

A Mission Congregation of the ELCA
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
P. O. Box 64 - 8520 Oakes Rd - Pittsburg, Ohio 45358



Luke 1:26-45 [46-56]
December 22, 2024



Scan with your Smartphone and link to our web page,
our Facebook page, and our YouTube Channel.

GATHERING

- **Prelude** **Pam Sherman**
- **Office of the Acolyte and Ringing of the Bell**
- **Welcome** **Pr. Mel Musser**
- **Lighting of the Advent Wreath**
R: O Come, O Come Emmanuel.
C: We light the 1st candle in the hope of your coming.
C: We light the 2nd candle in love for our you and our neighbors.
C: We light the 3rd candle with joy in the promise.
R: With Mary we hope for the peace the promised messiah will bring to all creation.
C: We light the 4th candle for peace on earth.

* **THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM**

The assembly stands. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God, the fountain of living water, the rock who gave us birth, our light and our salvation.

C: Amen.

The presiding minister addresses the assembly.

P: Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness. Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Water may be poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks.

P: We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family. Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons, making us heirs of your promise and servants of all. We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. Shower us with your Spirit, and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

C: Amen

* Please stand if able

• Please be seated

* **GATHERING HYMN “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel” LBW 34**



1 Oh, come, oh, come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
 2 Oh, come, oh, come, great Lord of might, who to your tribes on
 3 Oh, come, strong Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's
 4 Oh, come, blest Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by your
 5 Oh, come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
 Si - nai's height in an - cient times once gave the law
 tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save
 ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,
 heav'n - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
 in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.
 and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!
 and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.
 and close the path to mis - er - y.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

* **APOSTOLIC 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.**

* **PRAYER OF THE DAY.**

P: Let us pray... Almighty God, like Mary, help us embrace humility and readiness as we navigate the unexpected. May we respond to your call with a willing heart, trusting in your guidance and love. In Jesus name we pray.

C: **Amen.**

* Please stand if able

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• **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**



Theme: The Greatest Gift

Materials: One Christmas Present wrapped with bright paper and one wrapped in plain brown paper

Scripture: Luke 1:26-56

Hello boys and girls! Merry Christmas, well almost... This is the last Sunday before Christmas. Are you excited? I am! Today I brought 2 different Christmas presents. If I let you pick one present, which one would you rather have? Would you rather have this brightly colored fancily wrapped package, or this one wrapped in plain brown paper?

Let's pass around this package and when it gets to you, call out one of your favorite things to receive as a present. (Allow each child to participate. Give a five-second time limit to speed up the process.)

On Christmas morning, we may wake up to find brightly colored packages tied up with pretty ribbons and bows. If on Christmas morning, you found a package with your name on it that was wrapped in plain brown paper and tied up with string, what might be your reaction? (Pause.) We might not be excited about a package like that.

Maybe that's why so many people have missed out on God's gift that we celebrate at Christmas. God's gift of Jesus, His only Son, didn't come in fancy wrapping. Jesus' mother was a very young girl... His earthly father was a poor carpenter... He was born in a stable not in a fancy house or even a big hospital. Not a very pretty package, is it? (Pause.) Despite the wrapping, Jesus is the greatest gift the world has ever known. He offered us forgiveness and eternal life with God!

The Bible tells us when Mary found out she was chosen to deliver God's gift to the world, she was filled with joy. She hurried to Elizabeth's home to share the good news. Elizabeth was also going to have a baby, and when she heard the news, the Bible says the baby she was carrying "leaped" inside of her! She exclaimed in a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what He said."

Through Jesus, God sent us the gift of His love, but some people are so busy unwrapping the beautifully wrapped packages this world offers that they have missed out on the greatest gift of all.

Dear Father, we are thankful that You loved us so much that You sent Your only Son to be our Savior. May we never miss out on the greatest gift of all time, your son, Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen.

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• **A READING OF SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:26-56**

R: The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the first chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance

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of his mercy, ⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.” ⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

R: This is the Word of the Lord!

C: Praise to You, O Christ (*Spoken*)

• **SERMON**

Pr. Mel Musser

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one born to turn the world upside down, our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

(SLIDE) Of all the people God could have chose to bear the Messiah, God chose Mary. We don't really know all that much about Mary. Historians believe she was a peasant girl, probably a teenager at the time she was first visited by the Angel Gabriel. Imagine how afraid Mary would have been. First of all, this wasn't just any old apparition. This was the Archangel of Goooodddd! (SLIDE) The news Gabriel brought was even more frightening. Imagine being told you were going to have a baby, but you didn't have a husband. Now today that would be no big deal. It happens all the time, but in those days girls who got pregnant outside of wedlock were stoned to death. Let that sink in for a minute... (SLIDE) Your family and people you thought were your friends picking up rocks the size of softballs and throwing them at you until your bones were broken and your skull smashed. Not a very pleasant prospect for Mary to say the least. Yet Gabriel tells Mary she has been favored by God. I know what I would have been thinking...

