

SOLA SCRIPTURA ✘ SOLA GRATIA ✘ SOLA FIDE

Divine Service



Our Savior Lutheran Church

Westminster, Massachusetts

SCRIPTURE ALONE ✘ GRACE ALONE ✘ FAITH ALONE

1 Hager Park Road
(Junction 140, 2, and 2A)
Westminster, MA 01473

Our Savior Lutheran Church

December 10, 2023

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church: 978-874-2479
www.oursaviorlcms.com

Visitor, you are very welcome here.

Please contact us with questions or prayer requests, and come worship with us again. Our pastor would be very glad to meet with you. May our Lord's Word be a blessing to all who gather in His name.

For those caring for young children or who have difficulty standing for the prayers, hymns, or other parts of the service, please know that you may sit as you find need or comfort.

Don't be embarrassed if your children make noise during worship—all children do. We encourage families to worship together. If needed, there is a nursery available in the basement during service and Bible class.

Out of courtesy to your brothers and sisters, please silence your cell phone and refrain from leaving or entering the sanctuary during the readings and the prayers.

Holy Communion

We welcome to the Lord's Table members of Our Savior and members of sister congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Pastor Gregory would be very glad to instruct you so that you can confess Jesus Christ with us and receive His holy body and blood for forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Spiritual Care

Individual confession and absolution, spiritual care, and pastoral counsel are available by appointment. Please contact the church office to schedule a time.

Christian Education

Sunday School and Adult Bible Study follow the service. Children meet in the basement, high school students in pastors' study, and adults in the sanctuary. Coffee and refreshments are served in the basement directly after service.

Serving in Worship Today

Preacher & Celebrant The Rev. Charles Varsogea
Liturgist Tom Connell
Organist Loyall Allen
Acolytes George Newman, Landon Vega

Advent Note

During Advent, the Divine Service changes. We use a different confession of sin. The Gloria in Excelsis (first sung by the angels to the shepherds when Jesus was born) waits for Christmas. Hymn stanzas replace the Sanctus and Nunc Dimittis. The liturgy for Holy Communion is shorter. These changes mark this as a season of repentant joy in preparation for the glorious celebration of our Lord's birth beginning on Christmas Eve.

Prayers for Worship

Before service: Almighty God, through John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, You once proclaimed salvation. Now grant that we may know this salvation and serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Before communion: Lord Jesus, You invite all who are burdened with sin to come to You for rest. We now come at Your invitation to the heavenly feast You have provided for Your people on earth. Preserve us from impenitence and unbelief, cleanse us from our unrighteousness, and clothe us with the righteousness purchased with Your blood. Strengthen our faith, increase our love and hope, and assure us a place at Your heavenly table, where we will eat eternal manna and drink of the river of Your pleasure forever and ever. Amen.

Cover Illustration

St. John the Baptist Preaching in the Desert
by Anton Raphael Mengs (ca. 1774). Public Domain.

THE OPENING HYMN – TUNE & TEXT: LSB 347

1 “Comfort, comfort ye My people,
Speak ye peace,” thus saith our God;
“Comfort those who sit in darkness,
Mourning ‘neath their sorrows’ load.
Speak ye to Jerusalem
Of the peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover
And her warfare now is over.”

2 Yea, her sins our God will pardon,
Blotting out each dark misdeed;
All that well deserved His anger
He no more will see or heed.
She hath suffered many’a day,
Now her griefs have passed away;
God will change her pining sadness
Into ever-springing gladness.

3 Hark, the herald’s voice is crying
In the desert far and near,
Calling sinners to repentance,
Since the Kingdom now is here.
O that warning cry obey!
Now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise to meet Him
And the hills bow down to greet Him.

4 Make ye straight what long was crooked;
Make the rougher places plain.
Let your hearts be true and humble,
As befits His holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord
Now o’er earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token
That His Word is never broken.

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THE INVOCATION

Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]

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

Amen.

THE CONFESSION OF SINS

Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with sincere hearts to confess our sins to God, our Father, and to plead in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ for His forgiveness.

*Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.*

Psalm 124:8

*I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,
and You forgave the guilt of my sin.*

Psalm 32:5

Silence for reflection on God’s Word and self-examination.

Almighty God, our Maker and our Redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Wherefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

O most merciful God, who has given Your only-begotten Son to die for us, have mercy upon us, and for His sake grant us remission of all our sins; and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, so that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Liturgy for the
confession of sin
is spoken.

