



Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Fremont, Ohio 43420

Pastor Tim Miller

93.1FM

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Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

8 a.m. Service – Setting 3 with Holy Communion

*Congregation please stand as you are able.

Introduction

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.

Prelude:

Sing We Now of Christmas

Bill Cain

Welcome & Announcements: Joys and Concerns

Signing of the Pew Register by all present.

Noisy Offering: The Noisy Offering is given so children from our Companion Parish of Bumila Lutheran Church have the opportunity to attend school in the Mpwapwa Region. Thank you for your support of the children of our sister congregation in Bumila, Tanzania.

***Opening Hymn:**

Joy to the World

ELW 267

GATHERING

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

***Greeting**

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

C: And also with you.

P: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, Let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

C: Amen.

Advent's Holy Light Candle Lighting – Congregational Singing Part

Lighting of Advent Candle

P: Today the fourth candle, the candle of Love, joins the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy. Like the combined glow of many candles, let this season remind us of the strength found in unity as we come together to love and uplift one another. Let the warmth of love illuminate the connections that bind us together and foster us in a deep sense of belonging.

P: Love creates the bonds that provide us with deep meaningful relationships.

C: The greatest of all gifts is love.

P: Love inspires random acts of kindness and generosity.

C: The greatest of all gifts is love.

P: Love causes us to only look for the best in others.

C: The greatest of all gifts is love.

P: Love allows us to be accepted for who we are, flaws and all.

C: The greatest of all gifts is love.

P: Gracious Creator, we gather in your presence today, hearts brimming with gratitude for the extraordinary gift of love you have bestowed upon us. May the celebration of love extend beyond our immediate circles, creating ripples of compassion and unity in the world. In recognizing the beauty of love, may we become vessels of your light, shining brightly for all to see. Amen.

Advent's Holy Light – Congregational Singing Part

Repeat from previous page

***Confession and Forgiveness**

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

C: Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Long-expected God,

**C: 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.**

P: 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.

C: Amen.

Glory to God – sung to the tune of *Angels from the Realms of Glory*

Glory be to God the Father and to Christ His Only Son.

Praises to the Holy Spirit, may our voices sing as one.

Come and worship, come and worship.

Glory be to God on high.

***Prayer of the Day**

P: Let us pray.

**C: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant
grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that
eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with
the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD

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

First Reading:

Isaiah 7:10-16

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!

R: A reading from Isaiah, the seventh chapter.

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ 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.”

The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Responsive Reading:

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

¹ Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

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

³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

⁴ **O LORD God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**

⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

⁶ **You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;

let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

¹⁷ **Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

¹⁸ And so will we never turn away from you;

give us life, that we may call upon your name.

¹⁹ **Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;**

let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

Second Reading:

Romans 1:1-7

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.

R: A reading from Romans, the first chapter.

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ 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, ⁵ 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, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ 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.

The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia – sung to the tune of *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Amen

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Amen

Sing we praises to our Father, to Christ Jesus, to the Spirit.

Alleluia, Amen. Alleluia, Amen.

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."

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 1st chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

P: ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

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

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife

²⁵ 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.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Children's Sermon

Sermon

***Sermon Hymn:**

Unexpected and Mysterious

ELW 258

***Apostles' 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 Intercession**

R: 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.

R: In the anticipation of these days, prepare our hearts for your arrival.
Stir our spirits through the gifts of artists, musicians, poets, and
preachers, as together we proclaim your advent among us. God of
grace,

C: hear our prayer.

R: The earth breaks forth in singing as it heralds the Messiah's coming.
Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in
announcing this holy birth. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

R: You send your saving grace and peace to the nations. Lead us in work
for justice and care for the common good. May we meet the Christ-
child we seek in the faces of our neighbors. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

R: When tears of grief, exhaustion, or loneliness come, or physical or emotional hurt overwhelms us, come to our aid. Uphold all who are anxious, who know the challenges of depression, or who are ill, *especially those we name at this time (Pause for 10 seconds for people to be named)*. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

R: Surround expectant parents and those suffering from infant loss with communities of support. Bless young children and new parents. Guide us in ways that provide safety for all children and those who care for them. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

R: We give thanks for all who have treasured the gospel and lived in faithful service. Strengthen our earthly journeys until, at the last, your face shines upon us and we are held in your love. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

R: 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

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

***Sharing of the Peace**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

Offertory *Give Thanks

Give thanks with a grateful heart.

Give thanks to the Holy One,

Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ His Son.

Give thanks with a grateful heart.

Give thanks to the Holy One.

Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ His Son.

Give thanks.

***Offering Prayer**

P: 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.

C: Amen.

***The Great Thanksgiving**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: 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.

***Thanksgiving at the Table**

P: 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.

P: 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.

P: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**C: Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

P: 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.

C: Come, Lord Jesus.

P: 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.

C: Come, Holy Spirit.

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

C: Amen.

***Lord's Prayer**

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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.**

***Invitation to Communion**

P: Here is life. God is with us.

Come, receive what God has promised.

Lamb of God – sung to the tune of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O Lamb of God you take away our sins.

