



The Lutheran Church of Vestavia Hills
"Prepare the Way of the Lord"

**FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT:
THE WORK AND THE WAY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

December 3, 2023



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF VESTAVIA HILLS

201 So. Montgomery Highway Birmingham, Alabama 35216
Church office: 205-823-1883 PreSchool/MDO: 205-791-5200
Web Site: www.vestavialutheran.org
WORSHIP: 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sundays
SUNDAY SCHOOL: 9:15 a.m.
Church Office Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday



PASTOR: The Reverend Michael D. Ahlemeyer – pastor@vestavialutheran.org text: 205-201-8866
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TO OUR GUESTS: We offer you a warm welcome in the name of Jesus. Please sign the Friendship Register. If you do not have a church home, we would be delighted to have you become a part of our church family. Please feel free to speak with the Pastor about membership in our congregation. If you do have a church home, we pray that God will bless you as you continue your growth in faith and love.



SUNDAY SCHOOL Adult Bible Classes meets in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall at 9:15 a.m. Children, Confirmation, and Youth classes also meet at 9:15 a.m. in the class rooms downstairs.



CHILDREN'S CHURCH and NURSERY Following the Children's Message, all children ages 3-7 are invited to Children's Church downstairs. They will return to the sanctuary after the sermon. A nursery attendant is provided for children ages birth to 3 years during our 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM services.



COMMUNION We invite all baptized Christians who acknowledge their sinfulness, trust in Christ as their Savior, and who recognize the real presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the bread and wine to join us at the Communion table. The practice of our congregation is to place the bread into the extended hand of the communicant. The wine is offered in individual cups; please take one from the tray as it is offered by the Elder. The common cup will be offered to those who do not take an individual cup. The cups in the center of the tray are filled with non-alcoholic wine, in consideration of persons who should not drink wine. Also, children who have not received Communion instruction are invited to come to the Communion rail, fold their hands and receive a blessing. Please notify an usher if you need a communion assistant to bring the Lord's Supper to you in the pew.

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OPENING HYMN

“Savior of the Nations Come”

LSB #332 (v. 1-4)



1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come, Vir - gin's Son, make
2 Not by hu - man flesh and blood, By the Spir - it
3 Here a maid was found with child, Yet re - mained a
4 Then stepped forth the Lord of all From His pure and



here Your home! Mar - vel now, O heav'n and earth,
of our God, Was the Word of God made flesh—
vir - gin mild. In her womb this truth was shown:
king - ly hall; God of God, yet ful - ly man,



That the Lord chose such a birth.
Wom - an's off - spring, pure and fresh.
God was there up - on His throne.
His he - ro - ic course be - gan.

+ HOLY BAPTISM +

(10:30 a.m.)

Charlie Victoria Dahlke

Daughter of Abby & Zebediah Dahlke

We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as a fellow member of the body of Christ, a child of the same heavenly Father, to work with us in His Kingdom.

~the 10:30 service continues on page 3 with the Lighting of the Advent Wreath~

CALL TO WORSHIP (8:00 a.m.)

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come. Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION (8:00 a.m.)

"When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." (Luther: *The Ninety-Five Theses*)

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestow on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

~John 1:4, 6-8

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light so that all might believe.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, has come into the world.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

~Advent Wreath Is Lit While Singing Hymn~

RESPONSE

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

LSB #357 (v.1)



O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive



Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here



Un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re - joice! Re - joice!



Em - man - u - el Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son. You sent John the Baptist to prepare our hearts through the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Let Your bountiful grace and Your endless mercy help us in this hour and deliver us at our last hour; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Isaiah 40:1-9

¹Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her

that her warfare is ended,

that her iniquity is pardoned,

that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Behold your God!"

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHOIR ANTHEM (10:30 a.m.)

R. E. Schram

"Bring Us Hope: An Anthem for Advent

Bring us hope, bring us hope, bring us love;

Bring us peace and joy from above.

Bring us hope, bring us love, peace and joy from above.

Bring us hope, bring us hope, bring us hope.

Bring us light, take our darkness away.

Bring us light, turn or night into day.

Bring us hope, bring us love, peace and joy from above.

Bring us hope, bring us hope.

*Hope to replace our hopelessness, love to refill our emptiness,
Peace in the midst of our distress; oh, how we need Your joy!*

*Bring us hope, bring us hope, bring us love;
Bring us peace, peace and joy from above.*

Bring us hope, bring us love, peace and joy from above.

Bring us hope, bring us hope, bring us hope, bring us hope, bring us hope.

EPISTLE LESSON

2 Corinthians 7:9-10

⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

¹⁰For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

THEME HYMN

"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist Cry"

LSB #344 (v. 1-2)



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry An - nounc - es
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; Make straight the



that the Lord is nigh; A - wake and hear - ken,
way for God with - in, And let us all our



for he brings Glad tid - ings of the King of kings!
hearts pre - pare For Christ to come and en - ter there.

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the third chapter.

Glory to You, O Lord.