The Declaration of Grace

Mark 16:16; John 1:12

Amen.

THE INTROIT

Psalm 80:3, 1, 8a, 9b, 7

Restore us, O God;

let Your face shine, that we may be saved!

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock!

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.

You brought a vine out of Egypt;

it took deep root and filled the land.

Restore us, O God of hosts;

let Your face shine, that we may be saved!

THE GLORIA PATRI

Sung liturgy

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

THE KYRIE

Mark 10:47

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us.

THE SALUTATION

2 Timothy 4:22

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

THE COLLECT

Let us pray. Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Reading of God's Word

from the Old Testament: Isaiah 40:1–11

After the reading:

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

THE PSALM

Psalm 85; antiphon v. 9

*Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,
that glory may dwell in our land.*

LORD, You were favorable to Your land;

You restored the fortunes of Jacob.

You forgave the iniquity of Your people;

You covered all their sin.

You withdrew all Your wrath;

You turned from Your hot anger.

Restore us again, O God of our salvation,

and put away Your indignation toward us!

Will You be angry with us forever?

Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?

Will You not revive us again,

that Your people may rejoice in You?

Show us Your steadfast love, O LORD,

and grant us Your salvation.

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for He will speak peace to His people, to His saints;

but let them not turn back to folly.

Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,

that glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;

righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Faithfulness springs up from the ground,

and righteousness looks down from the sky.

Yes, the LORD will give what is good,

and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness will go before Him

and make His footsteps a way.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,

that glory may dwell in our land.

from the Letters: 2 Peter 3:8–14

After the reading:

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HALLELUJAH AND VERSE

Luke 3:4b, 6

Hallelujah! Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.

All flesh shall see the salvation of God. Hallelujah!

from the Holy Gospels: Mark 1:1–8

Glory be to You, O Lord!

After the reading:

Praise be to You, O Christ!

THE APOSTLES' CREED

Having heard the Word, what do you believe?

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

And 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 sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence 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.

HYMN OF THE DAY – TUNE: TLH 63 – TEXT: LSB 344, STANZAS 1–4

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings of the King of kings! | 3 We hail Thee as our Savior, Lord,
Our refuge and our great reward;
Without Thy grace we waste away
Like flow'rs that wither and decay. |
| 2 Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin;
Make straight the way for God within,
And let us all our hearts prepare
For Christ to come and enter there. | 4 Lay on the sick Thy healing hand
And make the fallen strong to stand;
Show us the glory of Thy face
Till beauty springs in ev'ry place. |

The Sermon

THE OFFERTORY HYMN – TUNE: TLH 63 – TEXT: LSB 344, STANZA 5

- △ **5 All praise, eternal Son, to Thee
Whose advent sets Thy people free,
Whom with the Father we adore
And Holy Spirit evermore.**

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The Presentation of the Offering

Psalms 116:17; 18:1

I will offer the thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.

O LORD, my strength, I love You.

The Prayer of the Church

after each petition:

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. In Your boundless mercy You sent Your servant, John the Baptist, to proclaim that in Christ the kingdom of heaven draws near. With thankful hearts we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus," confident that in His body and blood, given us to eat and drink, we receive the forgiveness of sins and so proclaim His death until He comes again in glory.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

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.

CONSECRATION HYMN – TUNE & TEXT: LSB 355, STANZAS 1, 4, 6



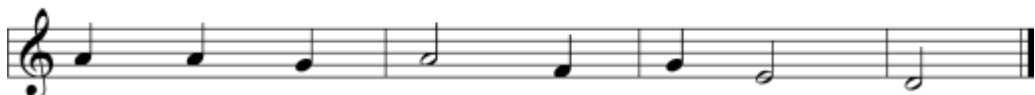
1 O Sav - ior, rend the heav - ens wide;
4 O Fount of hope, how long, how long?
6 Sin's dread - ful doom up - on us lies;



Come down, come down with might - y stride;
When will You come with com - fort strong?
Grim death looms fierce be - fore our eyes.



Un - lock the gates, the doors break down;
O come, O come, Your throne fore - go;
O come, lead us with might - y hand



Un - bar the way to heav - en's crown.
Con - sole us in our vale of woe.
From ex - ile to our prom - ised land.

The Words of Institution

Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25

THE PAX DOMINI

John 20:19

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

THE AGNUS DEI

John 1:29

O Christ, Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.

O Christ, Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.