Have mercy on us, Lamb of God.

O Lamb of God you take away our sins.

Have mercy on us, Lamb of God.

Amen, Amen. Thy name we praise. Have mercy on us. Amen.

Distribution of Communion

Communion will be continuous. The ushers will invite you to come forward by the center aisle. You will be handed the bread with the words, "The Body of Christ given for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be to God!". Step to the Communion Assistant and take the cup. They will speak the words, "The Blood of Christ shed for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be to God!". Empty cups may be placed in the basket as you return to your seat by the side aisle.

If you prefer gluten- free bread, please let the Pastor know. If you prefer grape juice, please let the Communion Assistant know. If you prefer not to receive or have children who have not yet received, please let the Pastor know and he will offer a blessing.

Communion Hymn:

ELW 275 *Angels, from the Realms of Glory*

***Post Communion Blessing**

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

C: Amen.

***Prayer After Communion**

P: 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

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

***Blessing**

P: 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.

C: Amen.

***Closing Hymn:**

O Come, All Ye Faithful

ELW 283

***Dismissal**

P: Go in peace. Keep Awake.

C: Thanks be to God.

***Postlude:**

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Carlos Staszkeski

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ON THIS LAST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, we happily reach out to all who have come to approach the throne of Grace. Christmas will be truly Christmas when we center our minds on the Christ child who came to offer the world salvation and hope.

THE MITTEN TREE is up and any mittens and gloves will go to Atkinson Elementary School. Other items, such as hats and scarves, will go to Pontifex and/or Liberty Center.

CONGRATULATIONS TO REAGAN BROTHERS, daughter of Dr. Mike and Julie Brothers, and granddaughter of Larry & Teri Hine, on her graduation from Bowling Green State University on December 13, 2025 with a Bachelor's Degree in Speech Pathology. Reagan was one of thirty-seven students out of 650 to graduate Summa Cum Laude with a perfect 4.0 average! Super job Reagan!

2026 OFFERING ENVELOPES are available in the narthex. If you have not picked yours up yet, please do so.

UPDATED CHURCH TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES AND THE F.L.C.W. PROGRAM BOOKLETS for 2026 are also available in the narthex for you.

ANNUAL REPORTS DEADLINE – In order to put the Annual Report into your hands a week earlier than the January 25th meeting, the **deadline** to have all committee reports submitted to the office **is Sunday, January 4, 2026.** Please plan accordingly. Thank you.

PRAYER SISTERS FOR 2026 – You have the opportunity to be matched up with a prayer sister for 2026. Prayer sisters keep in touch with each other throughout the year. This can mean meeting for lunch or dinner, sending greeting cards, praying for each other regularly and anything else fun that you can think of to do together. **It really is quite rewarding!** If you would like to have a prayer sister, please let Barb Kocsis know (567-219-2603). Thank you.



CHRISTMAS CANTATA – TODAY, Sunday, December 21st, at the 10:30 a.m. service.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES: There will be a 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Candlelight Service with Holy Communion. Offerings from these services and Thanksgiving offerings will go to ELCA – Good Gifts. Please invite your family, friends and guests as we celebrate our Savior's birth.

DECEMBER 28, 2025: There will only be a 9 a.m. service this day with celebration of Holy Communion and Sunday School to follow.

ANY HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE YOUTH interested in participating in our next Bible Study starting January 11 – We will be concentrating on how we can use God's Word daily to support & strengthen our faith. Feel free to sign up on the youth room door, text or email, so enough Study Guides can be ordered. Please consider joining us! ajgazdecki@hotmail.com 330-696-0931. Deadline to order supplies is December 28th. Thank you. Annie Gazdecki.

USHERS NEEDED ON SUNDAY MORNINGS – I would like to appeal to those of you interested in being ushers to please sign up on the clipboards in the coat room area. Thank you very much! Mike Fought, Deacon.

REMINDER... *When Sandusky County is under a Level 3 Snow Advisory the church will be closed. This includes Sunday services as well as all weekday events, meetings and activities for that day. If we are under a level 1 or 2 snow emergency, the church will be open and if it's on a day of worship, we will have worship.*

IN OCTOBER, WE LAUNCHED OUR FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH PROJECTS CAPITAL CAMPAIGN, taking a bold step toward protecting our facility with a new roof for the next 25+ years, transforming our fellowship entry way into a more accessible and welcoming one, and revamping our sanctuary sound system to enhance and improve our worship experience. Thanks to your generosity, and the generosity of a donor who believes in this mission, so far, we've raised \$40,880 towards our ultimate goal of \$250,000! If you would like to contribute to this, simply note on your offering or gift that it is for the Faith Lutheran Projects Campaign.

PRAYING DAILY



For healing and hope: Joan Bolen, Mary Ann Diekman, Denny Fahle, Millie Fetterman, Pat Forsyth, Della Humbarger, Denny Krumnow, Bill Leutenegger, Dean May, Stan Moyer, Nancy Mylander, Gary Overmyer, Sandie Reed, Ken & Gloria Root, Bob Schneider, Bill Seibert, Janet Tressler, Linda Woessner. Roger Hardiman, Al & Judi Krumnow, Matt Michael, Jackie Mowry, Eric Paul, Louanna Rhea, Teri

Titkemeier, Victims of Holiday Parade crash in Clyde.

For the Family of: William Seibert

For our Military: Noah Egbert, Troy Halfhill, Jade Kayser, Daniel Linder, Tony Rozzi, Christopher Templeton, & Joshua Tooman.

For our Bishops: Bishop Christian Ndossa, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, and NWOS Bishop Daniel Beaudoin and Staff

For our partner congregation in Bumila, Tanzania

And its pastor: Pastor Peter Magasi

ASSISTING TODAY

Pastor: Rev. Tim Miller **Organist:** Parm Boyer
Cantata Director: Darla Brown **Cantata Accompanist:** Becky Fox
Narrator: Ken Walker, Jr. **Soloists:** Jadlynnne Moyer & James Deer
8:00 a.m. **10:30 a.m.**
Greeter: Jim & Kim Smith Laurie Krynock
Lector: Braelyn Weiker Laurie Krynock
Acolyte: Brielle Weiker Rachel Wasserman
Communion: K. Smith/B. Wasserman Miranda Garlock & Angi Miller
Counters: Laurie Krynock* & Randy Koch
Fellowship Time Host:
Altar Guild: Annie, Allison & Lauren Gazdecki
Ushers: (8:00) Roy & Shelli Burgoon

ASSISTING CHRISTMAS EVE

Pastor: Rev. Tim Miller **Organist:** Pam Boyer
Sr. Choir Dir.: Darla Brown **Praise Choir Dir.:** Becky Fox
Handbell Choir Director: Darla Brown **Soloist:** Jadlynne Moyer

4:00 p.m. **7:00 p.m.**

Greeter: Eric McBride & Family Harder Family
Lector: Evan McBride Gary Overmyer
Acolyte: Jackson Fought
Communion: A. Gazdecki & K. Smith R. Brown & G. Walker
Counters: Laurie Krynock* & Randy Koch
Altar Guild: Annie, Allison & Lauren Gazdecki
Ushers:

ASSISTING DECEMBER 28TH

Pastor: Rev. Tim Miller **Organist:** Parm Boyer
Sr. Choir Director: Darla Brown
9:00 a.m.
Greeter: Gazdecki Family
Lector: Dave Kocsis
Acolyte: Caleb Seibert
Communion: Jackie Seibert & Barb Kocsis
Counters: Ann Waggoner* & Anne Gerner
Fellowship Time Host:
Altar Guild: Annie, Allison & Lauren Gazdecki
Ushers:

FAITH ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK OF – Dec. 21 to Dec. 28

Sunday CHRISTMAS CANTATA AT 10:30 SERVICE

Dec. 21----- 8 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion
 9:15 a.m. Sunday School & Fellowship Time
 10:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE

Monday OFFICE OPEN

Dec. 22-----8 a.m. Men's Group in Fellowship Hall
 10 a.m. Valley View – Tea Time with God

Tuesday

Dec. 23-----

Wednesday OFFICE CLOSED

Dec. 24-----4 p.m. Christmas Candlelight Service with H.C.
 7 p.m. Christmas Candlelight Service with H.C.

Thursday OFFICE CLOSED

Dec. 25----- **MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

Friday OFFICE OPEN

Dec. 26-----

Saturday

Dec. 27-----

Sunday

Dec. 28----- 9 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion
 10 a.m. Sunday School & Fellowship Time

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2025: ATTENDANCE: 178 – OFFERING: \$7,639.67

GOSPEL MESSAGE

December 21, 2025
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Promises Made Real

Dreams are delicate things, often hanging in our minds only long enough to evaporate in the morning like dew on the grass. Yet dreams can also endure and shape the arc of social movements and the identities of people near and far. Joseph has the rare privilege of an *angelic* dream, of all things—a visitation from a divine messenger, beckoning a change of heart and a change of direction for him and the person he loves.

It is no small thing to change direction in life, especially when family expectations and social norms can make life harder than it needs to be. Yet, Joseph and Mary do a remarkable thing as they face uncertainty: They trust God's promise that something incredible is about to happen. They take the angel's words to heart and lean into the possibility of God's Holy Spirit doing something neither of them expected.

Joseph and Mary are at a precipice, a pivot point, a threshold, a new beginning. Isaiah's language reminds us of the relationship that stands at the center of this divine arrival: God is with us, God is with humanity, God is with (and in) the world! *Emmanuel!*

We stand at a similar threshold every time God gathers us in worship. In word and sacrament, God's promise unfolds anew, birthing love and grace in our lives. Such mercy may seem like a fever dream, a vanishing vision, an impossibility. Yet it is the very thing that undergirds our lives of faith, turning us time and again to what is most important: God's promises fulfilled. As God chose to be with Mary and Joseph, God has chosen to be with us, as we together bear witness to the Spirit who brings about a world where sin is forgiven and God is ever near.