

AD TE LEVAVI  
("UNTO YOU, O LORD")  
THE FIRST SUNDAY IN  
ADVENT  
FEAST OF ST.  
ANDREW, APOSTLE  
(NOVEMBER 30)

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**WELCOME IN THE NAME OF OUR BLESSED LORD!** We are pleased you are here, gathered around the Gospel in Preaching and the Sacraments! **GUESTS** – If we can assist you in any way with questions about our confession of faith, spiritual struggles, understanding our liturgical service, or any other need, please let us know. It is our prayer that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will strengthen and comfort you.

**CONFESSIONAL STATEMENT:** Concordia Lutheran Church confesses all the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired word of God without any errors. We also hold, without any reservation, to the teachings of the Evangelical-Lutheran Confessions contained in the 1580 Book of Concord. We confess these teachings to be the correct interpretation of Scripture and a true explanation of the one, holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic faith.

† In the Name of Jesus †

Prayer before Worship: Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank You, we bless and praise You forever, that You sent Your Son to rule over us poor sinners, who for our transgressions justly deserved to remain in the bondage of sin and Satan, and that in Him You gave us a meek and

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righteous King, Who by His death became our Savior from sin and eternal death. We beseech You so to enlighten, govern and direct us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may ever remain faithful to this righteous King and Savior, and not, after the manner of the world, be offended by His humble form and despised Word, but, firmly believing in Him, obtain eternal salvation; through the same, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Divine Service: Rite Two  
Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary: p. 60

The Office of Preparation  
(Confession & Holy Absolution)

Hymn of Invocation: *90, Savior of the Nations, Come*

**C: Savior of the nations, come, Virgin's Son, make here Thy home!  
Marvel now, O heaven and earth, That the Lord chose such a birth.**

**Not by human flesh and blood, By the Spirit of our God,  
Was the Word of God made flesh – Woman's Offspring, pure and fresh.**

**Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child Of the Virgin undefiled!  
Though by all the world disowned, Still to be in heaven enthroned.**

**From the Father forth He came And returneth to the same,  
Captive leading death and hell – High the song of triumph swell!**

**Thou, the Father's only Son, Hast o'er sin the victory won.  
Boundless shall Thy kingdom be; When shall we its glories see?**

**Brightly doth Thy manger shine, Glorious is its light divine.  
Let not sin o'ercloud this light; Ever be our faith thus bright.**

**Praise to God the Father sing, Praise to God the Son, our King,  
Praise to God the Spirit be Ever and eternally.**

*At the Invocation all **may** make the sign of the †  
in remembrance of their Baptism.*

The Invocation: p. 60-61

**P:** In the Name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

The Confession of Sin (form II): pp. 60-62

**P:** Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God, our Father, beseech Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

**P:** Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**C: Who made heaven and earth.**

**P:** I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord;

**C: And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

**P:** Almighty God, our Maker and 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. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**C: O most merciful God, You have 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, to the end that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

**P:** Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given His only-begotten Son to die for us, and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To all who believe on His name He gives power to become the children of God, and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.

**C: Grant this unto us, O Lord. Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Word

Introit

Tone 4



Antiphon (**Pastor**) Unto You, O Lord, I `lift up my soul:/ O my God, `I trust in You;  
Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies tri`umph over me:/ Let no one who waits on `You  
be ashamed.

Psalm (**All**) Show me `Your ways, O Lord:/ Teach `me Your *paths*.  
**For You are the God of `my salvation:/ On You I `wait all the day.**  
**Let integrity and upright`ness preserve me:/ For I `wait for *You*.**  
**Redeem `Israel, O God:/ Out of `all their troubles.**

Gloria Patri (**All**) Glory be to the Father `and to the Son:/ and to `the Holy Ghost.  
As it was in the be`ginning, is now:/ and ever shall be, forever`more. Amen.

Antiphon (**All**) Unto You, O Lord, I `lift up my soul:/ O my God, `I trust in You;  
Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies tri`umph over me:/ Let no one who waits on  
`You be ashamed.

The Kyrie Eleison (form II): p. 63-64

**C: Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison.**  
**Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison.**  
**Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison.**

*The Gloria in Excelsis is silent until Christmas Day.*

The Salutation: p. 66

**P:** The Lord be with you.

**C:** **And with your spirit.**

Collect for the Day: p. 66

**P:** Stir up, we beseech You, Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may  
be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for  
You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever.

**C:** **Amen.**

Collect for the Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle (Nov. 30)

**P:** Almighty God, by whose grace Your Apostle Saint Andrew obeyed the call of Your Son Jesus Christ: grant also to us grace to follow Him in heart and life; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

Collect for the Beginning of the New Church Year

**P:** Eternal Lord God, our Father, by Your grace You have this day permitted us to enter a new church year: we implore You to pour upon Your church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes down from above, that Your Word, as becomes it, may not be bound, but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve You and in the confession of Your name abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

Old Testament: *Jeremiah 23:5-8; 31:31-34*

**P:** *In those days Jeremiah prophesied:* "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that they shall no longer say, 'As the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.' And they shall dwell in their own land." ... "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

**P:** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

Gradual (All)

Tone 4



**Let no one who waits on You be `ashamed, O Lord:/ Show me Your ways, O Lord; `teach me Your paths.**

Epistle: *Romans 13:8-14*

**P:** *Brethren:* Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

**P:** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

Alleluia Verse

**P:** Alleluia! Alleluia! Show us Your mercy, Lord: and grant us Your salvation. Alleluia!

**C: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Holy Gospel: *St. Matthew 21:1-9*

**P:** The Holy Gospel according to † St. Matthew, the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter:

**C: Glory be to You, O Lord.**

**P:** *At that time* when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethpage at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was

spoken by the prophet, saying: “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!”

**P:** This is the † Holy Gospel.

**C:** Praise be to You, O Christ.

Apostles' Creed: pp. 68-69

**C:** 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 heavenly

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

From there He shall 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.

Chief Hymn: 94, *O How Shall I Receive Thee, sts. 1-5*

**C:** O how shall I receive Thee, How welcome Thee aright!

All nations long to greet Thee, My hope, my heart's delight!

O Jesus, Jesus, set Thee Thy lamp within my breast,

**And by its guidance let me Know what doth please Thee best.**

**Thy Zion strews before Thee Green boughs and fairest palms,  
And I, too, will adore Thee With sweetest songs and psalms.  
My heart shall bloom forever For Thee with praises new,  
And from Thy name shall never Withhold the honor due.**

**What hast Thou left ungranted To give me glad relief?  
When soul and body panted In utmost depth of grief,  
In deepest degradation, Devoid of joy and peace,  
Then, Thou, my soul's Salvation, Didst come to bring release.**

**I lay in fetters groaning, Thou com'st to set me free;  
I stood, my shame bemoaning, Thou com'st to honor me;  
A glory Thou dost give me, A treasure safe on high,  
That will not fail or leave me As earthly riches fly.**

**Naught, naught, dear Lord, could move Thee To live Thy rightful place  
Save love, for which I love Thee; A love that could embrace  
A world where sorrow dwelleth, Which sin and suff'ring fill,  
More than the tongue e'er telleth; Yet Thou couldst love it still!**

Sermon

Pulpit Hymn (throughout Advent): *596, Praise to Thee and Adoration*

**C: Praise to Thee and adoration, Blessed Jesus, Son of God,  
Who, to serve Thine own creation, Didst partake of flesh and blood.  
Teach me that I never may From Thy fold or pastures stray,  
But with zeal and joy exceeding Follow where Thy steps are leading.**

**Let me never, Lord, forsake Thee, E'en though bitter pain and strife  
On my way shall overtake me; But may I through all my life  
Walk in fervent love to Thee, In all woes for comfort flee  
To Thy birth, Thy death, and Passion, Till I see Thy full salvation.**

The Intercessions: *each petition concludes:* Lord, in Your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

## Lord's Prayer

Chief Hymn: 94, *O How Shall I Receive Thee*, sts. 6-10

**C: Rejoice, then, ye sad-hearted, Who sit in deepest gloom,  
Who mourn o'er joys departed, And tremble at your doom;  
Despair not, He is near you, Yea, standing at the door,  
Who best can help and cheer you, And bid you weep no more.**

**No care nor effort either Is needed day or night,  
How ye may draw Him hither In your own strength and might.  
He comes, He comes with gladness, Moved by His love alone,  
To calm your fear and sadness, To Him they well are known.**

