



Third Sunday of Advent  
December 14, 2025 | 11:00 am



St. John's Lutheran Church | Salisbury, NC  
[stjohns-salisbury.org](http://stjohns-salisbury.org) | 704.636.3431

# WELCOME TO ST. JOHN'S!

*We're so glad God has brought you here!*

**Offering Envelopes**—Now available in the Sanctuary narthex and Peeler Hall through the end of the year, and in the Church Office beginning in January.

**Men's Chorus Christmas Concert** – “*The Work of Christmas*” - **Today at 4 pm in the Sanctuary**, with Guest Instrumentalists, Handbells, and Narration. Directed by Jason Harwood, and Accompanied by Janie Rollins, Thom Hinson, and Spence Robertson.

**Advent Music and Meditation** - **Dec. 15 at 12:15 pm in the St. John's Chapel**. Featuring Kevin Agner (cello) and Mark Tysinger (piano).

**Service of Lessons and Carols** – **Dec. 21 at 11 am in the Sanctuary**. The story of Christ's birth will be told in song, carols, scripture, and special music.

**Altar Flowers** - Given to the glory of God and in memory of Glenn and Addie Ketner, by Glenn and Susan Ketner.

## Christmas at St. John's

### CHRISTMAS EVE

Wednesday, December 24



**4 pm Christmas Eve Family Service**—in the Sanctuary. A beautiful Christmas service created with children in mind.

**8 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**—in the Sanctuary. Our time-honored candlelight service celebrates the Nativity of Our Lord led by the Chancel Choir, brass, timpani, organ and other musicians.

**11 pm A Sacred and Reflective Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**—in the Chapel. This holy service is a time to worship and bring in the birth of Jesus together in fellowship.

*(4 pm and 8 pm Christmas Eve services will be broadcast via live video stream.  
Visit our website at [stjohns-salisbury.org](http://stjohns-salisbury.org) and click "Watch Live.")*

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## GATHERING

*The congregation is invited to respond where words are in **Bold**.  
Hymns are found by number in the red worship books located in each pew.*

### PRELUDE

**‘Après un Rêve’**  
**‘Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 65, Mvt. 3’**  
*Kevin Agner (cello) and Mark Tysinger (piano)*

**Gabriel Fauré**  
**Frédéric Chopin**







*We rise and face the cross.*

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*All may make the sign of the cross ✠, the sign that is marked at baptism,  
as the presiding minister begins.*

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.  
*Silence is kept for reflection.*

<i>Cantor</i>	<i>Congregation</i>
	
Lord, have mer - cy.	Lord, have mer - cy.
	
Christ, have mer - cy.	Christ, have mer - cy.
	
Lord, have mer - cy.	Lord, have mer - cy.

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.**

1. Come, Thou long - ex - pect - ed Je - sus, Born to  
 2. Born Thy peo - ple to de - liv - er. Born a  
 set child, Thy and yet a King, Born to reign in  
 sins re - lease us; Let us find our rest in  
 us for - ev - er, Now Thy gra - cious king - dom  
 Thee. bring. By Thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it  
 Hope of all the earth Thou art; Dear de -  
 Rule in all our hearts a - lone; By Thine  
 sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, Joy of ev - 'ry  
 all - su - fi - cient mer - it, Raise us to Thy  
 long - ing heart.  
 glo - rious throne.

## APOSTOLIC 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.**

*Be seated.*

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Children ages 3 through 3rd grade are now invited to **Kingdom Kids**, exiting through the door near the baptismal font. Children will return to the worship service after the sermon.*

## ADVENT LIGHTING AND SONG

*The family comes forward during the song.*

*Toni and Bill Kenerly  
will light the Advent Wreath.*



We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord's coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen.**

*Light the third candle.*

## MUSICAL INTERLUDE

*The reader comes forward during the music.*

## WORD

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

## READING

**Isaiah 35:1-10**

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah, the 35<sup>th</sup> chapter.

<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.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

*We rise.*

## GOSPEL READING

**Matthew 11:2-11**

Come, Light of the World.

Come, Light of the World.

Hear us we pray: Come, light our way.

