

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
December 12, 2021
3rd Sunday in Advent



ST. STEPHEN
Evangelical Lutheran Church

* indicates to please rise for this part of the worship service

Christ's presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good news—and cause for exultation—for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.

Our Mission

We respond to Christ's love by feeding those who hunger in body, mind, and spirit.

Prelude

"An Advent Voluntary in English Style"

by William D. Gudger

Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

***Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who alone does wonders, who lifts up the lowly, who fills the hungry with good things.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the tender mercy of our God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God for whom we wait,

in the presence of one another, we confess our sin before you. We fail in believing that your good news is for us. We falter in our call to tend your creation. We find our sense of self in material wealth. We fear those different from ourselves. We forget that we are your children and turn away from your love. Forgive us, Blessed One, and assure us again of your saving grace.

Amen.

God, in Christ Jesus, has looked with favor upon you! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, ☩ your sins are forgiven. You are children of the Most High, inheritors of the eternal promise, and recipients of divine mercy. God strengthens you anew to follow the way of peace.

Amen.

Gathering Music

"Joy to the World"

Hymn#267 vs. 1,3,4

- 1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

- 3 No more let sin and sorrow grow
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

- 4 He rules the world with truth and grace
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Wreath Litany 3rd Sunday of Advent

"Joy"

Candle Lighting:

Last Sunday we lit the candle of Hope, remembering the hope which comes in Christ, and we lit the candle of Peace, remembering God's dream of a peaceful world. (Light Candles). Today we light the third candle of Advent, the candle of Joy.

In Advent, we are in a time of waiting. Like the Israelites who wandered through the Wilderness, waiting to come into the Promised Land, we wait for the coming of the Joy of Ages. We wait for the day where we can join our voices with the angels to sing "Joy to the World, the Lord is come!" We wait for the day when everlasting joy will be on each of us.

We light this candle in Joy.

On this day, we remember the Spirit who breathes joy into our lives

***Advent Wreath Hymn**

"Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah"

Hymn#240, vs. 1,2,3

- 1 Light one candle to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
He shall bring salvation to Israel,
God fulfills the promise.

- 2 Light two candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
He shall feed the flock like a shepherd,
gently lead them homeward.

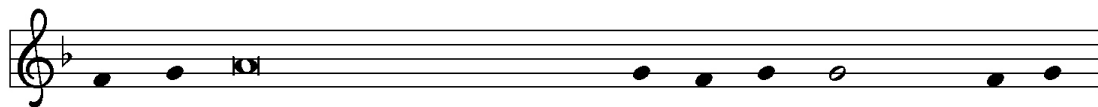
- 3 Light three candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway
for the King of glory.

Text: Wayne L. Wold, b. 1954
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Kyrie



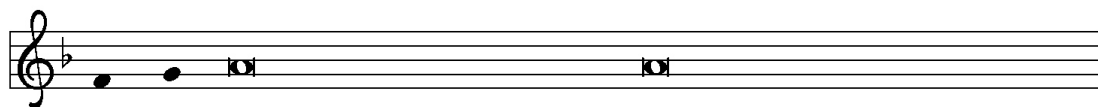
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



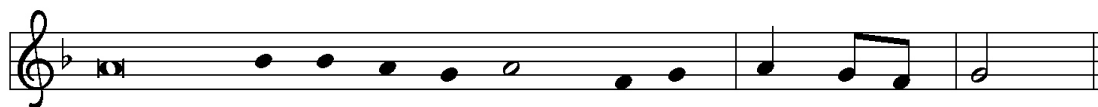
For the peace from above, and for our sal - va - tion, let us



pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



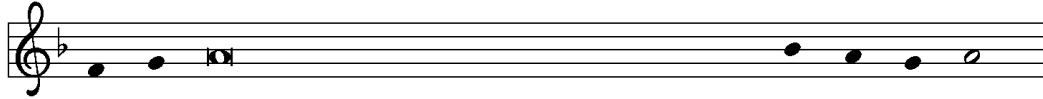
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



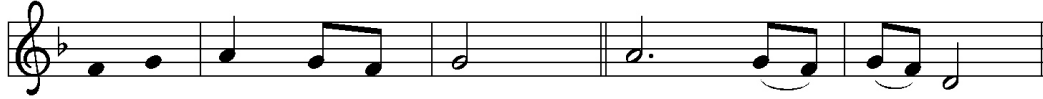
and for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men.

