

Fourth Sunday of Advent: Christmas Pageant Holy Communion



9:00 a.m., December 22, 2024

Welcome to worship this morning!

We are glad you're here! Please know that **children** are welcome to remain in worship; they are also welcome to take a break in our "Kid's Korner" in the Gathering Space where the service audio is played through speakers. **Bathrooms** are located down the hall, past the church office. **Hymns** are printed in the red book (ELW) available in the pew rack.

We practice **open communion** at St. Matthew, meaning all who desire the sacrament of Holy Communion are welcome. If you prefer, you may also come forward for a blessing. During the distribution of Holy Communion, ushers will direct the congregation forward to receive communion in a **continuous line**. The pastor will distribute communion wafers, which you may intinct (dip) into red wine, or white grape juice, held by communion assistants. Please do not drink from the chalices. Gluten free wafers are also available. The pastor will deliver the sacrament to anyone unable to come forward. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit, available at the usher's table.

All are welcome!

PRELUDE: *Greensleeves*

John M. Rasley

WELCOME

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

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

Amen.

Let us prepare the way of the Lord by confessing our sin against God and our neighbor. I invite you into a prayerful posture of kneeling, standing, or sitting.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God of all time,

We confess that we have not prepared the way for your merciful reign among us. We trust only earthly powers and human authority. We grow fearful and we cling to false comforts. We have ignored our neighbors in need and fail in the labor of peace, justice and goodwill on earth. 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 our God.

In Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven and all things are made new. †
Rejoice, Rejoice Emmanuel shall come to you! Hear this Good News.
Amen.

OPENING HYMN: *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*

ELW 265

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.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

The congregation may be seated.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Long-ing for light, we wait in dark-ness. Long-ing for
truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the
dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your
church gath - ered to - day.

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FIRST READING: Hebrews 10:5-10

The author of Hebrews uses the image of religious sacrifice to convey the significance of Christ's coming. Through obedient acceptance of God's will, Christ allows his own body to become the greatest sacrifice of all, one through which we are made a holy people.

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews:

⁵ [W]hen Christ came into the world, he said,
“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;

⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

⁷ Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me).”

⁸ When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7

We will now read responsively from the book of Psalms:

¹ Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up-on the cherubim.

² **In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

⁴ **O Lord God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**

⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

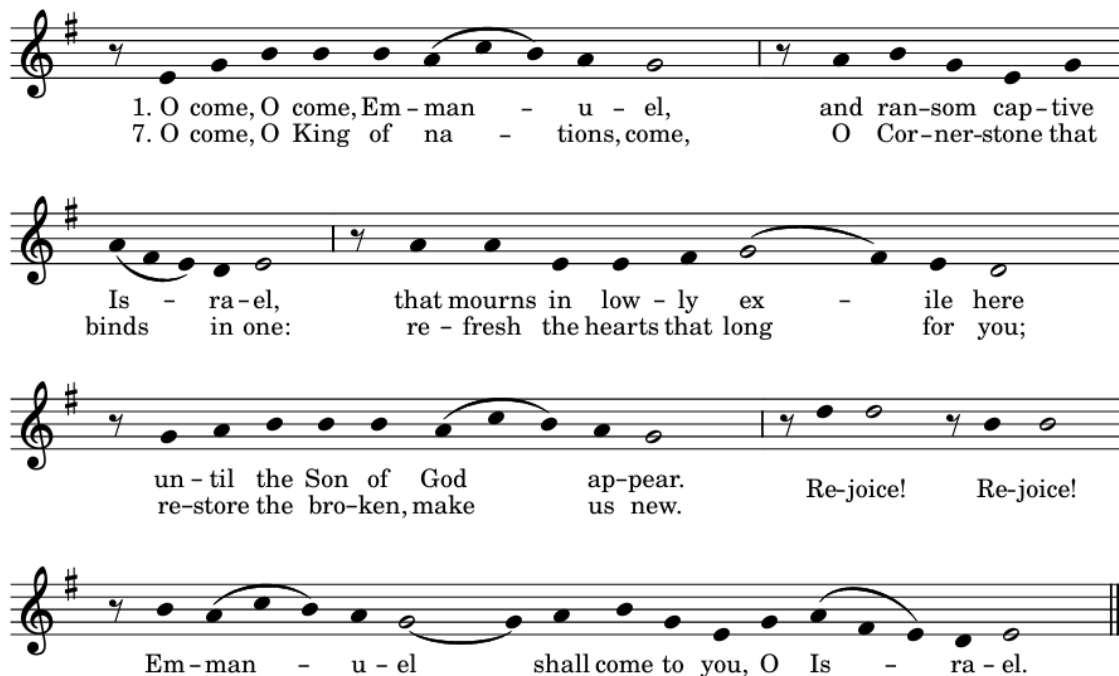
⁶ **You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran-som cap-tive
7. O come, O King of na - tions, come, O Cor-ner-stone that

Is - ra-el, that mourns in low - ly ex - ile here
binds in one: re - fresh the hearts that long for you;

un - til the Son of God ap-pear. Re-joice! Re-joice!
re-store the bro-ken, make us new.

Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

SUNDAY SCHOOL SHARING OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Members of St Matthew's Sunday School will share a tableau of the Nativity Scene of our Lord Jesus Christ as our Lesson and Sermon. The Congregation is invited to sing alongside the children at various points. There are prompts in this bulletin for when to sing along with hymn numbers. All numbered hymns can be found in the red ELW in your pew rack.

Our Narrators begin with our story in Nazareth...

Elizabeth will sing praise of Mary, and the congregation will sing...

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN: *My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness*

ELW 251

*The Three Wisemen will come to the Nativity with their gifts. The Children and Congregation will sing *Away in a Manger* and *Silent Night* together...*

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN: *Away in a Manger*

ELW 277 (v. 1)



A - way in a man-ger, no crib for his bed, the lit - tle Lord



Je-sus laid down his sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked



down where he lay, the lit - tle Lord Je-sus a - sleep on the hay.

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN: *Silent Night*



Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,



all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.



Ho - ly In - fant so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en-ly



peace, sleep in heav - en-ly peace.

The Narrator will proclaim "We excitedly await the coming of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Christmas morning!" and the Congregation sings...

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN: *Soon and Very Soon* ELW 439 (v. 1 – 4, no coda)

At the end of the pageant, the congregation is invited to stand and sing the Hymn of the Day.

HYMN OF THE DAY: *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* ELW 270

APOSTLES' 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 prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence. I invite you into a prayerful posture of kneeling, standing, or sitting.

A brief silence.

God our uniter, increase communication and cooperation in our relationships with those of other traditions and religions. Root your church in the radical message of your incarnation, and enable us to pursue your justice in the world. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God our creator, we praise you for the beauty that surrounds us. Awaken in us a renewed sense of care for the wildlife in our communities. Form us into faithful stewards of what you have made. As the northern hemisphere begins its slow turn toward more daylight, remind us that even in the deepest nights, you are there. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God our sovereign, Mary proclaims a new way of life that lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things. Nurture in local governments and municipalities a desire to care for all who are overlooked and ignored. We pray for peace throughout the world, especially we pray for the people of Syria and Ukraine, of Israel and Gaza, and anywhere where war and violence destroy life. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God our protector, we pray for the families and victims of the recent school shooting Madison, Wisconsin. Comfort grieving families and be with those who are retraumatized by this tragedy. We understand this is a uniquely American problem and that without meaningful change these tragedies will continue. We confess there has been sinful neglect of this issue. Forgive us for our inaction. Help us to not feel helpless and to not become numb to such preventable violence. Inspire our nation's leaders to initiate meaningful change to protect our children. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God our shepherd, we thank you for the gift of children in this congregation. We thank you for their proclamation of the Christmas story this morning and the joy they share each week. We pray that you grow our children, youth, and family ministries; and strengthen our Sunday School, Confirmation, and youth ministry programs. Bless all the young people of this congregation that they may be in close relationship with you, lead lives of deep faith, and be a blessing to the world. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God our life, we thank you for our loved ones who have died and now rest in you. Comfort those who will be celebrating the holidays without someone close to them for the first time. We especially pray for Warren Gedstad, that you welcome him into your heavenly light and comfort his family in this time of mourning. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you always.
The congregation may be seated.

And also with you.

OFFERING

At this time, ushers will pass the offering plate if you desire to give a financial gift. Donations may also be given online at stmatthewavon.org/give, using the QR code in this bulletin, or mailed directly to the church. Thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness!

OFFERTORY

PRESENTATION HYMN

All rise as the gifts are brought forward.