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“If that’s what being highly favored means, give me a little less favor, if you please...” Mary was one strong, independent woman inside that teenage girl’s body! Her reaction wasn’t, “how can I get out of this,” but just the opposite, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” (SLIDE)

Mary visited her cousin, Elizabeth and confirmed the Archangel’s announcement. She resolves to follow all that the Lord had in mind for her. After pondering her situation and what God was doing, she proclaims some of the most beautiful words in all of scripture. Her song has been known for centuries as “The Magnificat.” (SLIDE) In it she has the audacity to claim that her soul magnifies the Lord. Mary says for all the world, including you and me, that her soul makes God larger, like a magnifying glass... What she means, of course, is that through her life, we can closely examine God and see God even more clearly. Because of Mary, we get a close up picture of God’s character. We get a better understanding of who and what God favors. In the Magnificat, Mary is envisioning and voicing a vision of a world where the lowly are recognized as having value. She can see on the horizon the structure for a world where food and wealth are not hoarded by a handful of rich people, but shared equitably. Where those who try to enlarge themselves by cutting others down find their thoughts scattered and impotent. What a wonderful world that would be.

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I like to think of this fairly long scripture reading in movements. Mary moves from being perplexed to pondering, to probing, to finally permission giving. When the Archangel first appears to her, Mary is quite naturally perplexed. (SLIDE) Probably terrified. The Greek word we have translated as perplexed also means greatly disturbed, confused, or thrown into disarray. Mary's life was completely turned upside down. Then she began to ponder, or do what I like to call process the situation. The Greek word means she began to debate with herself about what this meant. What does it mean that a teenage girl, someone the culture of the time discounted as a nothing and a nobody, was highly favored by God. That one statement alone tells us our worldly values are at odds with God's will. Mary recognizes this fact when she says in her Magnificat, God, "has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant." She later says God, "has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly..."

Back then as now, we still believe God's blessings include wealth, power, and giving some people a strong voice to make policies and laws. Mary tells us something different. By selecting Mary, out of all the women who have ever lived, God is revealing to the world God's favor rests on those who have no wealth, no power, and no voice in society. It's a topsy, tervy world, or maybe it's not God's world that's topsy-tervy, it's our sin scarred and broken world we should be taking

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a second look at. So, first Mary is perplexed, then she ponders and processes the information. As she's pondering and debating with herself what this all could mean, she has a question for the Archangel. (SLIDE) She begins to probe a little deeper. How can this be, since I have not ever been with a man and I have never committed adultery? Gabriel offers her reassurance and a bit of proof. He tells Mary about Elizabeth and her miraculous conception and leaves her with the promise that nothing is impossible with God. With that reassurance, Mary moves into the final act of this story where she gives permission for God to use her to bring God's Son into the world. (SLIDE) Mary wasn't forced into something she didn't want on couldn't handle. She moved from being perplexed, to pondering, through a process of probing how this would all take place, to acceptance and permission granting.

Mary was a perfect disciple, prophet, and mother. Most of the time we only see Mary from one aspect of her character. We most often think of her as the mother of Jesus. In most of the pictures and icons of her, she's sweet, loving, and almost always white. The truth would have been significantly different. She was a tough, strong willed woman who knew the plan God had for her and lived into God's will. She must have been a marvelous woman of great faith. Without great faith she would have never noticed the Archangel Gabriel. She learned what God

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had in store for her and that made her a great disciple. By her pondering and her probing she was given insights that revealed God's true values. The strength of her character allowed her to overcome her fear and proclaim those values for all generations to come after her. Yes, Mary was the mother of our Lord, but she was oh, so much more!

As we move from being perplexed to pondering what all this means for us today, we can learn from Mary. If God favors the lowly, the powerless, and those with no voice in how society functions, then perhaps those are the very people God calls us to focus our attention on as well. (SLIDE) Jesus echoed these very same values from the Sermon on the Mount when he said blessed are the poor, the weak, those who mourn. He added blessed are you who give mercy, who are peacemakers, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. From my processing of what all this means, I can say with surety, God most certainly favors the poor, the meek, and the lowly. God also favors those who assist and provide for the poor the meek and the lowly. That's why we're in the business of ministry and where the focus of our ministry most closely aligns with the will of God.