*Canticle of Praise



Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



1 Lord God, heav-en - ly King, al - mighty God and Fa - ther, we



wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo-ry.



Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



2 Lord Je - sus Christ, on-ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of



God, you take a-way the sin of the world: have mer-cy on us; you are



seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



3 For you a - lone are the Ho-ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,



you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly



Spir-it, in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.

***Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray.

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

The First Lesson

Zephaniah 3:14-20

The prophet Zephaniah's message is mostly one of judgment for sin. This reading, however, which comes from the conclusion of the book, prophesies joy for Judah and Jerusalem. Judgment has led to repentance, and God's salvation is at hand.

A reading from the prophet Zephaniah, the 3rd chapter.

¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
 shout, O Israel!
 Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
 O daughter Jerusalem!
¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
 he has turned away your enemies.
 The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
 you shall fear disaster no more.
¹⁶On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
 Do not fear, O Zion;
 do not let your hands grow weak.
¹⁷The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
 a warrior who gives victory;
 he will rejoice over you with gladness,
 he will renew you in his love;
 he will exult over you with loud singing
¹⁸as on a day of festival.
 I will remove disaster from you,
 so that you will not bear reproach for it.
¹⁹I will deal with all your oppressors
 at that time.
 And I will save the lame
 and gather the outcast,
 and I will change their shame into praise
 and renown in all the earth.
²⁰At that time I will bring you home,
 at the time when I gather you;
 for I will make you renowned and praised
 among all the peoples of the earth,
 when I restore your fortunes
 before your eyes, says the LORD.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks Be to God.**

Psalm

Isaiah 12:2-6

²Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not^l be afraid,
 for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might, and has become^l my salvation.
³**With joy you^l will draw water
 from the wells^l of salvation.**
⁴And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call^l on God's name;
 make known the deeds of the LORD among the nations; proclaim that this name^l is exalted.
⁵**Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done^l gloriously;
 let this be known in^l all the earth.**
⁶Shout aloud and sing for joy, O^l royal Zion,
 for great in your midst is the Holy^l One of Israel.

The Second Lesson

Philippians 4:4-7

Despite being in prison, Paul is remarkably upbeat as he writes this letter. Here, he urges his friends in Philippi to trust God with all their worries and concerns with the hope that they will experience God's joy and peace.

A reading from Paul's epistle to the Philippians, the 4th chapter.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

*Gospel Acclamation

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. *Repeat alleluia*
Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

*Gospel Reading

Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity, and vocational integrity.

The Gospel according to St. Luke, the 3rd chapter. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

⁷John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" ¹¹In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."

¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?"

¹³He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." ¹⁴Soldiers also asked

him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

¹⁸So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

Sermon

Pastor Matthew Best

Hymn of the Day

"Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn"

Hymn#242 vs. 1,4

- 1 Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn,
 for angels herald its dawning.
 Sing out your joy, for soon he is born,
 behold! the Child of our longing.
 Come as a baby weak and poor,
 to bring all hearts together,
 he opens wide the heav'nly door
 and lives now inside us forever.
- 4 Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,
 though dark the winter and cheerless,
 the rising sun shall crown you with light,
 be strong and loving and fearless.
 Love be our song and love our prayer
 and love our endless story;
 may God fill ev'ry day we share
 and bring us at last into glory.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

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***Nicene Creed**

AM: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us profess our faith, using the words of the Nicene Creed.

**We believe in one God,
 the Father, the Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth,
 of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,**

the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

***Prayers of the Church**

Congregational response after each petition:

AM: Hear us, Oh God. **C: Your mercy is great.**

In this season of watching and waiting, let us pray for all people and places that yearn for God's presence.

A brief silence.