**O Christ, Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world,
grant us Your peace. Amen.**

Holy Communion

> *Note about Holy Communion: All who receive Holy Communion here must first be instructed. Our pastor will be very glad to instruct you. Please contact the office for an appointment. Those who have not been instructed may come forward with their arms crossed to receive a blessing.* <

Psalm 50:1–15 (v. 15)

DISTRIBUTION HYMN – TUNE & TEXT: LSB 354

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 Arise, O Christian people!
 Prepare yourselves today;
Prepare to greet the Savior,
 Who takes your sins away.
To us by grace alone
 The truth and light were given;
 The promised Lord from heaven
To all the world is shown.</p> <p>2 Prepare the way before Him;
 Prepare for Him the best.
Cast out what would offend Him,
 This great, this heav'nly guest.
Make straight, make plain the way:
 The lowly valleys raising,
 The heights of pride abasing,
His path all even lay.</p> | <p>3 The humble heart and lowly
 God raises up on high;
Beneath His feet in terror
 The haughty soul shall lie.
The heart sincere and right,
 That heeds God's invitation
 And makes true preparation—
It is the Lord's delight.</p> <p>4 Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus;
 Turn not from me aside,
And help me to receive You
 This blessed Adventtide.
From stall and manger low
 Come now to dwell within me;
 I'll sing Your praises gladly
And forth Your glory show.</p> |
|---|--|

Text: Public domain

- 1 O Lord, how shall I meet You,
How welcome You aright?
Your people long to greet You,
My hope, my heart's delight!
O kindle, Lord most holy,
Your lamp within my breast
To do in spirit lowly
All that may please You best.
- 2 Your Zion strews before You
Green boughs and fairest palms;
And I too will adore You
With joyous songs and psalms.
My heart shall bloom forever
For You with praises new
And from Your name shall never
Withhold the honor due.
- 3 I lay in fetters, groaning;
You came to set me free.
I stood, my shame bemoaning;
You came to honor me.
A glorious crown You give me,
A treasure safe on high
That will not fail or leave me
As earthly riches fly.
- 4 Love caused Your incarnation;
Love brought You down to me.
Your thirst for my salvation
Procured my liberty.
Oh, love beyond all telling,
That led You to embrace
In love, all love excelling,
Our lost and fallen race.
- 5 Rejoice, then, you sad-hearted,
Who sit in deepest gloom,
Who mourn o'er joys departed
And tremble at your doom.
Despair not, He is near you,
Yes, standing at the door,
Who best can help and cheer you
And bids you weep no more.
- 6 Sin's debt, that fearful burden,
Cannot His love erase;
Your guilt the Lord will pardon
And cover by His grace.
He comes, for you procuring
The peace of sin forgiv'n,
His children thus securing
Eternal life in heav'n.
- 7 He comes to judge the nations, a terror to His foes,
A light of consolations and blessed hope to those
Who love the Lord's appearing. O glorious Sun, now come,
Send forth Your beams so cheering, and guide us safely home.

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DISTRIBUTION HYMN—TUNE & TEXT: LSB 352

- 1 Let the earth now praise the Lord,
Who has truly kept His word
And at last to us did send
Christ, the sinner's help and friend.
- 2 What the fathers most desired,
What the prophets' heart inspired,
What they longed for many a year,
Stands fulfilled in glory here.

(Continued on the next page.)

3 Abram's promised great reward,
Zion's helper, Jacob's Lord—
Him of twofold race behold—
Truly came, as long foretold.

4 As Your coming was in peace,
Quiet, full of gentleness,
Let the same mind dwell in me
Which is Yours eternally.

5 Bruise for me the serpent's head
That, set free from doubt and dread,
I may cling to You in faith,
Safely kept through life and death.

6 Then when You will come again
As the glorious king to reign,
I with joy will see Your face,
Freely ransomed by Your grace.

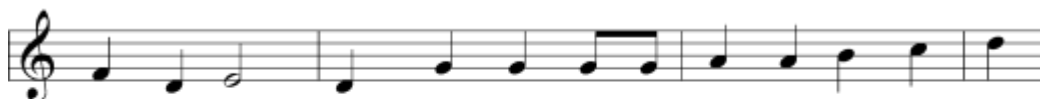
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THE POST-COMMUNION HYMN — TUNE & TEXT: LSB 936

This hymn is a versification of the Benedictus (Luke 1:68–79), the Song of Zechariah, father of John the Baptist.



