



RORATE COELI
("RAIN DOWN")
THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT
FEAST OF ST. THOMAS,
APOSTLE (DEC. 21)

Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church
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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: Bethany 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.

PASTORAL CARE AND GUESTS AT THE LORD'S SUPPER: Scripture and our Confessions teach that the Lord's Supper "is the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine" (Small Catechism). We are concerned about the spiritual welfare of all who commune at the Lord's Table. *If you are a guest and desire to commune, please speak to the pastor before the service.* Our altar is open to those who confess oneness with us in doctrine, are members of sister churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and are not under church discipline in another congregation. In Christ, Pastor Lawson

DECEMBER 18, 2022 † 11:00 A. M.

† In the Name of Jesus †

Prayer before Worship: Lord God, heavenly Father, it is good and right that we should give thanks to You, that You have given us a glorious baptism like that of John the Baptist, and that therein You have promised us the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and everlasting life through Your Son, Jesus Christ: We beseech You, by Your grace and mercy preserve us in such faith, that we never doubt Your promise, but be comforted by our baptism in all temptations; and grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may renounce sin, and ever continue in the righteousness bestowed on us in baptism, until, by Your grace, we obtain our eternal salvation; through the same, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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

The Office of Preparation
(Confession & Holy Absolution)

Hymn of Invocation: 106, *On Jordan's Bank the Herald's Cry*

**C: On Jordan's bank the herald's cry Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake and hearken, for he brings Glad tidings of the King of kings.**

**Then cleansed by ev'ry Christian breast, and furnished for so great a Guest;
Yea, let us each our hearts prepare For Christ to come and enter there.**

**For Thou art our Salvation, Lord, Our Refuge and our great Reward;
Without Thy grace we waste away, Like flow'rs that wither and decay.**

**To heal the sick stretch out Thine hand And bid the fallen sinner stand;
Once more upon Thy people shine And fill the world with love divine.**

**All praise, eternal Son, to Thee, Whose advent set Thy people free:
Whom with the Father we adore And Holy Ghost, forevermore.**

*At the Invocation and Absolution 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 I): 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: Let us bow before the Lord and confess our sins.

C: O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess to You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them, and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

P: I ask each of you, in the presence of God who searches the heart: Do you confess that you have sinned, and do you repent of your sins?

C: I do.

P: Do you believe that Jesus Christ has redeemed you from all your sins, and do you desire forgiveness in His name?

C: I do.

P: Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to all of you, and in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

May He comfort your heart by His holy Absolution,
and strengthen you by His Sacraments,
that your joy may be full.

Peace be with you!

C: Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

Introit

Tone 4



Antiphon (**Pastor**) Rain down, you heav`ens, from above:/ And let the skies pour down
`the Righteous One;

Let the earth `open her womb:/ And bring `forth Salvation.

Psalms (**All**) **The heavens declare the `glory of God:/ And the firmament shows `His handiwork.**

Their voice is gone out in`to all the earth:/ And their words to the `end of the world.

In the heavens He has set a taberna`cle for the sun:/ Which is like a Bridegroom coming out `of His chamber.

His going forth is from the end `of the heaven:/ And his circuit unto `the end of it.

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**) Rain down, you heav`ens, from above:/ And let the skies pour down
`the Righteous One;

Let the earth `open her womb:/ And bring `forth Salvation.

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

C: Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison. Christe eleison. Christe 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: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, and help us with Your great might, that whatever is hindered by our sins may be speedily accomplished by Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Collect for the Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle (December 21)

P: Almighty and ever-living God, through the Word of Your Son You mightily strengthened the faith of Your Apostle Saint Thomas: by the same Word keep us ever steadfast in the faith unto our end; through the same Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Old Testament: *Isaiah 40:1-11*

P: *In those days Isaiah prophesied:* “Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says Your God. “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” The voice said, “Cry out!” And he said, “What shall I cry?” “All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.” O Zion, You who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountains; O Jerusalem, You who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” Behold, the Lord

God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Gradual (All)

Tone 4



**The Lord is near to all who `call upon Him:/ To all who call up`on Him in truth.
My mouth shall speak the `praise of the Lord:/ And all flesh shall bless `His holy
name.**

Hymn: 102, *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*

**C: 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.**

**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.**

**Hark, the Herald's voice is crying In the desert far and near,
Bidding all men to repentance Since the Kingdom now is here.
Oh, 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.**

**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.**

Epistle: *Philippians 4:4-7*

P: *Brethren:* Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Alleluia Verse

P: Alleluia! Alleluia! You are my help and my Deliverer: Do not delay, O my God. Alleluia!