May we learn from Mary what God's values are and how to respond when God calls your name. May we never forget God's values are different and sometimes at odds with the values we think are normal. May we always place the

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lifting up of those who are at the bottom of the rung on the social ladder as our highest goal and priority. May God continue to bless us when we share our blessings with those God highly favors. May we find in Mary a wonderful example of disciple, prophet, and mother of our Lord, amen.

Silence may be kept for meditation...

* **SPECIAL MUSIC** The Annunciation & Magnificat Pr Mel & Lexie Angles

* **NICENE CREED**

The Nicene Creed is said on all festivals and on Sundays in the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. The Apostles' Creed is said at other times. The Creed is omitted here if the service of Holy Baptism or another rite with a creed is used.

C: 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; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. 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 and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He 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.

➤ *Or, He descended to the dead.*

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* **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

L: Confident in your grace and truth, we pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

L: We pray for gratitude for all you have done. As we reflect on Mary's song of praise, fill our hearts with the same joy and thankfulness. May our lives be a witness to your goodness and grace. God, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We pray for the wellbeing of creation, our home. Help us not to take the earth's abundance and beauty for granted, and inspire us to be faithful stewards. God, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We pray for the leaders of our nation. May they lead with integrity and empathy. Help them make decisions that reflect the wellbeing of all of our diverse communities and people. God, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We pray for healing for all under emotional and mental duress or suffering physical illness (*especially...*) Help them find peace and clarity, and be their refuge in this time of need. God, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We pray that all ongoing conflicts and wars around the world might come to an end. Guide people and leaders to reconciliation and peace. God, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

L: We pray for inspiration to pass on the faith to the next generation as those before us passed on the faith to us. Guide us as we continue to share your love with others. God, in your mercy,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We lift up all of our prayers, spoken and unspoken to you. In Jesus' name we pray.

C: Amen.

* Please stand if able

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MEAL

- **OFFERING**

P: As we collect our offering here in person, those worshipping with us through the internet may go to our website located at www.pitsburgtlc.org where you'll find a button labeled "Give to Trinity." You can make your offering to God through our secure website.

- * **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

P: Let us pray for the offerings we receive this day ...God, our hearts leap for joy when we realize all that you have done for us. In gratitude, we return to you a portion of all you have given to us. Use these gifts according to your holy will for the sake of all creation.

C: Amen.

- * **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: United into one through Jesus Christ Our Lord, we pray as Jesus taught...

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.

SENDING

- **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- * **SENDING BLESSING**

P: God of endings and beginnings, God in the darkness and the light, God, our hope for the journey, bless and keep you ✝ now and forever.

C: Amen.

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* **SENDING HYMN**

“Prepare the Royal Highway”

LBW 26



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

* **DISMISSAL**

P: Thank you all for joining us to worship our great and gracious God! Thanks also to our Facebook and other social media viewers for joining us as well. We're glad you're with us today. Until the next time we gather together as God's people to offer our worship and praise, depart in Christ's Love.

C: Seeking, welcoming, and serving all. Amen!

* **POSTLUDE**

Pam Sherman

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Trinity Worship Assistants and Staff

Ministers	All the People of Trinity
Organist	Roxanne Groff
Lector	PJ Musser
Acolyte	
Parrish Nurse	PJ Musser
Custodian	Mark Groff
Secretary	Sharon Fourman
Facebook Live Recorder	PJ Musser

This Week @ Trinity – December 22, 2024 thru January 5, 2025:

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Sun, Dec. 22	9:30 am	Christian Conversations (Coffee/Juice and Donuts)
	10:30 am	Worship Service
Tues, Dec. 24	4 & 10 pm	Christmas Eve Worship
Fri, Dec. 27	3:30 pm	FISH Choice Food Pantry
Sun, Dec. 29	9:30 am	Christian Conversations (Coffee/Juice and Donuts)
	10:30 am	Christmas Hymn Sing & Ugly Christmas Sweater Sunday
Thurs, Jan. 2	10:00 am	Youth & Family Ministry Meeting
Fri, Jan. 3	3:30 pm	FISH Choice Food Pantry
Sun, Jan. 5	9:30 am	Christian Conversations (Coffee/Juice and Donuts)
	10:30 am	Worship Service

Health Tips for the Week

BODY: Be aware of what your body tells you.

MIND: Try to see other's points of view.

SPIRIT: Put your trust in God.

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Trinity is on the Air at FM 88.3

If you are near the Church on Sunday morning, you can tune in to FM 88.3 at 10:30 AM and hear the sermon from your car.

Holy Communion Delivery Available to ALL:

If you or anyone you know would like to have Holy Communion delivered to a home or place of business, please call Pastor Mel at 937-626-7100. He will bring a prefilled communion chalice including both sanctified wine and a morsel of bread all prepackaged from the Concordia True Vine company. This is a safe way to stay connected to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Trinity Contact Info

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