

# On the Way to Bethlehem



*Hope hope HOPE Hope hope HOPE*

*December 1, 2024  
1st Sunday of Advent*



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Welcome to Worship...

Welcome to all God's guests, including those who call themselves "members" of this church named Ascension Lutheran Church more than 50 years ago.

A special welcome to guests who are here for the first time or who call yourselves "visitors" among the people of this community. It is at God's invitation, through worship, the Holy Spirit calls each of us to come to a place of **community, communion** and **commitment**. Each of us brings a different lens to worship, and yet, in a worshiping community, these differences become celebrations of diversity.

**Children are always welcome in worship services;**  
**however please know the cry room at the back of the sanctuary is available for**  
**parents who need to tend to their little ones.**

## Introduction

We are so often focused on the destination in our travels. "Where are you going?" is the most common question upon hearing that someone is heading out of town. While the destination is perhaps the impetus for deciding to "go," it is often the journey itself that offers the most memorable moments—frustrating or delightful. This Advent season, we will pay attention not just to the destination of Christmas, but also to the places where events occurred that led to a starry night on which a child was born who would change the world. And we will ponder our own milestones—the progress and the potholes "on the way."

# Rome: A Place of Longing

**G** We begin our Advent journey toward Bethlehem and the manger with a decree from Rome. Needing more money to build the Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus demands a census so that all who lived under his reign could “contribute” to his expansion of power.

**P** Our lives and stories are often shaped by that which is out of our immediate control. This was true in the moment of the Roman decree that would turn into the story of hope for the world. On this first week of Advent, we ask ourselves whether we are placing our hope in the empires of the world, or in the liberating through-line of God’s presence. What are we longing for this Advent, and how does it call us to act with hope?

***♪ ♪ O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie! ♪ ♪  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.***

The musical score is written on three staves in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "We're on our way. We're on our way. Dream of the day when hope holds sway. With all the earth, in To Coda ☩ all our hearts. We're on our way. This is the day." The score includes various musical notations such as rests, eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, with some phrases spanning across multiple staves.

G The journey begins, and this candle will help light our way.

**All We are on our way to more hope.**

G Decrees and decisions affect our world and our lives  
as they did in Jesus' day.

**All We are a people who long for Good News.**

G There are milestones that guide us to a better day.

**All God's light goes before us, we are not alone.**

The musical score is written in G major, 4/4 time, and consists of three staves. The lyrics are: "We're on our way. We're on our way. Dream of the day when hope holds sway. With all the earth, in To Coda ☩ all our hearts. We're on our way. This is the day." The score includes various musical notations such as rests, eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, with some phrases spanning across multiple staves.

## Confession and Forgiveness

*Please stand in body or spirit.*

P Holy and Living God, we pray for the renewal of our world.

**All Too often, we let fear or complacency prevent us from  
calling out the injustices of our time.**

**Give us courage for action, even in the midst of our longing.**

**Call us to a "census of hope."**

**All Call us to our senses**

**so that we may see, hear, know,**

**the power of your presence with us, Emmanuel.**

**We pray this in the name of your Son,**

**Jesus, the Christ, the Hope of Our Lives.**

*P* God is with us every step of our way toward the Hope of Bethlehem.

Jesus is being born into our lives even now.

The Spirit is transforming us in this place.

**All Amen.**

[You may be Seated](#)

## A Reading from Romans, the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter

*For Paul, true spirituality means that we experience the reality of the Spirit, which enables us to pray as God's children, keeps us in solidarity with creation, and gives us unseen hope that God will liberate us and creation from bondage to death and decay.*

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

*Romans 8: 18-25*

*WA* The word of the Lord.

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel Acclamation

Please stand in body or spirit.

♪ ♪ **Emmanuel, Emmanuel, His name is called Emmanuel** ♪ ♪  
**God with us revealed in us. His name is called Emmanuel**

## Gospel Reading

*P* The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.

**All** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered.

*Luke 2: 1-3*

*P* The Gospel of our Lord.

**All** **Praise to you, O Christ.**

You may be Seated

## Children's Sermon & Noisy Offering



Lit - tle don - key, lit - tle don - key, on the dust - y road,  
got to keep on plod-ding on - wards, with your pre - cious load.  
Ring out those bells to - night, Beth - le - hem, Beth - le - hem.