Come, Light of the World.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter. **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>11</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.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Be seated.*

**SERMON**

Pastor James Demmel

**REFLECTION SONG**

**‘The Swan’**

**by Camille Saint-Saëns**

*Kevin Agner (cello), Mark Tysinger (piano)*

**SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM**

**Julia Wrenn Larkins**

*Child of Rebecca Agner and Michael Larkins*

*Baptismal Partner: Sabine Witt*

**PRESENTATION**

*Baptismal family gathers at the font.*

People of God, do you promise to support Julia  
and pray for her in her new life in Christ? **We do.**

**THE PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church ...  
Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God, the powers of this world that rebel  
against God and the ways of sin that draw you from God? *We renounce them.*

*We rise.*

People of God, do you believe in God the Father?  
**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?  
**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.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?  
**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.**

## THANKSGIVING AT THE FONT

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We give you thanks, O God...unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

## RITE OF BAPTISM

*The Rite of Baptism includes three symbols used in baptismal liturgy since the beginning of the church: water (for cleansing), oil (for sealing), and light (for proclaiming).*

*Baptism with Water. Julia is baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

*Imposition of Oil. Oil is used to make the sign of the cross on Julia's forehead, a symbol that seals her in relationship with Christ.*

*Gift of Light. Julia is welcomed into the Family of God. A candle (the light of Christ) is presented to her with the words, "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).*

Let us welcome the newly baptized: **We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share: Join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative redeeming Word to all the world.**

*As Julia is introduced to the congregation; all are invited to sing:*

## BAPTISMAL SONG

*Jesus Loves Me'*

ELW 595

Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so;  
little ones to him belong, they are weak, but he is strong.

*Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me,  
yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.*

Jesus loves me! He who died, heaven's gates to open wide;  
he will wash away my sin, let his little child come in. *Refrain*



## PRAYER AND PEACE

*Each petition concludes with the following:*  
God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

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

*Be seated.*

## OFFERING AND ANTHEM

**'We Are Waiting'**  
*Arr. Priscilla Landis*

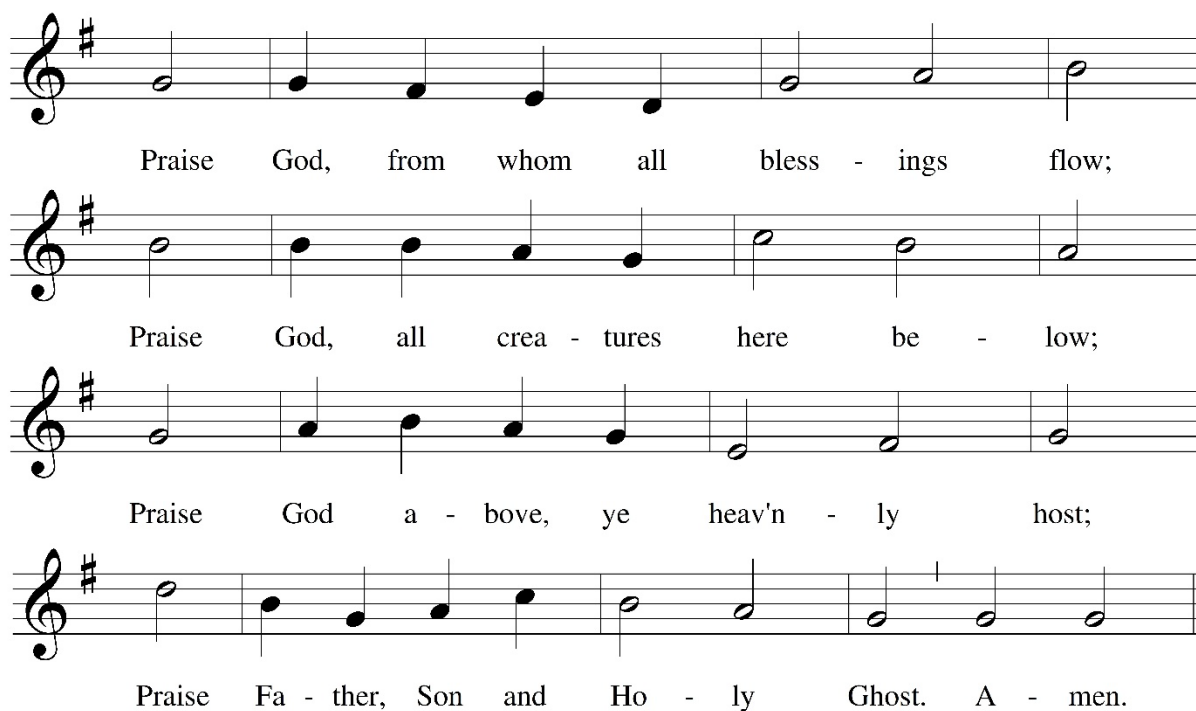
*We are waiting for Jesus;  
Jesus brings peace.*

*Sun of justice, shine upon us;  
we are trusting in your promise.*

*Loving Shepherd, walk beside us;  
stir our hearts, and gently guide us.*

*We rise.*

## RESPONSE AND PRAYER



Praise God, from whom all bless - ings flow;

Praise God, all crea - tures here be - low;

Praise God a - bove, ye heav'n - ly host;

Praise Fa - ther, Son and Ho - ly Ghost. A - men.

*Let us pray:* 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.**

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

### THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

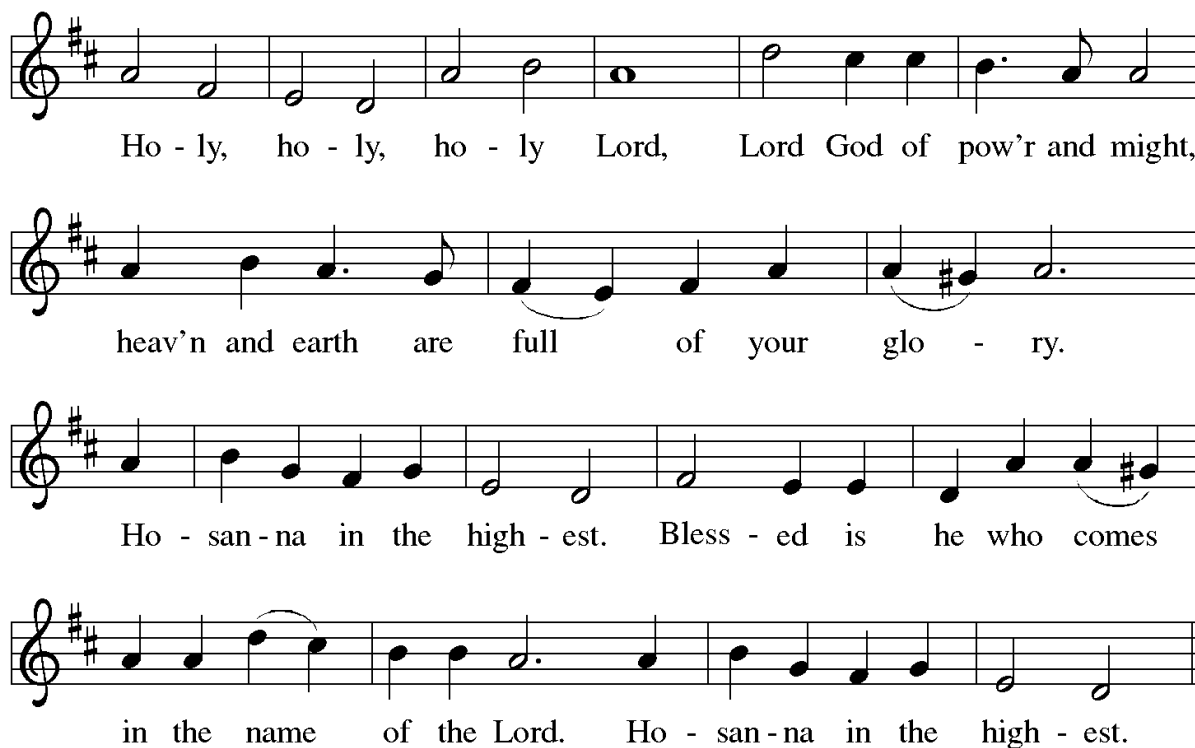
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**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



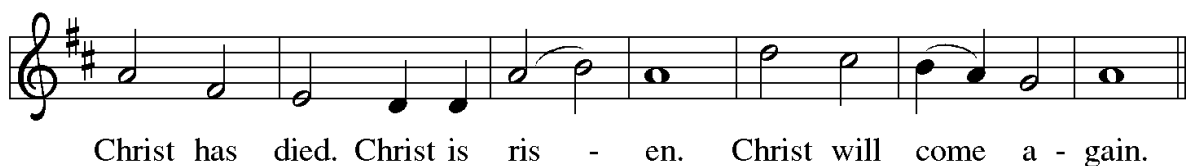
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,  
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.  
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes  
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

## THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

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.