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

Holy Gospel: *St. John 1:19-30*

P: The Holy Gospel according to † St. John, the 1st chapter:

C: Glory be to You, O Lord.

P: Now *at that time* this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” He said: “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands one among you Whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where

John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’”

P: This is the † Holy Gospel.

C: Praise be to You, O Christ.

*At the words “And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary
And was made man” all **may** bow out of reverence for Christ’s Incarnation.*

Nicene Creed: p. 69

C: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,

Maker of heaven and earth

and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,

the only-begotten Son of God,

Begotten of His Father before all worlds,

God of God, Light of Light,

Very God of Very God,

Begotten, not made,

Being of one substance with the Father,

By Whom all things were made;

Who for us men and for our salvation

came down from heaven

and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary

and was made man;

and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered and was buried;

and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures

and ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father;

And He shall come again with glory

to judge both the living and the dead;

Whose kingdom shall have no end.

**And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped
and glorified,
Who spoke by the Prophets.
And I believe one holy Christian and Apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,
And I look for the Resurrection of the dead
and the Life † of the world to come. Amen.**

Chief Hymn: *110, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

**C: O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, Who ord'rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the law In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Rod of Jesse's stem; From ev'ry foe deliver them
That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save, And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Key of David, come, And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high, And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Desire of nations, bind All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease, And be Thyself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

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.**

Hymn of Preparation: *94, O How Shall I Receive Thee, sts. 1, 4-8*

**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.**

**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!**

**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.**

The Liturgy of the Holy Communion

The Preface: p. 72

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And with your spirit.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them up unto the Lord.

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

C: It is good and right so to do.

Proper Preface & Sanctus

It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose way John the Baptist prepared, proclaiming Him the Messiah, the very Lamb of God, and calling sinners to repentance that they might escape from the wrath to be revealed when He comes again in glory. Therefore with angels and archangels

and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

**C: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heav'n and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He
who come in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.**

The Lord's Prayer: pp. 77-78

P: Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed by 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;

**C: For Thine is the kingdom and the pow'r and the glory forever and ever.
Amen.**

The Words of Institution: pp. 78-79

*When the Pastor turns and elevates the Host and Cup, the congregation **may** bow as an act of reverent worship toward the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.*

The Pax Domini (The Peace of the Lord): p. 79

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

The Agnus Dei: pp. 79-80

C: O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world,

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

The Distribution of the Holy Communion
*Prayers for “Before Holy Communion” and
for “After Holy Communion” are found on page 40 in ELH.*

The Nunc Dimittis: pp. 81-82

**C: Lord, now You let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word.
For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the
face of all people, a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of
Your people Israel.
Glory be the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.**

The Collect of Thanksgiving

P: O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good.
C: **And His mercy endures forever.**

P: O God the Father, the fountain and source of all goodness, who in lovingkindness sent Your only-begotten Son into the flesh, we thank You that for His sake You have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament, and we ask You not to forsake Your children but always to rule our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that we may be enabled constantly to serve You; 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.

Rite for the Blessing of New Paraments

P: Beloved in the Lord: “The Lord reigns; He is clothed with majesty; The Lord is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength.” “Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary” (Psalm 93:1 & 96:6). It is therefore fitting

that we implore the Lord's blessing on these new paraments with which we will, next week, clothe the altar of His sanctuary from which He strengthens and preserves us in the true faith.

P: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C: who made heaven and earth.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And with your spirit.