Holy God, renew your church and raise up leaders who announce your good news. Grant peace to congregations and seminarians in the midst of transition. Guide the work of candidacy and call committees. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, your Spirit brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Breathe life into us, that we are inspired to live in harmony with one another and the planet. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Shepherding God, you lead your people in paths of righteousness. Raise up prophets in our own day who warn against captivity to greed and point us to the freedom found in generosity. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Nurturing God, you come near in times of worry and need. Cradle us in your arms, that we trust you and are not afraid. Attend to any who are hungry, imprisoned, or ill this day. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Rejoicing God, you exult over us in singing. Enliven the song of this assembly and bless the ministry of church musicians. With instruments and dance, join our voices to the song of all creation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give you thanks for your servants who showed us your goodness and grace. By the power of your Spirit, keep us steadfast in faith until we make our home with you. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of new life, you come among us in the places we least expect. Receive these prayers and those of our hearts, in the name of Jesus.
Amen.

***Peace**

P: The Peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us show a sign of peace from where we are.

Offering

The offering, whether in person or through digital means, is an act of worship. Worship, at its core, is a reverent love and devotion accorded to God. We give because God loves us first, and we are called to love God and neighbor as a result. The offering is one way we show our love of God.

To assist you in this act of worship, there are several ways to make your offering: Go to www.StStephenLC.org and scroll to the bottom of the page, and click **DONATE**.

Text your offering dollar amount to 717-685-6947. Text "help" for options.

Use Engage from your smart phone or Internet connected device at <https://engage.suran.com/sslc/> or QR code below:

Set up regular electronic offerings by contacting Kevin, our office manager, at 717-766- 2168,



Monday through Thursday from 9am – 2pm, or by email at office@StStephenLC.org to get set up.

Mail in your check, made payable to St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Our address is:
30 W. Main St., PO Box 266, New Kingstown, PA 17072.

The offerings are used to carry out the ministry of the church, to share the Good News, to provide pastoral care, to worship as a community, and to create an environment where Jesus encounters people and their lives are transformed. All of these things continue to take place. Thank you for your generosity.

*Offertory Prayer

Let us pray.

God of our waiting and watching, 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

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

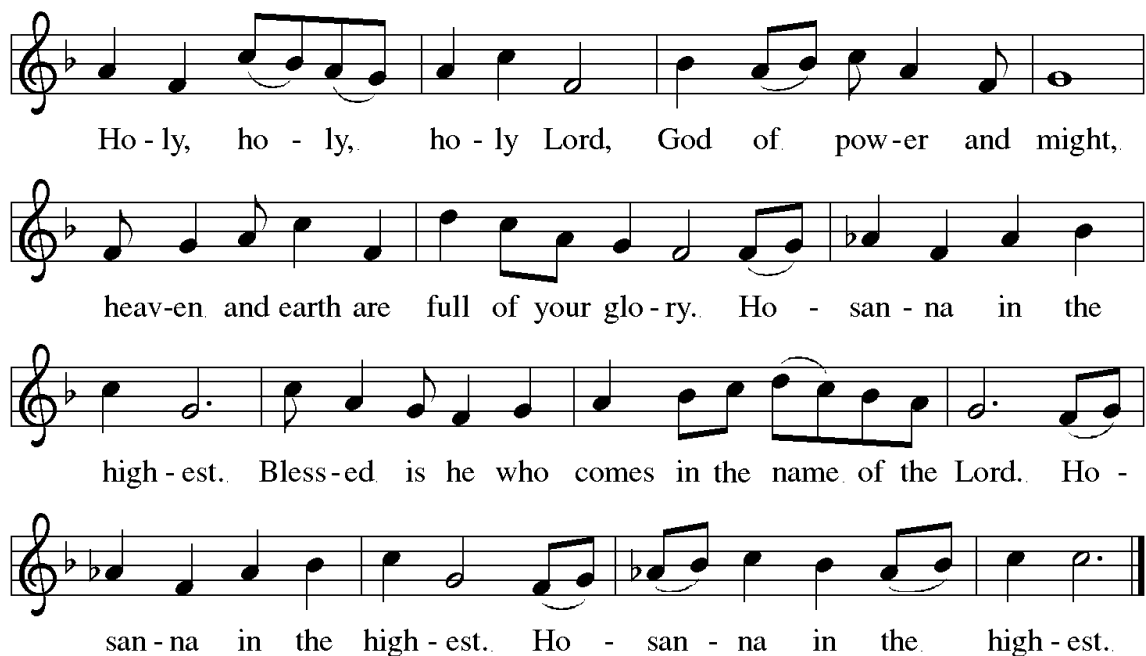
Lift up your hearts.