Fol - low that star to - night, Beth - le - hem, Beth - le - hem.  
 Don't give up now, lit - tle don - key, Beth - le - hem's in sight.

Sermon Pr. Debra Jimenez

Hymn of the Day

*Please stand in body or spirit.* **You Are My All In All** Words and Music by Dennis Jernigan

1 You are my strength when I am weak. You are the treas - ure that I  
 2 Tak - ing my sin, my cross, my shame, Ris - ing a - gain I bless Your

seek. You are my all in all. \_\_\_\_\_ Seek - ing You as a pre - cious  
 name; You are my all in all. \_\_\_\_\_ When I fall down, You pick me

jew'l, Lord, to give up I'd be a fool. You are my all in all.  
 up; When I am dry, You fill my cup; You are my all in all.

Je - sus, Lamb of God, wor - thy is Your name! \_\_\_\_\_

Je - sus, Lamb of God, wor - thy is Your name!

## Apostles' Creed

*P* Let us join together with the saints across the ages confessing our faith with the words of the 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 The People

[You may be Seated](#)

*WA* As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us,  
let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.





for if you lead me, I can - not stray.

Lord, let me walk each day with thee.

Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

*(each prayer petition ends with)*

**WA:** God of Hope

**All:** *You hear our prayer.*

## Passing of the Peace

**P** Jesus Christ become Hope with you.

**All** And also with you.

## Offertory

*Tune: Away in a Manger*

♪ ♪ Praise God for these gifts that we offer today ♪ ♪  
 and bless them for good in the world, this we pray.  
 Praise Jesus, the Christ-Child, our Hope and our Stay,  
 the Spirit, our Keeper, our Guide on the Way.

## Offertory Prayer

**P** Let us pray,  
 God of our waiting and watching,

**All** we offer the gifts of our hearts and our lives  
 to the service of all your people.

Prepare the way before us as we meet you in this simple meal,  
 through Christ Jesus, our pathway and our peace. Amen.

# The Great Thanksgiving and Words of Institution

*Please stand in body or spirit.*

*P* The God of Hope be with you

**All And also with you.**

*P* Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

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

**All It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

*P* It is right, and a good and joyful thing,  
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,  
Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.  
Especially on this road to Bethlehem, we remember  
that like the first breath of all things born,  
you formed each of us in your image  
and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we forget this connection of life with you,  
when we think we travel alone and the journey is too hard,  
you never leave us.

You guide us and protect us every step of the way  
as you did with our spiritual ancestors,  
making the promise of presence more real  
than we could have imagined.

And so, with your people on earth  
and all the company of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



1 Joy - ful, joy - ful we a - dore thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love!



Hearts un - fold like flow'rs be - fore thee, prais - ing thee, their sun a - bove.



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, drive the gloom of doubt a - way.



Giv - er of im - mor - tal glad - ness, fill us with the light of day.

WA Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ...  
...in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

**♪ ♪ All Your works with joy surround You, ♪ ♪  
Earth and heav'n reflect Your rays,  
Stars and angels sing around You, center of unbroken praise;  
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,  
Chanting bird and flowing fountain Praising You eternally!**

*P* On the night in which he gave himself up for us,  
he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread,  
gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.”

*P* When the supper was over, he took the cup,  
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for *all people* for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,  
we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice,  
in union with Christ’s offering for us,  
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**All Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

**♪ ♪ Always giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest, ♪ ♪  
Well-spring of the joy of living, Ocean-depth of happy rest!  
Loving Father, Christ our brother, let Your light upon us shine;  
Teach us how to love each other, Lift us to the joy divine.**

*WA* Pour out your Holy Spirit ...  
...redeemed by his love.

*P* By your Spirit make us one with Christ,  
one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world,  
until Christ comes in final victory  
and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ  
with the Holy Spirit in your holy church,  
all honor and glory is yours, almighty God,  
now and forever.

**All Amen.**

**♪ ♪ Mortals, join the mighty chorus, which the morning stars began; ♪ ♪  
God's own love is reigning o’er us, Joining people hand in hand.  
Ever singing, move we onward, Trav’lers in the midst of strife;  
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.**

## The Lord's Prayer

*P* God in Community, Holy and One,  
we lift our prayers to you, saying ...

*All* **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 Invitation

*P* Christ has set the table with more than enough for all.  
Come!

**Note: the communion cups on the periphery of the tray contain red wine while the cups in the center contain white grape juice.**

***Gluten Free wafers available –ask the communion attendant***

shed for you and  
for all people  
for the forgiveness of sin



**All are Welcome!**

# Communion Songs

## Shine On Us

Words and Music by  
Michael W. Smith and Deborah D. Smith



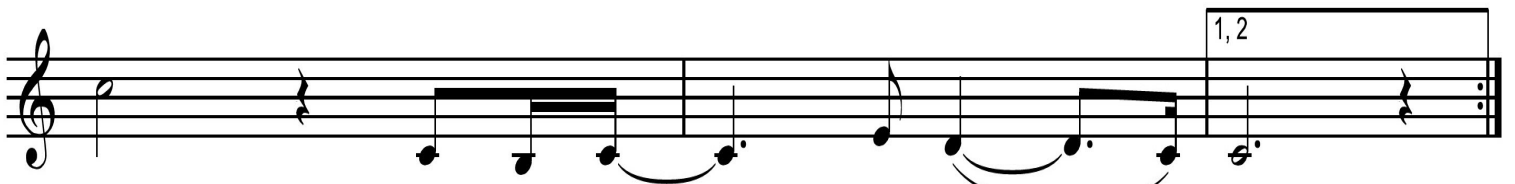
1 Lord, let Your light, light\_\_ of Your face\_\_ shine\_\_ on\_\_ us.  
2 Lord, let Your grace, grace\_\_ from Your hand\_\_ fall\_\_ on\_\_ us.  
3 Lord, let Your love, love\_\_ with no end\_\_ come\_\_ o - ver us.



Lord, let Your light, light\_\_ of Your face\_\_ shine\_\_ on\_\_ us That  
Lord, let Your grace, grace\_\_ from Your hand\_\_ fall\_\_ on\_\_ us That  
Lord, let Your love, love\_\_ with no end\_\_ come\_\_ o - ver us That



we may be saved, that we may have life; To find our way\_\_ in the dark - est



night, Let Your light\_\_ shine on\_\_ us.  
night, Let Your grace\_\_ fall on\_\_ us.  
night, Let Your love\_\_ come o - ver



us, let Your light\_\_ shine on\_\_ us.

# Come And Behold Him

Words and Music by  
John Chisum and George T. Searcy

1 Come and be - hold Him, come, see His glo - ry,  
2 Come and be - hold Him, come, see His mer - cy,

come with an hon - est heart to see all He is;  
come find His ten - der - ness\_ reach - ing to you;

We will dis - cov - er all of His beau - ty, His light will  
Just as a mir - ror shows a re - flec - tion, His Word and

burn a - way all the dark - ness we've known. \_\_\_\_\_  
Spir - it come, now re - flect - ing His love. \_\_\_\_\_ Come and be -

hold \_\_\_\_\_ Him, come and be - hold \_\_\_\_\_ Him, come with an

hon - est heart to see all He is; Come and be -

hold \_\_\_\_\_ Him, wait now be - fore \_\_\_\_\_ Him, come with an

hon - est heart to see all He is. \_\_\_\_\_

## He Is Lord

He is Lord, he is Lord, he is ris - en from the dead and he is Lord;

ev-'ry knee shall bow, ev-'ry tongue con - fess that Je - sus Christ is Lord.

## Post Communion Blessing and Prayer

*Please stand in body or spirit.*

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

**All Amen**

*P* Holy God,

**All we have received from your table more than we could ever ask.  
As you have nourished us in this meal,  
now strengthen us to love the world with your own life.  
In your name we pray. Amen**

*You may be Seated*

## Stewardship of Life & Ministry Announcements

### Benediction

*Please stand in body or spirit.*

*P* And now as you go forth from this place,  
know that all the places you encounter in the world  
will contain signs and markers of God's work among us.

So keep your senses alert, your perception wide,  
and your heart open to new discoveries along the way.

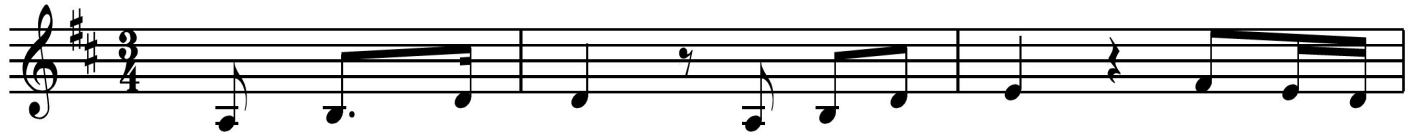
**All Amen.**



# Sending Song

## In Christ Alone

Words and Music by  
Keith Getty and Stuart Townend



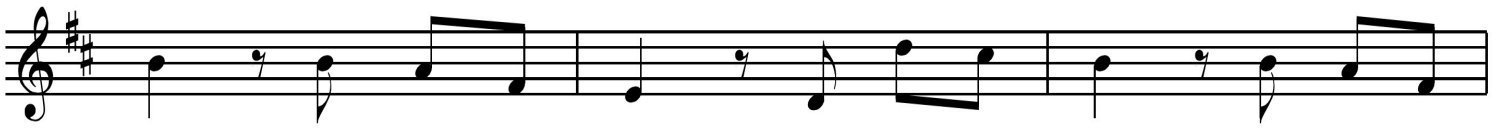
1 In Christ a - lone my hope is found, He is my  
2 In Christ a - lone, who took on flesh, ful - ness of



light, my strength, my song; This Cor - ner - stone, this sol - id  
God in help - less babe! This gift of love and right - eous -



Ground, firm through the fierc - est drought and storm. What heights of  
ness, scorned by the ones He came to save. Till on that



love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when striv - ings  
cross as Je - sus died, the wrath of God was sat - is -



cease. My Com - fort - er, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I  
fied. For ev - 'ry sin on Him was laid; Here in the death of Christ I



stand.  
live.

# Dismissal

**WA** Go out with Hope. Prepare the way for Emmanuel!

**All** Thanks be to God!

*Each week our congregation is **led by children** to collect pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. Through this offering, we are reminded that together, the smallest of offerings can change lives and make “hope” tangible.*

*In recent years, our Noisy Offering has fed 10 children for an entire year through Food for the Poor.*

*The Noisy Offering has helped families by providing:  
4 goats; 2 hens; 12 chicks; 2 piglets; mosquito netting;  
honeybees and a vegetable garden.*

*You’ve provided a Farmer’s Field School, 3 fruit tree seedlings, seeds, and gardening tools.*

*We can’t wait to see how the children will choose to share next!*

Reading for next Sunday,  
December 8<sup>th</sup>  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

**Reading:**

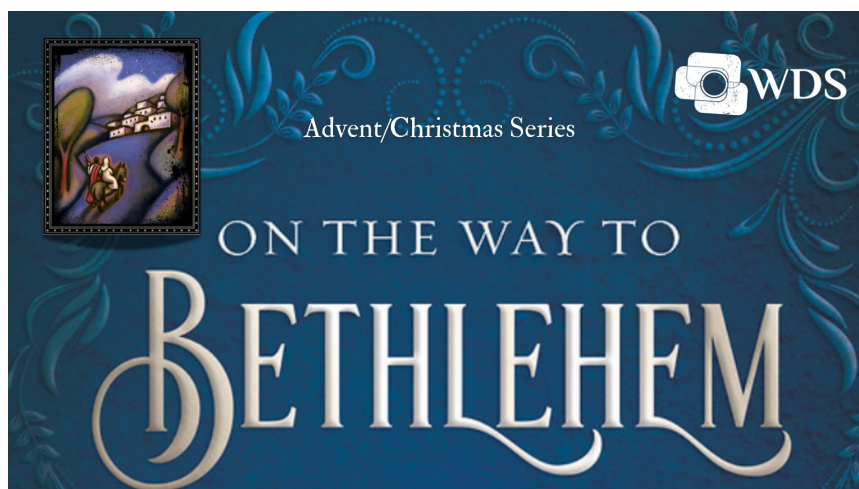
Romans 12: 9-18

**Gospel:**

Luke 1: 5-17

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