P: Let us pray: O Lord God Almighty, You instructed Moses Your servant to make hangings and fine linens for use in Your tabernacle. We implore You to sanctify these altar & pulpit paraments for the adornment of Your Church; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.

C: Amen.

P: The Lord Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless these paraments for use in His Church.

C: Amen.

The Salutation, Benedicamus & Benediction: p. 84

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And with your spirit.

P: Let us bless the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

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: *The Lutheran Hymnal 93, O Lord, We Welcome Thee*
(Tune: 63)

**C: O Lord, we welcome Thee, Our hearts for joy are leaping.
Thou, Jesus, dearest Child, Thy precious promise keeping,
Art come from heav'n to earth To be our Brother dear;
Thou gracious Son of God, Wilt banish all our fear.**

**The mighty Son of God, His majesty concealing,
Dwells with our fallen race To give us balm and healing.
The everlasting God Descends from realms above,
Becomes a winsome Child, Reveals His Father's love.**

**Ah, sweet and gentle name! Its echoes far are sounding,
It pierces hearts of stone And tells of love abounding.
O Jesus, dearest Child, On Thee will we rely,
And, calling on Thy name, We die not when we die.**

**To Thee alone we cling, For Thee all else forsaking;
On Thee alone we build Tho' heav'n and earth be quaking.
To Thee alone we live, In Thee alone we die;
O Jesus, dearest Lord, With Thee we reign on high.**

Our Life Together

Thank You
FOR
GIVING
GENEROUSLY

O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever! The Lord has been gracious to our congregation. He has opened up the hearts of His people with the gifts of His grace and motivated them to give generously. After the tremendous deposit last week, the year-end gap between offerings and spending has been narrowed significantly. ***Thank you to everyone who has taken this matter to heart the past few weeks and contributed sacrificially.*** The

gap is much narrower than it was, but there is still a bit of a gap. Let us all continue to pray and consider how God blesses us with material wealth, and then consider the greatest blessing of the saving work of His Son for the life of the world and how the benefits of Jesus' work are distributed in the congregation through Word & Sacrament Ministry. Let us consider how we can give back to the work of the gospel in proportion to how the Lord has blessed each of us.

The Sunday Bible Study has been canceled past several Sunday due to other events and also lack of attendance. Today we will (hopefully, finally) cover the theme: *Racism vs. Original Sin*. The Thursday study is covering Judges. This week We will look at the first four Judges in chapters 3-5.

Christmas Caroling: Please meet here at church by 4:00 today if are able to go Christmas caroling. We will be caroling first at the VA and Flagstone and then heading to Columbia Basin and also an individual who is a shut-in and lives on that side of town.

Church Cleaning
Dec. 19-31 Larsons

Christmas Chorus: Those who have already agreed to sing in a small chorus for Christmas Eve & Day, please talk to Pastor about a time to have a brief rehearsal of a couple of easy pieces sometime this week.

The Cascade Singers will offer two more opportunities to see their Christmas Concert: Today at 2pm at United Church of Christ and also on Thursday at 7pm at the Christian Science Reading Room.

New Lutheran Sentinels are available on the top tere of the shelf in the church entryway. Also, please take a new *Mission News* and a new *Thoughts of Faith* newsletter from the second shelf.

**Don't forget Whose Day Christmas Is!
O Come, let us adore Him!**

Christmas Eve: *Vespers with Lessons & Carols, 5:00pm*

Christmas Day (also a Sunday)

The Divine Service, 11:00am

New Year's Day (also a Sunday)

The Divine Service, 11:00am

Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord (Friday, Jan 6)

The Divine Service, 5:30pm

Ham Potluck Dinner with King Cake served after the Service!



Jesus truly IS the Reason for the season!

Let's make sure to confess that! Make Christ and His saving gifts given in Word & Sacrament the high point of your Christmas festivities. Set a faithful example for others in your life, even invite your family and friends to come with you to worship the Christ-child in His Church!

