



## Union Lutheran Church

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Welcome to Union Lutheran Church! We are a Christian faith family, gathered to love God and love our neighbors. All are welcome, no matter where you are in your faith journey, young or old, rich or poor, contemporary or traditional, female or male, and no matter your walk of life. We extend the same invitation that the Samaritan woman made to her village as they questioned her about Jesus, *“Come and See”* (John 4:7-30). If you are searching, wondering or hoping for God, we invite you to Union Lutheran Church, to *“Come and see that the Lord is good!”*

We worship every Sunday at 10:30 a.m., preceded by 9:30 a.m. Sunday School for all ages.

Some helpful notes as you worship with us:

P = Pastor, C = Congregation

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December 3 and 4, 2024

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## *The Light of Grace*

A Series of Special Services for Advent

Week 1: The Light of Grace

Hope: Zechariah

HYMN: *Hark! the Glad Sound!*

**Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,  
The Savior promised long;  
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne  
And ev'ry voice a song.**

**He comes the pris'ners to release,  
In Satan's bondage held.  
The gates of brass before him burst,  
The iron fetters yield.**

**He comes the broken heart to bind,  
The bleeding soul to cure,  
And with the treasures of his grace  
To enrich the humble poor.**

**Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
Thy welcome shall proclaim,  
And heav'n's eternal arches ring  
With thy belovèd name.**

### INVOCATION & LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

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

C **Amen.**

*(One candle is lit on the Advent wreath.)*

P Today we light the first of our Advent candles, the candle of hope.

C **“O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.”** (Psalm 39:7)

P Across the centuries, the people of God waited in hope for the promised Messiah, the Savior. As the time came near for the promise to be fulfilled, the Lord sent an angel to tell the priest Zechariah that Zechariah and his wife would have a son. That son, to be named John, would announce the coming of the Messiah and prepare Israel to welcome the Savior.

C **“O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.”**

P John would proclaim the dawn of hope for Israel. He would baptize people as a sign of repentance, preparing them for the Savior, the Lamb of God, who was coming to take their sins away. When the

right time came, God's promise was fulfilled in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**C "O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you."**

**P** We have seen the promise fulfilled. The Savior has come! He has died and risen to set us free. Now we wait in hope for his return on the Last Day. Jesus has promised, "Surely I am coming soon!"

**C "O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you." Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!**

#### CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

**P** Let us confess our sins to God, trusting in his mercy for the sake of Jesus our Lord.

**C Almighty God, you have called us to a living hope in Jesus. Yet so often we do not reflect that hope in our lives. We turn away from the promises of your Word. We walk in our own selfish ways instead of following in Jesus' footsteps. We do not love others as we should, and we are not always willing to share our hope with the people around us. Have mercy on us and forgive us.**

**P** God has had mercy on us. He sent his Son to be our Savior and for his sake forgives our sins. I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**C "O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you."**

#### HYMN OF RESPONSE: *Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound*

**Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.**

**'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!**

**Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come:  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.**

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

**P** Almighty God, Advent is a time of hope and waiting. For centuries your people waited in hope for the Messiah to come. Speaking

through the prophets, you reminded them of your promise to send the Savior. Finally, when the right time came, Jesus the Messiah was born in Bethlehem. We have seen that hope fulfilled in Jesus' birth, in his saving death and triumphant resurrection. Yet now we too wait in hope. During this Advent season, we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth, but we also look forward to his Second Advent, his return on the Last Day. Lead us to live in hope and to share that hope with others so that they too may come to worship Jesus as Lord. Hear our prayer and accept our praise in Jesus' name.

**C Amen.**

*HYMN: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*

**1 My hope is built on nothing less  
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
no merit of my own I claim,  
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.**

*Refrain*

**On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
all other ground is sinking sand,  
all other ground is sinking sand.**

Old Testament Reading, Isaiah 51:1-5

Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him. For the Lord comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.

Epistle Reading, Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

HYMN: *Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord*

**Let the earth now praise the Lord,  
Who has truly kept his word  
And at last to us did send  
Christ, the sinner's help and friend.**

**What the fathers most desired,  
What the prophets' heart inspired,  
What they longed for many a year,  
Stands fulfilled in glory here.**

Holy Gospel Reading, Luke 1:67-79

And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

SERMON

Pastor Heidi Punt

HYMN OF RESPONSE: *Abram's Promised Great Reward*

**Abram's promised great reward,  
Zion's helper, Jacob's Lord—  
Him of two-fold race behold—  
Truly came, as long foretold.**

**As your coming was in peace,  
Quiet, full of gentleness,  
Let the same mind dwell in me  
Which is yours eternally.**

APOSTLES' CREED

**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 heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he will 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.**

**ADVENT OFFERING** *All loose offering and designated gifts will go towards the NALC Disaster Relief.*

#### **PRAYERS**

**P** Almighty God, your people waited long in hope for the fulfillment of your promise to send the Messiah, the Savior. As the days drew near for the Messiah's birth, you told Zechariah and Elizabeth that their son John would prepare the way of the Lord. As we prepare to celebrate the Savior's birth, with Zechariah and Elizabeth and all of the saints we rejoice in the fulfillment of your promise. Our God and Savior,

**C Fill us with hope and guide us into the way of peace.**

**P** Almighty God, Advent is a season of hope and a time of repentance, a time to remember our need for a Savior. Even though we do not deserve your love and mercy, in grace you sent your Son to save us. Through his death and resurrection, we have forgiveness for our sins and the hope of eternal life in your presence. All of your promises find their "Yes!" in Jesus Christ. Our God and Savior,

**C Fill us with hope and guide us into the way of peace.**

**P** Almighty God, during this Advent season there are many people who feel no hope. They struggle with illness, grief and loss. Bring them help and comfort through the promises of your holy Word and, according to your gracious will, bring them healing. Fill them with confident faith and the certain knowledge that you always keep your promises. Although earthly hope and promises may fail, in the birth of Jesus Christ, your Son our Savior, we have hope that will not fail. Our God and Savior,

**C** **Fill us with hope and guide us into the way of peace.**

**P** Almighty God, help us by your Spirit to serve others in love and to share with them the hope that we have in Jesus. Lead us to true repentance and strengthen us through the study of Scripture so that we can then strengthen others with the sure and certain promises of your Word. Our God and Savior,

**C** **Fill us with hope and guide us into the way of peace.**

**P** Almighty God, as we prepare to celebrate our Lord's first Advent, his birth in Bethlehem, we also look forward to his Second Advent, his return on the Last Day. By your grace through faith in our Lord, have the sure and certain hope of eternal life in your presence. Jesus has promised, "I am coming soon!" With joy we anticipate the fulfillment of that promise. Our God and Savior,

**C** **Fill us with hope and guide us into the way of peace.**

**P** Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**C** **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**

#### BENEDICTION (Romans 5:1-2; Romans 15:13)

**P** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**C** **Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

**P** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

**C** **Amen.**

#### CLOSING HYMN: *Savior of the Nations, Come*

**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,  
But 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 vict'ry 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.**

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### **NALC Disaster Response**

**Toys & Gift Cards for Western, NC**

**Deadline:** Friday, December 6

**Drop Off Location:**

Pew (outside of church office) or  
Supply Closet (small fellowship hall)

In cooperation with the NALC Disaster Response team, we are asking for **toys** for children, and Walmart or Amazon **gift cards** for teens, who have been affected by Hurricane Helene in Western NC.

Please place toys and gift cards either on the pew outside of the church office or in the Supply Closet when entering the small fellowship hall.

Thanks for your generosity and cooperation in helping to meet the needs of those affected!

Blessings and peace, Pastor Steven King