¹In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,
²"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³For this is he who was spoken
of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,
"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.'"

⁴Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist,
and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all
the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were baptized by
him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he
said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to
come? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to
yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these
stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of
the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and
thrown into the fire.

¹¹"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is
mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with
the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear
his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn
with unquenchable fire."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Augsburg Confession: *Article XII. Of Repentance*

Now, repentance consists properly of these two parts:

One is contrition, that is terror striking the conscience through the knowledge of sin;

The other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution,

and believes that for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven, comfort the conscience, and delivers it from terrors.

Then good works are bound to follow,

which are the fruits of repentance.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

HYMN OF THE DAY

"The First Song of Isaiah"

J.N. White

the congregation is asked to join in singing this refrain after each verse:



Sure-ly, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be a - fraid. For the



Lord is my strong-hold and my sure de-fense, and he will be my Sav - ior.

*Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing
from the springs of salvation.
And on that day you shall say,
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon His Name;*

REFRAIN

*Make His deeds known among the peoples;
See that they remember that His Name is exalted.
Sing the praises of the Lord, for He has done great things,
And this is known in all the world.*

REFRAIN

*Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion,
Ring out your joy,
For the great one in the midst of you
Is the Holy One of Israel*

REFRAIN (sung twice)

SERMON

Sermon Series: "Prepare the Way of the Lord"

Part 1: The Work and Way of John the Baptist

Rev. Michael Ahlemeyer

VOLUNTARY

OFFERING

~please sign the Record of Fellowship during the Offering

OFFERTORY

"The Advent of Our King"

LSB #331 (v. 1)



1 The ad - vent of our King Our prayers must now em - ploy,



And we must hymns of wel-come sing In strains of ho - ly joy.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

~Please be seated for the Distribution~

DISTRIBUTION

DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

"Once He Came in Blessing"

LSB #333



1 Once He came in bless - ing, All our sins re -
2 Now He gent - ly leads us; With Him - self He
3 Soon will come that hour_____ When with might - y
4 Come, then, O Lord Je - sus, From our sins re -



dress - ing; Came in like - ness low - ly,
feeds us Pre - cious food from heav - en,
pow - er Christ will come in splen - dor
lease us. Keep our hearts be - liev - ing,



Son of God most ho - ly; Bore the cross to
Pledge of peace here giv - en, Man - na that will
And will judg - ment ren - der, With the faith - ful
That we, grace re - ceiv - ing, Ev - er may con -



save us; Hope and free - dom gave us.
nour - ish Souls that they may flour - ish.
shar - ing Joy be - yond com - par - ing.
fess You Till in heav'n we bless You.

"Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord"

LSB #352



1 Let the earth now praise the Lord, Who has tru - ly
2 What the Fa - thers most de - sired, What the proph - ets'
3 A - bram's prom - ised great re - ward, Zi - on's help - er,
4 As Your com - ing was in peace, Qui - et, full of



kept His word And at last to us did send
heart in - spired, What they longed for man - y a year,
Ja - cob's Lord— Him of two - fold race be - hold—
gen - tle - ness, Let the same mind dwell in me



Christ, the sin - ner's help and friend.
Stands ful - filled in glo - ry here.
Tru - ly came, as long fore - told.
Which is Yours e - ter - nal - ly.

5 Bruise for me the serpent's head
That, set free from doubt and dread,
I may cling to You in faith,
Safely kept through life and death.

6 Then when You will come again
As the glorious king to reign,
I with joy will see Your face,
Freely ransomed by Your grace.

~Distribution Hymns continue on the following page~

DISTRIBUTION HYMNS (continued)

"Let All Together Praise Our God"

LSB #389 (v. 1-5)



1 Let all to - geth - er praise our God Be - fore His
2 He leaves His heav'n - ly Fa - ther's throne, Is born an
3 With - in an earth - born form He hides His all - cre -
4 He un - der - takes a great ex - change, Puts on our
5 He is a ser - vant, I a lord: How great a



glo - rious throne; To - day He o - pens heav'n a - gain To
in - fant small, And in a man - ger, poor and lone, Lies
at - ing light; To serve us all He hum - bly cloaks The
hu - man frame, And in re - turn gives us His realm, His
mys - ter - y! How strong the ten - der Christ Child's love! No



give us His own Son, To give us His own Son.
in a hum - ble stall, Lies in a hum - ble stall.
splen - dor of His might, The splen - dor of His might.
glo - ry, and His name, His glo - ry, and His name.
tru - er friend than He, No tru - er friend than He.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

"Prepare the Royal Highway"

LSB #343 (v. 1,3-4)



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; The King of kings is near!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen To greet your prom-ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; It comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley A lev - el road ap - pear!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion Its trib - ute too should bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom And jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of Glo - ry Fore-told in sa - cred sto - ry:
All lands, bow down be - fore Him! All na - tions, now a - dore Him!
So let your praise be sound - ing For kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

Refrain



Ho - san - na to the Lord, For He ful - fills God's Word!

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE