

SOLOMON'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
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*"Solomon's Evangelical Lutheran Church, following the example of Jesus Christ, seeks to live in the confidence and fullness of God's grace; to preach the Good News boldly and truthfully; to support and serve others in faith; to work in harmony with all creation."*

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
DECEMBER 21, 2025

**December 21, 2025**  
**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

*Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.*

**CAROLS SING**

**GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ORGAN PRELUDE** *Fantasy on "Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel"* - Evan Copley

**\*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God,  
whose home is heaven and earth,  
whose salvation is sure.

**Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God  
and of one another.

Long-expected God,  
**we confess that we look to ourselves  
for the peace and security only you can provide.  
We reach for swords and spears,  
reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war.  
We become impatient while waiting  
and weary of keeping awake.  
Free us from self-reliance,  
and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors.  
Increase our trust in God's timing,  
and awaken us to your advent among us,  
that we may abound in the hope you have promised.  
Amen.**

God judges us not as we deserve,  
but according to God's own righteousness.

✙ You are freed and forgiven,  
saved by grace,  
and ready to welcome the Savior.  
**Amen.**

## \*GATHERING SONG *Fling Wide the Door* (ELW 259)



1 Fling wide the door, un - bar the gate; the King of glo - ry  
 2 He is the rock of our be - lief, the heart of mer - cy's  
 3 Oh, hap - py towns and bless - ed lands that live by their true  
 4 Come, Lord, our Sav - ior, Je - sus Christ; our hearts are o - pen



comes in state; the Lord of lords and King of kings, the  
 gen - tle self. His king - ly crown is ho - li - ness; his  
 king's com-mands. And bless - ed be the hearts he rules, the  
 wide in trust. Oh, show us now your love - ly grace, up -



Sav - ior of the world who brings his great sal - va - tion  
 scep - ter is his love - li - ness; he brings our sor - rows  
 hum - ble plac - es where he dwells. He is the right - ful  
 on our sor - rows shine your face, and let your Ho - ly



to the earth. So raise a shout of ho - ly mirth and  
 to an end. Now glad - ly praise our king and friend, and  
 Son of bliss who fills our lives and makes us his, cre -  
 Spir - it guide our jour - ney in your grace so wide. We



praise our God and Lord, Cre - a - tor, Spir - it, Word.  
 wor - ship him with song for sav - ing us from wrong.  
 a - tor of the world, our on - ly strength for good.  
 praise your ho - ly name, from age to age the same!

Text: Georg Weissel, 1590–1635; tr. Gracia Grindal, b. 1943  
 Music: MACHT HOCH DIE TÜR, J. A. Freylinghausen, *Geistreiches Gesangbuch*, 1704  
 Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress

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## \*GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
**And also with you.**

## \*THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH "LOVE'S PURE LIGHT"

### *Responsive Litany*

During Advent we see God's love for us embodied in our Savior's birth.

**Christ is our light and the source of everlasting love.**

Advent calls us to love others with patience and kindness.

**Christ is our light and the source of everlasting love.**

Advent calls us to be slow to anger and quick to forgive.

**Christ is our light and the source of everlasting love.**

Advent reminds us that Christ commanded us to love as he loved.

**Christ is our light and the source of everlasting love.**

This morning we light four candles: the candles of hope, peace, joy, and today's candle – love. This candle reminds us that God so loved the world that he sent his only son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have life everlasting. Today we celebrate God's gift of love and remember that we have been commanded to love others as God loves us.

### Love's Pure Light Congregational part

"Gesù Bambino"  
Music: Pietro Yon

Words and Arranged by  
JOEL RANEY



*Let us pray.*

**Gracious God, as we continue our Advent journey, we are reminded that “Love came down at Christmas – love amazing, love diving.” You loved the world enough to send your Son, and now it’s up to us to love others as you loved us. Remind us that Christ is our light, and the true source of infinite, everlasting, pure love. Amen.**

**CHOIR ANTHEM**    *When will the Little King Come*    - Ruth Elaine Schram

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10-16**

A reading from Isaiah.

*An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!*

<sup>10</sup> The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup> “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” <sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. <sup>15</sup> He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup> For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19**

**(read responsively between lector and congregation, beginning with the lector)**

<sup>1</sup> Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph <sup>1</sup> like a flock;  
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- <sup>1</sup> on the cherubim.

<sup>2</sup> **In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, <sup>1</sup> and Manasseh,**  
**stir up your strength and <sup>1</sup> come to help us.**

<sup>3</sup> Restore <sup>1</sup> us, O God;  
let your face shine upon us, and we <sup>1</sup> shall be saved.

<sup>4</sup> **O LORD <sup>1</sup> God of hosts,**  
**how long will your anger fume when your <sup>1</sup> people pray?**

<sup>5</sup> You have fed them with the <sup>1</sup> bread of tears;  
you have given them bowls of <sup>1</sup> tears to drink.

<sup>6</sup> **You have made us the derision <sup>1</sup> of our neighbors,**  
**and our enemies laugh <sup>1</sup> us to scorn.**

<sup>7</sup> Restore us, O | God of hosts;  
 let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.  
<sup>17</sup> **Let your hand be upon the one at | your right hand,**  
**the one you have made so strong | for yourself.**  
<sup>18</sup> And so will we never turn a- | way from you;  
 give us life, that we may call up- | on your name.  
<sup>19</sup> **Restore us, O LORD | God of hosts;**  
**let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.**

## **SECOND READING: Romans 1:1-7**

A reading from Romans.

*Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.*

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,  
<sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, <sup>3</sup> the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>5</sup> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, <sup>6</sup> including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,  
<sup>7</sup> To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:  
 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Word of God, word of life.  
**Thanks be to God.**

In place of the Alleluia gospel acclamation, the choir will sing:

*Joseph, Dearest, Joseph, Mine* Traditional German carol  
 Soloists: Sally Gayman and Wayne Dale

**Congregation joins as directed on the final refrain:**

He came upon us at Christmastime, at Christmastime in Bethlehem.  
 Let us bring him from far and wide Love's diadem:  
 Jesus, Jesus, lo, he comes and loves and saves and frees us.

## **\*GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."*

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." <sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON** Rev. Julia Brown

**\*Please stand as you are able for the final verse**

**HYMN OF THE DAY *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (ELW 257) VS. 1,5-8**



- 5 O come, O 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. *Refrain*
- 6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;  
O Sun of justice, now draw near.  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*
- 7 O come, O King of nations, come,  
O Cornerstone that binds in one:  
refresh the hearts that long for you;  
restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*
- 8 O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*

Text: *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. composite  
Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.  
Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

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**Please join me as we confirm our faith together in the words of the apostles' creed.**

**\*CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.\*  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**\*PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH** *(Please respond.)*

*P: God of grace, C: hear our prayer.*

**\*PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.  
**And also with you.**

**\*OFFERTORY *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* (ELW 254)**



1 Come, thou long-ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;  
2 Born thy peo-ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.  
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king-dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art,  
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir-it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long-ing heart.  
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788  
Music: JEFFERSON, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

**\*OFFERING PRAYER**

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

**\*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.**

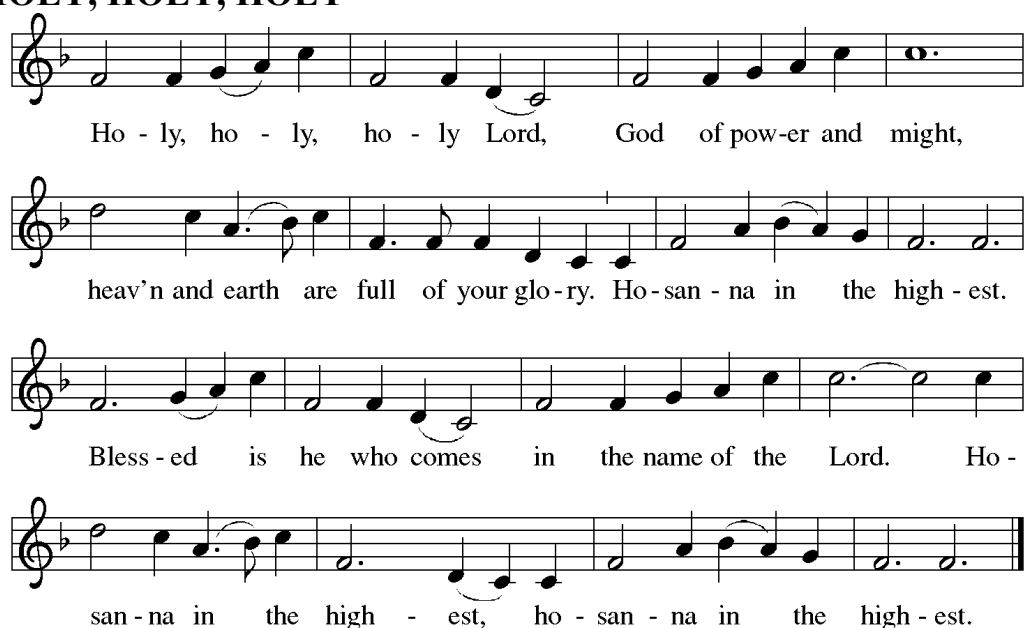
## \*PREFACE

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:

## \*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,  
heav'n 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

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
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.

## **\*LORD'S PRAYER**

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

**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.**

## **\*INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Here is life. God is with us.  
Come, receive what God has promised.

## **COMMUNION**

*Continuous - Please continue down center aisle at the direction of the usher. After you receive the bread, you may take a cup of red wine or white grape juice from the tray. Please place your empty communion cup in the basket. Gluten free wafers are available, ask the Pastor when you come forward. Notify the Head Usher if you would appreciate receiving Communion at your seat rather than walking up to the altar, the Pastor and Communion Assistant will be happy to bring Communion to you.*

## COMMUNION SONG *What Feast of Love* (ELW 487) vs. 1,3



1 What feast of love is of - fered here, what ban-quet come from heav - en?

3 What wine of love is of - fered here, what crim-son drink from heav - en?



What food of ev - er - last-ing life, what gra - cious gift is giv - en?

What stream of ev - er - last-ing life, what pre - cious blood is giv - en?



This, this is Christ the king, the bread come down from heav - en.

This, this is Christ the king, the sweet - est wine of heav - en.



Oh, taste and see and sing! How sweet the man - na giv - en!

Oh, taste and see and sing! The Son of God is giv - en!

Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939

Music: GREENSLEEVES, English ballad, 16th cent.

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## COMMUNION HYMN *Away in a Manger* (ELW 277)



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for his bed, the lit - tle Lord  
2 The cat - tle are low - ing; the ba - by a - wakes, but lit - tle Lord  
3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay close by me for -



Je - sus laid down his sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked  
Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I love you, Lord Je - sus; look  
ev - er and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear chil - dren in



down where he lay, the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.  
down from the sky and stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.  
your ten - der care and fit us for heav - en, to live with you there.

Text: North American, 19th cent.

Music: AWAY IN A MANGER, James R. Murray, 1841–1905

## \*COMMUNION BLESSING

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

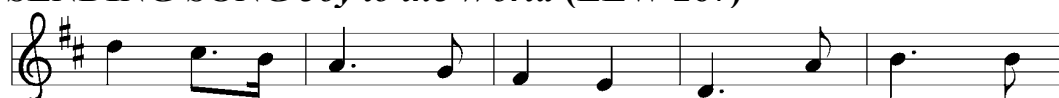
## \*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

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.  
**Amen.**

## \*BLESSING

May God who comes among us,  
Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit,  
grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness,  
and good news to share today and always.  
**Amen.**

**\*SENDING SONG *Joy to the World* (ELW 267)**



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -  
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their  
3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -  
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the



ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him  
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and  
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings  
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -



room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture  
plains re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat the sound-ing  
flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is  
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his



sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.  
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.  
found, far as, far as the curse is found.  
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748

Music: ANTIOCH, English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792–1872

**\*DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Keep awake.

**Thanks be to God.**

**\*EXTINGUISHING THE CANDLES/SILENT PRAYER**

**POSTLUDE** *Joy to the World* - David Cherwien

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## SERVING TODAY

Interim Pastor .....	Rev. Julia Brown
Church Office Email Address .....	<a href="mailto:office@solomonslutheran.org">office@solomonslutheran.org</a>
Organist .....	Mary-Jo Bedsworth
Head Usher .....	Sarge Weaver
Acolyte .....	Aaron Shreiner
Lector.....	Rich McEntire
Securing Offering.....	Sarge Weaver
Communion Set-Up.....	
Communion Clean-Up .....	Kathy Bowen
Communion Bread .....	Linda Berberich
Communion Assist.....	Martie Veilleux
Attendance last Sunday.....	23

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**The altar flowers** this morning are placed to the glory of God for Linda's children Kevin, Christopher, and Heather given by Linda Berberich.

**Welcome Visitors!** We welcome you to our worship service. We hope your visit with us will be a time of blessing. If you have any concerns, please talk to the Head Usher. We invite you to worship with us again!

**Communion will be served on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month in addition to all church holidays.**

**Communion Cards** – to maintain accurate records, we ask that each member fill out a communion card **only once per calendar year**, at a service when you partake of Holy Communion.

### **Weekly Calendar Reminders:**

December 24 - Christmas Eve Service 7:10pm

**Christmas Caroling today following the church service.** Pizza will be provided prior to leaving to visit and share Christmas carols with our homebound residents. If you can join the carolers to bring joy to the residents, please contact Bonney Coldsmith.

**Today, and for the remaining weeks of Advent, we will gather at 10:35 AM to have a chance to sing Christmas carols together prior to worship.** We will begin with one carol already chosen and then give you a chance to choose your favorite carol from our hymnal, #267-300.

**Any pastoral care or concerns can be addressed to Pastor Julia Brown by email** [jlouisebrown@msn.com](mailto:jlouisebrown@msn.com) or phone 703-434-9220.



**Prayer requests for the following:** *Carole Rau, Peggy Weller, William Brindle, Patricia Yetter, Kaitlyn Dovey, Norm Kuykendall, Phil Johnson, Nancy Deardorff, Susie Bingaman, Patsy Wildeson, Glenn Wildeson, James Bersch, Kristen Hardman, Brandan DeShong, Charles Carl, Marty Wenger, Nancy Marshall, Betty Amt, our world & country, Debbie Aschmann, Donna, Karen, Chuck Bedsworth, Linda Mumaugh, Katy Klutz, Becky Ensinger, and all the Homebound. If anyone has a prayer request, please call Janice McEntire, 717-264-3702.*

**Please Be Aware:** *We wish to be a praying congregation, and especially for those who are sick or experiencing difficult times. We will continue to name person's (first name only) aloud each Sunday, and we will hold each name for a month. In order to keep our list updated we ask that by the final Thursday of the month, but please call Janice McEntire 717 264-3702 to keep the name on for an extra month. Any name can remain for as long as desired, but we need to hear from the person adding the name, or we will presume the name can be removed. Thank you for your understanding.*

**Christmas Eve Worship** - Since Christmas is less than one week away, why not invite your family, friends, neighbors, and all who you might think of to join us for our Candlelight and Communion Worship Service which begins at 7:10 PM with a special musical prelude, followed by worship at 7:30 pm. The musical prelude will include selections on the organ, anthems by our choir, and a guest soloist, all planned to glorify God and add meaning to your Christmas Eve worship experience! Join us!

