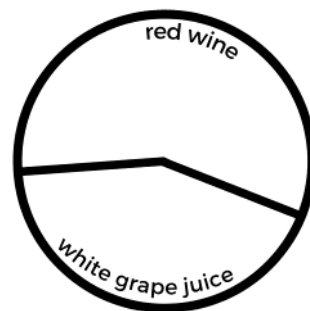
P: As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death and resurrection until He comes.

C: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Sit

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

Out of respect for those who cannot consume alcohol, we offer both white grape juice and red wine. The graphic shows how the wine and grape juice are divided in our communion trays. The ushers will invite you forward for the Lord's Supper. The pastor and communion assistant will offer you the bread, then the wine/grape juice. Once you have received both, place your used individual cup in one of the containers on the communion rail and return to your seat. If you have not taken communion with us before, please read our communion statement in the back of the bulletin before joining us in this sacrament. If you would like a gluten-free wafer, please ask the pastor.



Reflect: John the Baptist sent a question to Jesus. If you could ask Jesus anything, what would it be?

COMMUNION HYMN

LSB #387 Joy to the World



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive her
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let men their songs em -
3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow Nor thorns in - fest the
4 He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the na - tions



King; Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare Him
play, While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
ground; He comes to make His bless - ings
prove The glo - ries of His righ - teous -



room And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture
plains Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing
flow Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is
ness And won - ders of His love, And won - ders of His



sing, And heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
joy, Re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
found, Far as, far as the curse is found.
love, And won - ders, won - ders of His love.

Stand

Joy to the World has become a well-known Christmas hymn, but it was initially written as a paraphrase of Psalm 98. Thematically it was intended be about the return of Jesus rather than His incarnation.

BENEDICTION

P: 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.

C: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

LSB #338 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus



1 Come, Thou long - ex - pect-ed Je-sus, Born to set Thy peo-ple free;
2 Born Thy peo-ple to de - liv - er; Born a child and yet a king!



From our fears and sins re-lease us; Let us find our rest in Thee.
Born to reign in us for-ev - er, Now Thy gra - cious king - dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con-so - la-tion, Hope of all the earth Thou art,
By Thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it Rule in all our hearts a - lone;



Dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na-tion, Joy of ev - 'ry long - ing heart.
By Thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it Raise us to Thy glo - rious throne.

POSTLUDE

SERVING TODAY

Greeters: Owens, Judy Bennett

Ushers: Brad Hernlem and Bob Dottery

Acolyte: Addy Rehana

Children's Chat: Pastor Colter Knippa

Reader: Jonathan Welles

Communion Assistant: Kent Campbell

Sound: Mark Meyer

Livestream: Stephanie Jones

Counters: Melissa Johnson and Kathy Barstad

Altar Guild: Diane Enochs, Ida Thomason, Ruth Welles

Accompanist: Natasha Kung

Flowers: Campbells in celebration of Lynnette's birthday

Donuts: Dotterys

Sunday School: Deb McKenzie and Heather Theiss

OUR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS AND CHURCH STAFF

Natasha Beltran, Heily Castro, Alex Drukov, Tammy Dube, Nicole Ford, Silvia Guillen, Moonyeen Jester, Pastor Andy Jones, Natasha Kung, Cindy Magos, Nicole Marchion, Mark Meyer, Valarie Ortega, Kala Rehm, Ruth Salguera, Jeni Smith, Heather Theiss, Anna Villalpando, Monica Zarate

ABOUT COMMUNION

First Lutheran Church and Preschool celebrates the Lord's Supper every Sunday in the joyful confidence that Christ our Lord gives us not only bread and wine but His very body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine to eat and drink for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. The Lord's Supper is intended for Christians who have been baptized, instructed in the faith, and who believe in these words of Christ: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Anyone who is not baptized or does not believe these words should refrain from participating in the Lord's Supper as our participation is a confession of our common faith.

Anyone who has not been instructed in the faith or holds a confession differing from that of this congregation and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and yet desires to receive the Lord's Supper, is asked first to speak with the pastor. For further study, see 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 (pages 958-959 in the English pew Bibles). Those not receiving the Lord's Supper (both adults and children) are invited to come forward for a blessing.

UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS:

12/18 — Midweek Bible study 12:00pm (Education room)

12/18 — Midweek Bible study + soup at Pastor Andy's house 6:00 pm

12/21 — Christmas Caroling (meet at church at 12:30 to carpool or 1:00 at La Casa
Via in Walnut Creek)

12/24 — Christmas Eve 7:00pm

12/25 — Christmas Day 9:30am