The Christmas Schedule Advertisement is posted on the Bethany Facebook page. Please "like" it and share it to your personal page and any community pages you might be on, maybe with a personal note of invitation for people to attend one (or both!) of the Christmas Eve & Day Services. Also, the image was sent to the Bethany email list. Feel free also to send it around, again, with a personal note of invitation.



Annual Voters Meeting: Pastor and the Elders have set a tentative date of Sunday, January 22 for the annual meeting. We only have voters meetings now twice a year, so it is important that as many of the voters as possible be in attendance. This is the meeting at which the new budget is approved and officers elected. ***Please look at your calendars now and confirm your attendance! At this point the meeting date can be changed.***

Food & Warm Clothing Collection for the Needy: Seasonal donations of non-perishable food items may be deposited in the church entryway, to be donated after Epiphany. Please keep bringing warm clothing and blankets for the homeless. You may deposit donations by the back door in the social hall. Thank you so much to all those who have contributed!

Feasts, Commemorations, and Events Easter Week

Monday: *Commemoration of Adam & Eve;* Pastor at Bethany

Tuesday: *Comm. of Blessed Katharina von Bora Luther;* Pastor at Bethany

Wednesday: FEAST OF ST. THOMAS, APOSTLE; Pastor at Concordia;

Thursday: Pastor at Bethany; Bible Study at Bethany, 10:00am

Friday: Pastor at Bethany

Saturday: EVE OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

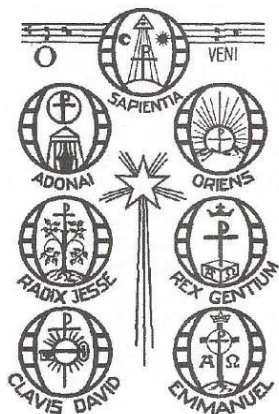
Bethany Candlelight Vespers with Lessons & Carols, 5:00pm

Concordia Candlelight Vespers with Lessons & Carols, 7:00pm

Next Sunday: FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Concordia Holy Communion, 9:00am

Bethany Holy Communion, 11:00am



Today's CHIEF HYMN is *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (ELH 110). The hymn is based on the seven great "O Antiphons." Beginning on December 17, one of these antiphons is sung before and after the Magnificat at Vespers each day leading up to Christmas Eve. They bid our Lord "Come!" using seven different prophetic Names for the promised Messiah: **O Wisdom** (*Sapientia*) Is 11:2-3; Pr 8:12; 9:1; 1 Cor 1:24; **O Lord** (*Adonai*) Is 2:5; 9:6-7; **O Root** (*Radix*) **of Jesse** Is 11:1, 10; **O Key** (*Clavis*) **of David** Is 9:6; 22:22; **O Rising Sun** (*Oriens*) Is 9:1; 59:19; **O King of Nations** (*Rex Gentium*) Is 2:4; 9:6-7; **O Emmanuel** Is 7:14. Benedictine monks of the seventh century arranged the

antiphons so that the first letter of each in reverse order spells EROCRAS (*Latin*: "Tomorrow I will come"). In the thirteenth century, an anonymous author arranged the antiphons into verse form and added the refrain. In 1966, the source of the plainsong tune *Veni Emmanuel* was discovered to be a fifteenth-century French Processional used by Franciscan nuns.

The Nativity Scene: The Crèche in its present form is credited to St. Francis of Assisi, who set up one with live people and animals at Greccio, Italy, on Christmas Eve, 1223 A.D. There the people re-enacted the Christmas story, and then had a solemn Divine Service on the spot. The Christmas Crèche of St. Francis reflected the then popular custom of the Crusaders who, returning from the Holy Land, enacted or erected representations of Biblical scenes and sites.

Customarily, the Crèche is set up gradually through Advent in anticipation of Christmas. On Advent 1, the stable only is set up. The ox and ass are added on Advent 2, followed by Mary and Joseph and an empty crib on Advent 3. The baby Jesus, angel, shepherds, and Christ-Child are added on Christmas Eve and the crèche is blessed before the Service begins. The three Wise Men are placed at a distance, so that they appear to be coming "from afar." On Epiphany, the Wise Men replace the shepherds.