1 Sing praise to the God of Is - ra - el! Sing praise for His
2 God spoke by the proph - ets long a - go, His prom - ise on
3 You, child, will go on be - fore the Lord As proph - et, His
4 O bright, ris - ing Sun, now shine on us In need of il -



vis - i - ta - tion! Re - deem - ing His peo - ple from their sin,
oath re - call - ing— To A - bra - ham made in for - mer years:
way pre - par - ing; To speak on be - half of God Most High,
lu - mi - na - tion; Come scat - ter the shades of sin and death



Ac - com - plish - ing their sal - va - tion, Up - rais - ing a
Of van - quish - ing foes ap - pall - ing, That those He de -
His coun - sel of truth de - clar - ing: Rich mer - cy and
And shat - ter their dom - i - na - tion. Be guid - ing our



might - y horn with - in The house of His ser - vant Da - vid!
liv - ered from their fears Might glad - ly and tru - ly serve Him.
grace for all where - by In - iq - ui - ty is for - giv - en.
foot - steps on the path Of peace, in Your pres - ence dawn - ing!

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*Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
and His mercy endures forever.*

THE THANKSGIVING COLLECT

Let us pray. We thank You, all-powerful God, for refreshing us with this healing gift, and we pray: Father of mercy, by this holy food make us strong in faith toward You, and in deep love for each other, that through us other beloved sinners may kneel to You and receive with us grace and life in Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE SALUTATION

2 Timothy 4:22

*The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.*

THE BENEDICAMUS

[Psalm 103:1]

*Bless we the Lord.
Thanks be to God.*

THE BENEDICTION

Numbers 6:24–26

*The LORD bless you and keep you.
The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.
Amen. Amen. Amen.*

HYMN TO DEPART – TUNE & TEXT: LSB 518, STANZAS 1, 18, 3

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 By all Your saints in warfare,
For all Your saints at rest,
Your holy name, O Jesus,
Forevermore be blest!
For You have won the battle
That they might wear the crown;
And now they shine in glory
Reflected from Your throne.</p> | <p>2 We praise You for the Baptist,
Forerunner of the Word,
Our true Elijah, making
A highway for the Lord.
The last and greatest prophet,
He saw the dawning ray
Of light that grows in splendor
Until the perfect day.</p> |
| <p>△ 3 Then let us praise the Father and worship God the Son
And sing to God the Spirit, Eternal Three in One,
Till all the ransomed number fall down before the throne,
Ascribing pow’r and glory and praise to God alone.</p> | |

God's People at Prayer

For Home Devotions

The sign of the cross may be made in remembrance of Baptism.

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Readings from Holy Scripture

These may be read in the morning and evening, as suggested here, or in any way that best works with your schedule.

	Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer
Su	Isaiah 26:20–27:13	1 John 4:1–21
M	Isaiah 28:14–29	1 John 5:1–21
Tu	Isaiah 29:1–14	Jude 1–25
W	Isaiah 29:15–30:14	Revelation 1:1–20
Th	Isaiah 30:15–26	Revelation 2:1–29
F	Isaiah 30:27–31:9	Revelation 3:1–22
Sa	Isaiah 32:1–20	Revelation 4:1–11

Confession

How Christians should be taught to confess

What is the Office of the Keys? The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written? This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (John 20:22–23)

What do you believe according to these words? I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

Luther's Small Catechism © 1986 Concordia Publishing House, cph.org.

Hymn

The hymn stanza may be sung or spoken.

"Comfort, comfort ye My people,
Speak ye peace," thus saith our God;
"Comfort those who sit in darkness,
Mourning 'neath their sorrows' load.
Speak ye to Jerusalem
Of the peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover
And her warfare now is over." LSB 347:1

Daily Prayer

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Prayers for Others and Ourselves

The following topics may guide your prayer each day.

- Su For God's name to be kept holy through pure teaching and holy living
- M For God's kingdom to come and increase through the gift of the Holy Spirit
- Tu For God to hinder every evil plan and purpose of the world, the devil, and the sinful nature
- W For daily bread and contentment in all things
- Th For forgiveness of our sins and of those who sin against us
- F For protection in the midst of temptation
- Sa For rescue from all evils of body and soul and, when our last hour comes, a blessed end

The Lord's Prayer

Collect of the Week

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Readings for the Third Sunday in Advent, Gaudete, December 17

Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11; Psalm 126 (v. 5) & 146 (v. 5);
1 Thessalonians 5:16–24; John 1:6–8, 19–28