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.

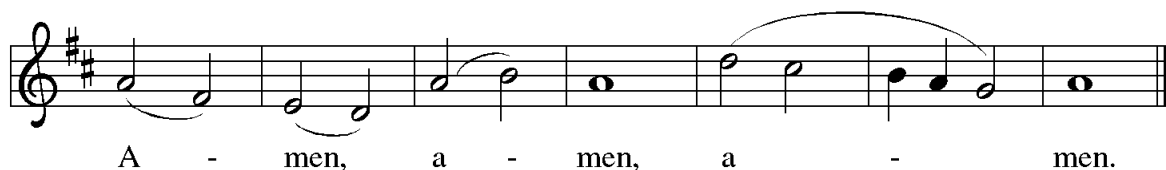
Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:



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.  
**Come, Lord Jesus.**

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.  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel,  
Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High,  
one God, now and forever. [*Sung*] **Amen.**



## LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, we 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.  
**Thanks be to God.**

*Be seated.*

## DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*All baptized Christians are welcome to receive Communion in the nave, following the usher's guidance. In the nave, communion is by intinction, dipping bread (gluten free by request) into wine (or grape juice). Those not receiving Communion are invited forward to receive a blessing (crossing your arms across your chest as a sign to the pastor). If you need Communion brought to you, please signal the servers when they come down from the chancel.*

## COMMUNION HYMN

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on

us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have

mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the

sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

## COMMUNION SONG

*'Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus'*  
*Arr. Mark Hayes*

*Kim Lentz, piano*



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for  
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -  
 3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when  
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for  
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is  
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so  
 dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.  
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;  
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.  
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -  
 mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -  
 Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in  
 Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and  
 kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to  
 won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and  
 sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.  
 shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.  
 weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.  
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry.



*We rise.*

## COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER

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

*Let us pray:* 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.**

## SENDING

*Forgiven and nourished, we are now sent into the world to share God's love.*

## 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 HYMN

### 'People, Look East'

ELW 248

1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing  
2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is  
3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the  
4 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new

of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,  
plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,  
bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,  
life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming

*...continue...*

trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look  
that in course the flow'r may flour - ish. Peo - ple, look  
bright as sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo - ple, look  
with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look

east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.  
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Rose, is on the way.  
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Star, is on the way.  
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

## DISMISSAL AND POSTLUDE

Go in peace. Keep awake.  
Thanks be to God.

## WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Cantor.....Mark Lewis  
Reader.....Mary Willis Page  
Preacher.....Pastor James Demmel  
Presider.....Pastor Dan Joyner Miller

## ORDER OF ST. JOHN'S

Acolytes.....Noah Trick and Carson Marino  
Crucifer.....Anna Lynn Marino  
Banner Bearer.....Bell Brady

# ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

200 West Innes Street, Salisbury, North Carolina 28144 | 704.636.3431  
stjohns-salisbury.org | To contact a staff member: *first-name*@stjohns-salisbury.org

## Pastoral Ministry

Senior Pastor.....Dan Joyner Miller...ext. 2060  
Pastor for Congregational Care .....Lori Carter...ext. 2050  
Pastor for Youth and Outreach .....James Demmel...ext. 2040

## Worship and Music Ministry

Pastor for Worship and the Arts.....Spence Robertson...ext. 2080  
Production Manager.....Taylor Hutchins...ext. 2190  
Associate Parish Musician.....Janie Rollins  
Bell Choirs.....Kimberly Lentz  
Contemporary Worship Leaders.....Michael Board and Ondria Witt  
Director of Music *emeritus*.....Karl Kinard, Jr., *deacon*

## Program Ministry

Children.....Stacey Shafer...ext. 2020  
St. John's Kindergarten (4 & 5 year olds), Director.....Bonita Rowland...ext. 2120  
Child Development Center, Executive Director.....Lea Anne Thomas...ext. 3212

## Administrative Team

Church Administrator.....Deborah Cross...ext. 2030  
Office Manager.....Vivian Connor...ext. 2000  
Bookkeeper.....Mark Bias...ext. 2170  
Communication Specialist.....Stephanie Mesimer...ext. 2220  
Ministry Program Coordinator.....Mary Wymbs...ext. 2180  
Facility Manager.....David Ellenburg...ext. 2070  
Custodian.....Steven Elliott



Let's connect faith and life. *Together.*