

# St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church



Third Sunday of Advent  
December 14, 2025

A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent already among us and yet to come.

† *Congregation stands as able*

## GATHERING

Prelude

Sandra Nearhoof



P: In the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbors.

P: Most merciful God,

C: **we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. 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. 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 will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

P: In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you, the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn

*“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”*

**ELW #254**

Kyrie

Page 156

Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray,

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

## PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

Children's Message

Amy Hoag

### First Reading

**Isaiah 35:1-10**

<sup>1</sup> The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus <sup>2</sup> it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. <sup>4</sup> Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.” <sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; <sup>6</sup> then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; <sup>7</sup> the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes. <sup>8</sup> A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. <sup>9</sup> No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. <sup>10</sup> And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

L: The word of the Lord

C: **Thanks be to God.**

### **Psalm 146:5-10**

**Tone 8**

Happy are they who have the God of Jacob <sup>1</sup> for their help,  
whose hope is in the <sup>1</sup> LORD their God;  
<sup>6</sup> **who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that <sup>1</sup> is in them;**  
**who keeps promises <sup>1</sup> forever;**  
<sup>7</sup> who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to <sup>1</sup> those who hunger.  
The LORD sets the <sup>1</sup> captive free.  
<sup>8</sup> **The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who <sup>1</sup> are bowed down; the LORD <sup>1</sup> loves the righteous.**  
<sup>9</sup> The LORD cares <sup>1</sup> for the stranger;  
the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way <sup>1</sup> of the wicked.  
<sup>10</sup> **The LORD shall <sup>1</sup> reign forever,**  
**your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. <sup>1</sup> Hallelujah!**

### **Second Reading**

**James 5:7-10**

<sup>7</sup> Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. <sup>8</sup> You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup> As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

L: The word of the Lord

C: **Thanks be to God.**

 Gospel Acclamation

Page 160

P: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

<sup>2</sup> When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.” <sup>7</sup> As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? <sup>8</sup> What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. <sup>9</sup> What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ <sup>14</sup>“Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon                    “Ready for God’s Kingdom”    Reverend Taylor Burton Edwards

 Hymn of the Day            “Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers”            ELW #244

### 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,  
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.

*You may sit, stand or kneel for the prayers.*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

A: In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

*A brief silence.*

A: God of power and mercy, we praise you for Jesus and his acts of healing and liberation. Lead us to proclaim the good news from generation to generation, that all may place their hope in you. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: When lands are parched and dry, bring rain and snow; where wilderness is barren, sow seeds of life. Fill the lands with trees that grow, plants that flower, and creatures that thrive, as nature proclaims the wonder of your works. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: When there is injustice or corruption among nations and leaders, root it out. Turn their attention to inequity and the cries of the poor. Instill a deeper sense of compassion and care in all who govern. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. In uncertain times, remind us of the promise spoken to our ancestors in faith. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: When people are imprisoned or held captive, break the chains and offer release. Strengthen the work of the church in restorative justice, breaking cycles of poverty, and welcoming the immigrant. God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: For all those who have asked us to pray for them....God of grace,  
C: **hear our prayer.**

A: As we await your coming, we give thanks for the faithful who have lived and died in faith. May their boldness of faith inspire our witness and work.  
God of grace,

**C: hear our prayer.**

P: Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

C: Amen.

## MEAL

## Anthem

## “Advent Joy”

## Choir

*The gifts may be brought forward.*

## Offering Prayer

A: Nourishing God, you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Thought this meal, satisfy our parched places that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come.

C: Amen.

† Great Thanksgiving	Page 161	
Holy, Holy, Holy	Page 162	
Lord's Prayer	“Our Father, who...”	Page 163
Lamb of God	Page 164	

## Communion

The body of Christ, given for you.  
The blood of Christ, shed for you.  
*Each person may respond. Amen.*

## Table Blessing

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

C: Amen.

### Prayer after Communion

**A:** God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.

C: Amen.

## SENDING

Blessing

**Sending Hymn**

*"People, Look East!"*

**ELW #248**

### Dismissal

**A:** Go in peace. Keep awake.

**C:** **Thanks be to God.**

**The Memorial Book is open today to the Glory of God**

**In Memory of:**

*Griseldis "Chris" Grogg, 2006*



The Advent Wreath for the Third Sunday of Advent is lit by Marga Miller and Raymond Lawton.

**READINGS AND PSALM**  
**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025**

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25



*"The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me."* —Martin Luther

**December 7, 2025**  
**Second Sunday of Advent**

ATTENDANCE — 74

(IN-PERSON — 48, YOUTUBE — 26)

2025 BUDGET-\$177,962

**OFFERING**

Benevolence	\$	3,228.00
Building	\$	210.00
Memorial	\$	100.00
Other	\$	75.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,613.00</b>

**December 3, 2025**  
**Midweek Advent Service**

ATTENDANCE — 15

**OFFERING**

Benevolence	\$	65.00
Other	\$	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>165.00</b>

St. Matthew Lutheran Church (ELCA)  
will not engage in any act or public  
statements to endorse or oppose any  
candidate for public office.