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles-sing. 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 dreams of



all; u-nite them with the prayers we of-fer. Grace our ta-ble



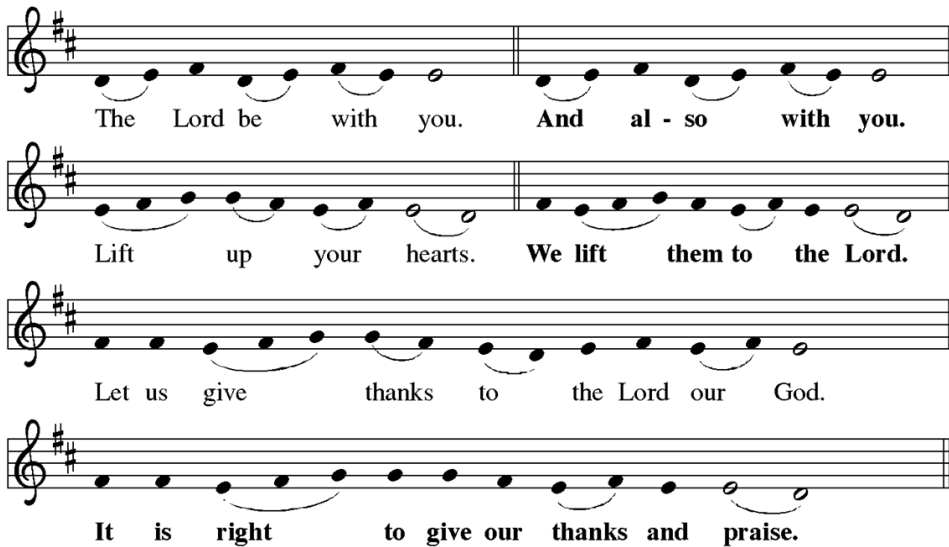
with your pres-ence, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980
Music: Ronald A. Nelson, A. 1927
Text and music: © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

OFFERING PRAYER

Creator God,
you made the whole world,
even the farthest stars,
and you draw near to feed us.
We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine.
Strengthen us with this food
that we may live in expectation
for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

HOLY COMMUNION



The image shows four staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. Each staff contains a melody line with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "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 our thanks and praise."

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 our thanks and praise.

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:

SANCTUS

ELW Setting 3



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.

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:
 Blessed are you for the birth of creation.
 Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.
 Blessed are you for your promise to your people.
 Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.
 Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.
 Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

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.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup
we remember your Word dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.

We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.

We look with hope for his coming.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.

Come among us.

Bless this meal.

May your Word take flesh in us.

Awaken your people.

Fill us with your light.

Bring the gift of peace on earth.

Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours,

Holy One of Israel,

Word of God incarnate,

Power of the Most High,

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as 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

At this time, ushers will direct the congregation to form two lines. You will receive a communion wafer from a pastor, which you are invited to intinct (dip) into the red wine or white grape juice held by the communion assistants. Please do not drink from the chalices. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit in your seat or indicate to an usher to have a pastor deliver the sacrament to your seat.

The table is prepared for us. Christ is near.

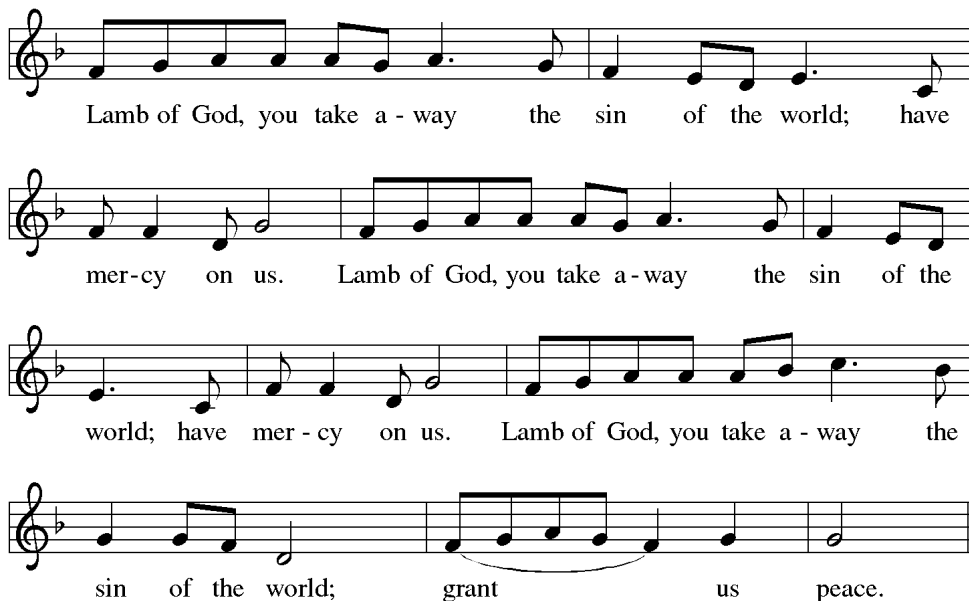
THE DISTRIBUTION

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

AGNUS DEI

ELW Setting 3



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.