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:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might,
heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. 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. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Thanksgiving at the Table

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 handed over, 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.

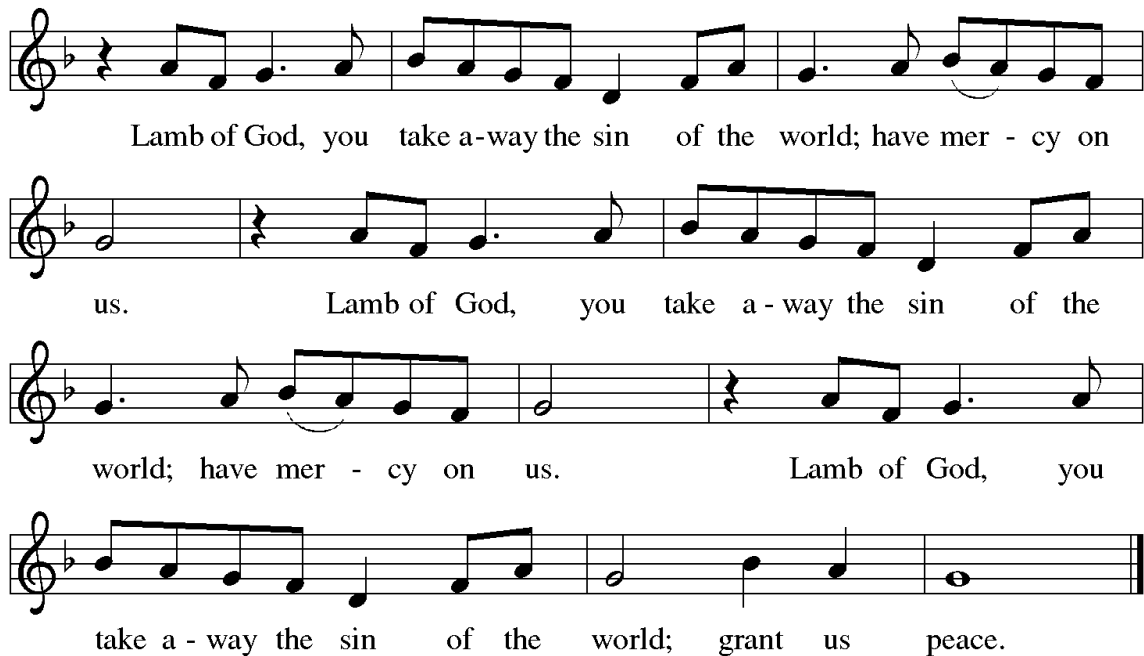
All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

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

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Invitation to Communion

Come to Christ's banquet. Feast on God's gift of grace.



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.

The Body and Blood of our Lord broken and shed for you.

Post Communion Prayer

Most High God,
you have come among us at this table. By the Spirit's power, form us to be bearers of your
word, sharing gifts of mercy and grace with all, through Christ Jesus, our host and our guest.
Amen.

Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

*Blessing

The God of hope
fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the
Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait.
Amen.

Sending Music

"He Came Down"

Hymn#253

- 1 He came down that we may have love;
he came down that we may have love;
he came down that we may have love;
hallelujah forevermore.

- 2 He came down that we may have light;
he came down that we may have light;
he came down that we may have light;
hallelujah forevermore.
- 3 He came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have peace;
hallelujah forevermore.
- 4 He came down that we may have joy;
he came down that we may have joy;
he came down that we may have joy;
hallelujah forevermore.

Text: Cameroon traditional

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***Dismissal**

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Postlude

“Awake! The Voice is Calling”

by Karl Karow

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