**Serving December 14, 2025**

Opener/Closer	Terri Niederhammer
Worship Assistant	Rose Johnson
Communion Assistant	Terri Niederhammer
Lector	Raymond Lawton
Ushers	Katherine Kelly
	Jim Sperry
Altar Guild	Nancy Gates
	Terri Niederhammer
	Catherine Sayers-Clean-up
Live Streaming	Paul Hicks

**Serving December 21, 2025**

Opener/Closer	Lisa Pettit
Worship Assistant	Lisa Pettit
Communion Assistant	Allena Sperry
Lector	Amy Hoag
Ushers	Jim Sperry
	Bill Wallace
Altar Guild	Rose Johnson
	Allena Sperry
	Catherine Sayers-Clean-up
Live Streaming	Matt Pettit

# **Pray Without Ceasing**



*"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*

5:16-18

—1 Thessalonians

The Armed Forces, their families, and victims of war	Sandy Gibbs	Gaza
	Moses Glidden	Palestinian People
	Estrella Gonzales	Israel
	Doris Grier	Ukraine
	Grigsby Family	People of Russia
	Laura Jett	Jamaica
	Norma Kilby	Philippines
	Ken Korn	Hong Kong
	Emma Kump	Thailand
	Robert Lowe	Indonesia
	David & John Lucas	Philippines
	Michelle Matthias	Sumali Refugees
Pastor Taylor Burton Edwards	Brady Meeks	Mario's Tire
Pastor Rachel Zarnke	Tim Moore	Mariner Finance
St Matthew Congregational Council	Debi Nelson	Woodville Apartments
Laura Alexander	Vincent Pawlowski	Beal Wellness
Carol Bingemann	Terry Pendergraft	
Isabelle Clark	Beth Price	
Randy Craven	Mark Purushotham	
Myrna & Ken Hoag	Tiffany Richardson	
Marga Miller	Dayna Ryan	
Charlotte Moore	Shirley Scott	
Traudel Moseley	Dou Shizhen	
Debby Owen	Ricky Skinner	
Dorothy Redden	Amanda Steinagel	
Gary Anderson	Sara Steinagel Sturgis	
Eric & Tinisha Bryant	Fred Turpin	
Jean Clemons	Charlie VanHousen	
Nancy Edmundson	Dawn VanHousen	
Lynne Funck	Martha Zimmerman	
Brandy Garnett		

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Welcome to St. Matthew:** Jesus Christ offers himself to all. All baptized Christians are invited to feast with us at the Lord's Table.

**We invite you to join our congregation if you have not yet found a church home.** We are people of God that share a living, daring, confidence in God's grace. Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person, questions, complexities and all. Join us, as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world.

**Nursery:** St. Matthew provides nursery service for children ages 6 and younger. All children are welcome to attend worship with their families. If a child needs a break during the service, they may sit with a parent/guardian in the Narthex.

## ***Mission Outreach Opportunities:***

### **Mission Focus:**

• Lion's Club:	Operation Christmas Child
• Family House of West GA:	Glasses, sunglasses and old cell phones
• Flags to Retire:	Pop tabs
• St. Anne's:	Used flags to dispose of properly
• SafeHouse/St. Benedict's	Feminine hygiene products, Personal hygiene products (travel size)
	Sealed plastic utensils (take-out meals)

Leave donations in the labeled containers in the Narthex.

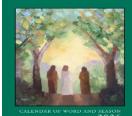
**Bible Study:** Please join us on Tuesdays at 10:15 in the Church House to review and discuss the scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday.

**Craf-Tea:** This group will meet December 19th at 10:00AM-12:00 PM in Luther Hall. If you enjoy crafts and tea, this group is for you! Please see Linnea Grosse for more information.

**Chair Yoga:** We will resume meeting on Monday at 11:00 AM in Luther Hall in the new year. Wear comfortable clothing and sneakers.

## ***Save the Date***

- December 15th - 12:00-1:00 - Advent lunch at St. Thomas
- December 16th-10:15 - Bible Study - Church House
- December 17th - 5:30 Midweek Advent Service
- December 18th - 5:00-Council Meeting - Fellowship Hall
- December 19th-10:00-Craf-Tea - Luther Hall



2026 Calendar of Word and Season is now on sale thru the end of the year. Please see Allena Sperry if you want to purchase a calendar for \$13. Please make checks payable to St. Matthew.

## December Mission Focus



Our Warming Tree stands in the Narthex awaiting us to decorate it with our gifts of new warm clothing such as socks, mittens, gloves, hats, and scarves for adults and children. We will take donations thru December 14th. We will deliver our gifts of love to Freedom House, Trinity House, Faith House, and Brown Bag of Columbus. You can make a monetary donation if you do not want to shop.

## ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SERVICES



### Midweek Worship

Wednesday 5:30 PM  
December 17



### Weihnacht Service

Sunday, December 14  
3:00 PM

### Christmas Eve

Holy Communion Service  
Wednesday, December 24  
7:00 PM



# HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAY

1 RANDALL CRAVEN

4 JONATHAN THIES

20 CONNOR GLAU

21 LINDSAY BROWN RATLIFF

23 PATTY CHAPPEL

26 ZAIGA MION

27 KATHY SKELLY

29 DAVID ALLEN



# St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church Mission Statement



Reach in to grow in Christ

Reach up to worship God

Reach out to welcome and witness



To give online, please scan the QR code to the left to be taken to the give.tithe.ly website form. You can just fill out the form and click the Give button. You can also go to our website and click on the ONLINE GIVING button.

## ST. MATTHEW EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

4026 Macon Road, Columbus, Georgia 31907

(706) 561-3406 - Office Hours - Tues & Thurs 2:00-5:00 PM, Friday 9:00-1:00 PM

Pastor Taylor Burton Edwards Email: [twbe@liturgyfolks.com](mailto:twbe@liturgyfolks.com)  
Phone: (765) 602-1426

Office email : [office@stmatthewcolumbusga.com](mailto:office@stmatthewcolumbusga.com)

*A member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,*

*Southeastern Synod*

[www.stmatthewcolumbusga.com](http://www.stmatthewcolumbusga.com)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@st.matthewlutheranchurch4457streams>

The Rev. Taylor Burton Edwards, Pastor  
Sonja Metcalf, Parish Administrator  
Lisa Pettit, Sexton

Sandra Nearhoof, Minister of Music  
Penny Davis, Nursery Director