COMMUNION HYMN: *What Feast of Love*

ELW 487

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

May the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Eternal God, for whom we wait,
you have fed us with the bread of eternal life:
keep us ever watchful,
that we may be ready to stand with the Son of man,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

God of endings and beginnings,
God in the darkness and the light,
God, our hope for the journey,
✠ bless and keep you now and forever. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN: *Joy to the World*

ELW 267

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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Today's Altar Flowers are provided by Indira Panthagani for the glory of God!

Altar flowers are also provided by the Kurtich's in memory of our mom.

THANK YOU TO TODAY'S PAGEANT PLAYERS AND HELPERS!

Narrators: Ivy Nadeau and Clara Codispoti

Joseph: Deacon Menezes

Angel Gabriel: Grant Menezes

Wiseman: Brian-Douglas Perillo

Star: Cece Rajcok

Shepherd: Charlie Rajcok

Angels: Azalea Nadeau, Sage Perillo, Delia Connors

MANY THANKS FOR TODAY'S VOLUNTEER WORSHIP LEADERS!

Altar Guild: Paula Cunningham & Carol Reider

Acolyte: Wyatt Boswell

Assisting Minister: Will Abbott **Lector:** Anne Fenn, Kathy Alsgaard, George Reider

Ushers: Kevin Reichler

Live Stream: George Spoering

Coffee Hour: Carol Reider & Karen Wright

STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Brian R. Rajcok – pastorbrian@stmatthewavon.org

Associate Pastor: The Rev. Ryan Heckman – revryan@stmatthewavon.org

Director of Music: Sarah Schiener-Redenz – music@stmatthewavon.org

Office Administrator: Paul Martin – office@stmatthewavon.org or (860) 673-3301

Sexton: Roy Zurell – contact the office

VISIT US ONLINE

Website: www.stmatthewavon.org

YouTube: @StMatthewAvon

Facebook.com: SaintMatthewLutheranChurch **Instagram:** @stmatthewlutheranavon

THE WEEK AHEAD

Office Closed Next Week			
Sunday	9am: Christmas Pageant w/ Holy Communion		
Tuesday	4:30pm: Christmas Eve Family Service	7:30pm: Christmas Eve Service	10:30pm: Christmas Eve Service
Sunday	9am: Lessons & Carols Service w/ Holy Communion		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADVENT GIFT LETTER

Rick Hanson, Council Vice President, has written a letter regarding the 2024 Staff Advent Gift. If you're interested in donating or learning more about this initiative, please read the letter included in Friday's weekly emails, or visit our website where you can view the letter on the Home Page.

Donations will be accepted via check or Vanco. If you choose to write a check, please include "Advent Gift" or "Christmas Gift" in the memo line. You may send the check directly to the office or place it in the collection plate on Sunday.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

The Christmas Eve Services this year will take place at the following times:

4:30 pm: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion & Children's Sermon

7:30 pm: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion (Livestream Available)

10:30 pm: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion

A SERVICE OF CHRISTMAS LESSONS & CAROLS

Sunday, December 29, 9:00 a.m.

Join us next Sunday morning for a special service of lessons and carols with Holy Communion! We will hear readings tying together the whole Christmas story, from prophecy to fulfillment, and we will respond with joyous carols and anthems of the season. Set midway through the twelve days of Christmas, this is a wonderful way to continue celebrating the season.

ONLINE GIVING

Make a one-time gift, or set-up recurring donations, via Vanco! You may use the QR code below to access the website, or visit: stmatthewavon.org/online-giving If you have yet to return your 2025 Pledge Card, they are available in the narthex. You may fill one place it in the offering plate, or hand it to an Usher.

We ask those that wish to set-up recurring donations, please select the "GENERAL OPERATING FUND" and choose withdrawals to take place on either the 1st or 15th of the month. Thank you! If you have any difficulty, please contact the church office or see one of the Pastors after service!



St. Matthew Mission Statement:

St. Matthew Lutheran Church is a worshipping community called to proclaim God's love for all and to grow spiritually together. Challenged by Jesus' example, we strive to connect people of all ages, abilities, and needs, and to nurture them to be disciples of Christ. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we reach out to the wider community and welcome our neighbors to a life of worship, preaching, teaching, Christian care, service, and spiritual growth.

In Christ, We Are Digging Deep, Reaching Out, Changing Lives.