**Sin's debt, that fearful burden, Let not your souls distress;  
Your guilt the Lord will pardeon And cover with His grace.  
He comes, He comes procuring The peace of sin forgiv'n,  
For all God's sons securing Their heritage in heav'n.**

**Why should the wicked move you? Heed not their craft and spite!  
Your Savior who doth love you Will scatter all their might.  
He comes, a King most glorious, And all His earthly foes  
In vain His course victorious Endeavor to oppose.**

**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 Thy beams so cheering, And guide us safely home!**

The Collect (III): p. 86-87

**P:** Grant, we beseech You, Almighty God, unto Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom which comes down from above, that Your Word, as becomes it, may not be bound, but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve You and in the confession of Your name abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

The Benediction: p. 84

**P:** The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and † give you peace.

**C:** Amen. Amen. Amen.

Dismissal Hymn: *91, Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

**C:** **Lift up your heads, yet mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits;  
The King of kings is drawing near, The Savior of the world is here.  
Life and salvation He doth bring; Wherefore rejoice and gladly sing:  
We praise Thee, Father now, Creator wise art Thou!**

**A Helper just He comes to thee, His chariot is humility,  
His kingly crown is holiness, His scepter pity in distress.  
The end of all our woe He brings; Wherefore the earth is glad and sings:  
We praise Thee, Savior, now, Mighty indeed art Thou!**

**O blest the land, the city blest, Where Christ the Ruler is confessed!  
O happy hearts and happy homes To whom this King in triumph comes!  
The cloudless Sun of joy He is, Who bringeth pure delight and bliss.  
We praise thee, Spirit, now, Our Comforter art Thou!**

**Fling wide the portals of your heart; Prepare a temple set apart  
From earthly use for heav'ns employ, Adorned with prayer and love and joy.  
For lo, your Savior and your King Salvation, life, and peace doth bring.  
To Thee, O God, be praise For word and deed and grace!**

**Redeemer, come, and open wide My heart to Thee; here, Lord abide!  
Let me Thy gracious presence feel, Thy peace and love to all reveal;  
Thy Holy Spirit guide us on Until our glorious goal is won.  
Eternal praise and fame We offer to Thy name.**

# Our Life Together



**Advent Ceremonies:** Advent is a season of preparation for the Feast of Christmas similar to Lent, which is preparatory for Easter. The church has some unique ceremonies which provide visual and audio aids to help us keep the spirit of the season alive in our worship. First, the paraments are purple, the ancient color of royalty. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the lowly King, who was conceived of a virgin girl and born in poverty; who rides forth into Jerusalem to win His kingdom by dying for His people. So

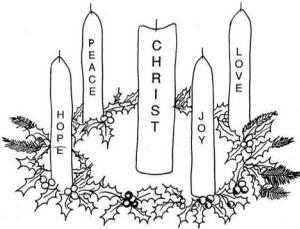
we prepare for His coming by bending our hearts in humble repentance over our sins. Purple, then, is also the church's color for repentance. For the best way for Christians to prepare for the coming of the Christ-Child is by heeding St. John the Baptist's Advent cry in the wilderness: Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand. Furthermore, the absence of flowers from the altar during Advent, and the omission of the Gloria in Excelsis reflect the reserved joy of the season. Advent is different than Lent, though, in that the Alleluias are not silenced. Both the flowers and all the glorious songs of the liturgy will be restored on Christmas Eve as the joy of the church bursts in celebration at the arrival of the newborn Savior and King.

**Advent Vespers** will be held at Concordia each of the next three Wednesdays at 6:00pm. The theme of this year's Advent Vespers sermon series is *The Hymns of Advent*. This week we will focus on the 6<sup>th</sup> century Latin hymn *Hark, a Thrilling Voice Is Sounding!* Everyone is invited to take a break midweek and come find rest with the People of God in joint prayer and meditation of God's Word!

**Bible Studies:** Bible studies resume at Bethany on Thursday. At the Thursday study we will begin a study of Judges. Next Sunday our survey of false ideologies and cultural issues in the light of St. Peter's Epistles continues. We will cover the theme: *Racism vs. Original Sin*. The purpose of this series is to learn how to heed Peter's admonition to God's people in 1 Peter 3:15: *Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

**Hope Clinic Giving Tree:** A few tags and a list of Giving Tree Gift Ideas for the Hope Clinic Giving Tree are available on the table in the Narthex. There is a \$25 limit and gifts will need to be turned in at the church by December 13.