**Once again, this year there are two Sundays after Christmas.** On Christmas 1, December 28, we will once again worship with the Service of Lessons and Carols...a great opportunity to hear scripture foretelling the birth of Christ, the story of the birth of Christ, and the wonderful passage that begins, "In the beginning was the Word." You will have the opportunity to sing many Christmas carols as part of this service.

**Finally, on January 4 we are going to observe The Feast of the Epiphany with the gospel reading of The Three Kings to close our Christmas season.** Mark your calendars and invite family and friends to worship with us during this special season of the year.

**The 2026 Chart for Altar flowers is on the table in the Sunday School room.** The cost of the two vases will be \$60.00 per week. You will continue to provide Kimberly with the information for the bulletin prior to the week before the Sunday you choose. Include the cost of \$60.00 with the bulletin information.

**Power Pack Meals:** We are once again collecting nutritious food for New Franklin Elementary School students in need during the 2025-2026 school year. Please place the items you donate in the tote in the Sunday School room. If you would like to give a monetary donation, please make your check payable to Solomon's Lutheran Church and put Power Pack Meals in the memo of your check.

**Weekends of Wonder:** Weekends of Wonder is a children's Christian education program offered by Solomon's UCC. On the second Saturday of every month, children ages 3 years and older can join Solomon's from 9:30 AM until noon for stories, songs, and activities designed to teach about God and God's love. Meanwhile, our hope is that guardians are enjoying a well-deserved sabbath! For more information and to download the registration form, visit <https://www.mysolomonsucc.org/childrens-ministry.html>. **If you would like to volunteer, please contact Pastor Julia to get connected.**

**SpiritTrust Lutheran has discount cards for sale, \$5 each good through August 2026.** If interested, they can be purchased from Bonney Coldsmith, Marjorie Dale, Becky Pecha, and Frances Reichard.

**If you are not taking your altar flowers home,** please let Kathy Bowen know to whom or to where you would like them donated. Thanks.

**The 2026 sign-up charts for Acolyte, Lector etc. are on the table in the Sunday School room.** Please sign up for as many as you can.

**Bulletin Announcement Forms** are in both pamphlet racks. Please submit all bulletin announcements to the office by the Wednesday prior to the Sunday for inclusion in the bulletin.

### **Music Notes/Hymn Notes:**

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” is an ancient Advent hymn that originated in part from the “Great ‘O’ Antiphons,” which were part of the medieval Roman Catholic Advent liturgy. On each day of the week leading up to Christmas, one responsive verse would be chanted, each including a different Old Testament name for the coming Messiah. When we sing each verse of this hymn, we acknowledge Christ as the fulfillment of these Old Testament prophecies. We sing this hymn in an already-but not yet-kingdom of God. Christ's first coming gives us a reason to rejoice again and again, yet we know that all is not well with the world. So along with our rejoicing, we plead using the words of this hymn that Christ would come again to perfectly fulfill the promise that all darkness will be turned to light. Join as we sing designated verses of this hymn, our Hymn of the Day, this morning. (Hymnary.org)

Our sending hymn this morning, “Joy to the World” is a unique Christmas carol. It was written by Isaac Watts in 1719, as part of a book of his poems. The poem was based on Psalm 98 and Watts never intended it to be a Christmas song, or any other song. “Joy to the World” refers not to the first coming of Jesus, but rather to the second coming. It is about Jesus coming again to rule in power, justice, and mercy. Nearly a hundred years later, a Boston music teacher and early American church musician, Lowell Mason, discovered the poem by Watts and set it to music. Releasing the song at Christmas, it quickly became a holiday favorite. It went on to become the most published carol in America. Sadly, Isaac Watts never knew he had written what would become one of his most famous hymns. Besides “Joy to the World,” there are nine other hymns whose texts were written by Isaac Watts. Among the most familiar are “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” “Give to Our God Immortal Praise,” and “Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed.” You can find a complete listing in the back of our hymnal on page 1193. (The Christian Broadcast Network; and Hymn Notes for Church Bulletins, Austin Lovelace).