**Food Collection for the Needy:** High inflation is creating more need in our area. Please donate what you are able! Non-perishable food items for local food banks may be deposited in the Narthex and will be hauled to the Fish Food Bank after the holidays.



**The Advent Wreath** originated several hundred years ago among German Lutherans and is the most popular Advent decoration. The evergreens symbolize the everlasting life found through faith in Christ. Bending the branches to form a circle further symbolizes life without end. The candles signify God's Son as the light of the world, and the four candles of the Advent wreath stand for the four weeks of Advent. The Advent wreath reminds us of the 4000 years of the Old

Testament, when humanity was sitting in darkness and the shadow of death (Lk 2:79); when the prophets, illumined by God, announced the coming of the Redeemer. One candle is lit each week symbolizing one, 1000-year period of the Old Testament, until all four candles are lit on the Fourth Sunday in Advent. This teaches us about the ever-increasing and ever-approaching Light of the World, Jesus Christ, Whom the Old Testament saints waited for; the One Who illumines the darkness of our hearts and minds. The candles in the wreath may be white. More commonly, though, there are three purple and one rose color to match the colors of the altar & pulpit paraments.

### **Feasts, Commemorations, and Events Easter Week**

**Monday:** Pastor at Concordia

**Tuesday:** *Comm. of OT Patriarch Noah*; Pastor at monthly study in St. Helens, OR.

**Wednesday:** FEAST OF ST. ANDREW, APOSTLE; Pastor at Concordia  
Advent Vespers at Concordia, 6:00pm.

**Thursday:** Pastor at Bethany; Bible Study at Bethany, 10:00am; Advent Vespers at Bethany, 5:30pm

**Friday:** Pastor at Bethany

**Saturday:** Pastor's Day Off

**Next Sunday:** *The Second Sunday in Advent*

Concordia Holy Communion, 9:00am

Bethany Holy Communion, 11:00am

Bethany First Sunday Fellowship, 12:15pm

Bible Study for the Parish at Bethany, 1:00pm

## Explaining the Divine Service Communing with God: Scripture Lessons – Part 2

### Preaching All of God's Word, Not Just Our Favorite Parts

In Acts 20:27 Luke records St. Paul's words to the Ephesian church: *For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.* In other words, Paul preached every article or doctrine of the Christian faith, just as our Lord had commanded before His ascension into heaven: *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you* (Matthew 28:20).

Here we see the value of an appointed lectionary – a cycle of lessons – for the Divine Service. The point of the public reading and preaching of Holy Scripture is not to read and preach on as much of the Bible as possible. Rather, the point is to cover the entire body of saving doctrine that God has set forth in the Holy Scripture – for example (in no particular order): sin and grace, faith in Christ, the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, justification, prayer, holy living, civil obedience, chastity, predestination, etc. Throughout the course of one church year all of these doctrines and more (all in fact) are touched upon through the reading and preaching of carefully chosen Biblical texts.

This is the advantage of an *appointed* lectionary, as opposed to the preacher just picking whatever book or section of the Bible he wants. An appointed lectionary ensures that the pastor will preach *the whole counsel of God* (everything God wants His people to know and believe) and not just whatever he might be especially interested in. For instance, *stewardship* is part of the *all things* that Jesus commanded be taught in the church. Most pastors, including me, don't relish the opportunity to preach on the doctrine of Christian stewardship. Nevertheless, stewardship is part of the whole counsel of God and so it must be preached. Well, lo and behold, the appointed Gospel lesson for the ninth Sunday after Trinity is Luke 16:1-13 – *the Parable of the Wise Steward*. Every year on Trinity 9 God's people will be instructed on what He wants them to know about giving a portion of their time, talents, and material goods back to the Lord from Whom all good things come.

Furthermore, the advantage of our one-year lectionary over a two or three-year lectionary is that it facilitates learning. The same texts are being heard on the same days every year, and not just once every three years. Repetition is the mother of all learning.

### Old Testament Lesson: Prophecy of Christ

Following the *Collect for the Day* the first lesson that is read is from the Old Testament. As I explained last time, these lessons are not technically part of the

lectionary, but are much later additions. So, I often feel free to leave them out when things need to be shortened up a bit (often at evening Services).

The Old Testament Scriptures always look forward to Christ and are fulfilled in Him (Deuteronomy 18:14-22; 6:9; Psalm 1; Psalm 33:6; Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 22:40, and Luke 24:25-27). That is how the Old Testament lesson functions in the Divine Service. It points ahead to the Gospel lesson.

### **Epistle Lesson: Apostolic Preaching**

The next lesson to be heard is from one of the inspired letters of the Apostles, called *Epistles*. The word *Epistle* is derived from a Greek word that means “letter” or “message.” Jesus chose the apostles to be taught by Him, to be eyewitnesses of His death and resurrection, and to be sent out by Him to speak His Word in the world. Their Epistles are the inspired reflections upon the work and preaching of Jesus recorded in the gospels. Thus, the Epistles instruct the church on the meaning of what Jesus said and did.

We should note here that, historically, during the Divine Service all Scripture lessons are read from the altar. The Old Testament and Epistle are read from the “liturgical south side” of the altar (the pastor’s left side). Then, the pastor moves to the “liturgical north side” (right side) for the Gospel. This will be discussed more in the next insert. For now, let me just say that if there is a lectern, it is best reserved for lessons read at Matins and Vespers. The altar is the focal point of the Divine Service as the place of our Lord’s *real presence*. It is the symbol of Christ’s sacrifice, and it is the place upon which His Body and Blood rest.

### **Gradual & Hallelujah: The People’s Response**

From apostolic times, the pattern of this part of the Divine Service follows the pattern of the Jewish synagogue, which was a *Service of the Word*. In between each lesson read in the synagogue one or more of the Psalms was chanted for two reasons: 1) as commentary on what had just been heard, and 2) as a transition into the next lesson. Thus, after the Old Testament the *Gradual* is sung. The word *gradual* comes from the Latin word *gradus* which means “step” (in larger churches of earlier times it was chanted on the first of three *steps* leading up the altar).

Following the Epistle the Alleluia Verse is sung. Both Gradual and Alleluia consist of brief Psalm verses. In the early church entire Psalms would have been chanted. Like the Introits, however, the Graduals and Alleluias were shortened to one or two verses after just a few centuries (Luther recommended restoring the earlier practice, at least for the Introits).

Before the inclusion of Old Testament lessons, both the Gradual and Alleluia Verse were chanted in between the Epistle and Gospel. This practice may still be observed, especially if a responsive hymn is sung after the Old Testament. Thus, the Gradual provides sung commentary on the Epistle, and the Alleluia joyfully anticipates the coming of Jesus' own voice in the Gospel lesson.

Like the Introit, the Gradual and Alleluia Verse are congregational songs. They are not meant to simply be read by the pastor anymore than a hymn is meant to be read by the pastor. In our practice the congregation chants the Gradual after the Old Testament lesson. The pastor or a cantor chants the Alleluia Verse and the congregation responds with the Triple Alleluia.

During the somber seasons of Pre-Lent and Lent the joyous Alleluia falls silent and is replaced with the *Tract*. The word *Tract* comes from the Latin word *tractim*, meaning "without ceasing". This describes the way the Tract is sung – in a long and drawn out way. In other words the Tracts are longer than the typical short Alleluia verses.



Today's CHIEF HYMN *O How Shall I Receive Thee* (ELH 94) by Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676) is widely considered the finest Advent hymn ever written. It was written during the Thirty Years' War and is based on today's gospel lesson. Gerhardt witnessed both plagues and the devastation of war. He outlived his wife and four of his five children and was also removed from his parish for holding to Christian doctrine in the face of controversy. All of this gave Gerhardt the opportunity to confess in his writings and hymns the reality of Christian joy in the midst of suffering: Christ's death and resurrection as hope in a dying world. Today's HYMN OF INVOCATION *Savior of the Nations, Come* (TLH 95) is another significant Advent hymn. Its roots are in the Latin *Veni, Redemptor Gentium* by St. Ambrose (340-397), bishop of Milan. The history of Western Christian hymns begins with Ambrose. He wrote catholic hymnody in opposition to the Arian heresy (the belief that the Son was not equal to and eternal with the Father). Ambrose's simple, direct, and beautiful hymns set forth the true faith with dignity and evangelical fervor. Martin Luther translated the hymn into German and prepared it for Advent, 1523. Luther also edited the original plainsong chant for congregational singing.

