



# TREE OF LIFE

Christian Fellowship

“for Healing, Obedience, & Peace on Earth” (H.O.P.E.)



Christmas I | 28 Dec 2025

“Repent!”

Matthew 3:1—4:25

# ✠ The Way of Jesus Liturgy ✠

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## Invocation

Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth, ♦ **you created us to serve and protect your creation.** ♦ But we selfishly destroyed the balance of your creation ♦ **by choosing our own “good” and making Civilization.** ♦ So you sent your Son Jesus to embody the Way of the Lamb, ♦ **so we will die with him to Civilization’s Way of arrogance, fear, and violence.** ♦ And also be reborn with him through your Holy Spirit ♦ **to care for all of your creation by following Jesus’s Way of faith, hope, and love.**

## Processional Song — *LSB 379 “O Come, All Ye Faithful”*

- ♫ *O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant! O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem! Come and behold him, born the King of angels; O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord! ♫*
- ♫ *God of God, Light of Light eternal, Lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb; Son of the Father, begotten, not created, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord! ♫*
- ♫ *Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above: "Glory to God, all glory in the highest!" O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord! ♫*
- ♫ *Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n; Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing; O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord! ♫*

## Christmas Litany

We are not alone, ♦ **for our Creator is living among us!**  
Let all creation rejoice, ♦ **for our Creator is living among us!**  
Let every knee bow, ♦ **for our Creator is living among us!**  
Through a baby born in poverty, ♦ **our Creator has come to live among us.**  
He has come to rescue us ♦ **and save us from ourselves.**  
He has come to open our eyes ♦ **and show us how to be truly human.**

## Prayer of the Day

Jesus says, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them.”  
(the Christ candle is lit to remind us that Jesus is coming among us)

♫ *O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel! ♫ (tune: LSB 361)*

The Lord Jesus be with you. ♦ **And also with you.** ♦ Let us pray. Heavenly Father, help us to see that your Kingdom has come near so that we might repent and turn to you with all of our hearts and bodies. In the name of Jesus, your Son, our Lord. † **Amen.**

## † Baptism — The Way of Faith †

## Surrendering to the Creator

Jesus says, “If you hold onto your life, ♦ **you will destroy it.** ♦ But if you let go of



† Holy Gospel † Matthew 3:1-10

We stand for the word of Jesus. ♪ *Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise us on the earth, born to give us second birth. Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"* ♪ (tune: LSB 380)

The holy Gospel comes from Matthew 3. ♦ **Blessed are those who listen to Jesus.**  
If you have ears to hear, then listen! ♦ **Lord Jesus, help us to practice your Word.**

## Message

### † Repentance — The Way of Hope †

#### Confronting Our Past

Jesus says, "I know everything you do. Pay attention and remove the log from your own eye. I have called you out of Civilization. Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

(silence for reflection)

For prostituting ourselves with the false lovers of self, family, and nation,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to love you with every thought, word, and deed.**

For trusting the technology and works of human hands, especially money,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to trust in your power alone.**

For being double-minded hypocrites who misrepresent your name,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to obediently live as your children.**

For overworking and oppressing land, animals, and each other,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to live in restful peace with all creation.**

For not respecting those you send to guide us and teach us,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to listen to our fathers and mothers in Christ.**

For being violent to our bodies and your creation,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to love all creation, including our enemies.**

For degrading ourselves and others with our sexuality,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to keep our sexuality within marriage.**

For trying to possess and control your creation,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to share everything we have.**

For not being vulnerable and honest with others,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to be truthful in all situations.**

For competing with others and desiring more than we need,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to be content in all circumstances.**

Father, turn us back to walking in your Spirit. ♪ *Lord Father we have wandered and hidden from your face. Rescue your whole creation with your almighty grace. From trust in wealth and weapons and blindness to your Way, save us and all creation with your own hands, we pray.* ♪ (LSB 449) Jesus says, "I discipline those I love. If you love your self, family, or nation more than me, you cannot be my disciple. Come out of Civilization, my people, so you will not share in its sicknesses. Not one stone will be left standing, it will all be torn down." Will you turn away from Civilization's Way of arrogance, fear, and violence and reaffirm your Baptism into Jesus's Way of faith, hope, and love? ♦ **Yes, I renounce Civilization's Way and pledge to follow Jesus.** ♦ Jesus

says, “Put your sword away. If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword. But if you forgive others, your heavenly Father will forgive you.” Will you release all debts and grudges that you hold against anyone—including every member of this church? ♦ **Yes, I forgive all those who have hurt me, frustrated me, or owe me anything.** ♦ Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven. Get up and walk. Go and sin no more.” † Amen.

Song of the Day — “*When John the Baptist Preached*” (tune: LSB 878)

- ♫ *When John the Baptist preached for all to hear, He said, “Repent! The kingdom has come near!” His rough, prophetic manner caused surprise, But people heard his words and were baptized.* ♪
- ♫ *Then John proclaimed that they should change their ways — For trees that don’t bear fruit are set ablaze. Prepare the Lord’s own way! Make his paths straight! It’s time to change! We can no longer wait!* ♪
- ♫ *O God, we harm creation by our greed; We overlook our neighbors in their need. We let our lives be ruled by hate and fear; Your call to change is one we need to hear.* ♪
- ♫ *And Lord, you call for change in your church, too, For even here we’ve wandered far from you. Renew in us a vision of your Way, And give us strength and courage to obey.* ♪

Waiting on the Creator

♫ *Our Father, bring your Rule and will to earth. Give what we need for worry-free rebirth. Bring peace among us and forgive us too, as we forgive and love in all we do.*

♫ *Protect us from all things that will mislead. Keep us from selfishness, violence, and greed. We place our lives into your hands this day. Teach us to listen and to walk your Way. Amen.* ♪ (LSB 637)

(incense is lit to symbolize our prayers ascending to God and as its smell fills this space we are reminded of his presence among us)

Jesus says, “Learn from the birds. They do not store up for tomorrow and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Do not fear or worry about tomorrow. Seek only your Father’s Kingdom and he will give you everything you need.”

*In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, set us apart from Civilization in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. Take charge of our lives and all those in authority. Use everything that happens to bring your good judgment and healing upon all creation. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, provide for us, protect us, and heal our brokenness. Especially this day we remember Charlene Sargent, John Espino, Bill Mellott, Cebra Sims, and those we name in our hearts... Father, give us exactly what we need this day and teach us to be content with that. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, forgive us and free us from all that enslaves us. Help us to walk away from our anxieties, traumas, and addictions to Civilization’s Way, so we may walk in Jesus’s Way. Empower us to love and forgive everyone, even our enemies, in the way you have loved and forgiven us. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, humble us and remind us that we have no strength apart from you. Stay with us in difficult times and save us from our selfishness. Comfort us in the certain hope that all your creation and children will be renewed and raised from the dead. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord*

*have mercy.* ♪ Father, help us to let go and surrender everything into your loving hands, trusting that you work all things for the good of those who love you. ♦ **Our Father in Heaven, may your name be holy, may your Kingdom come, and may your will be done—on Earth as in Heaven. Give us this day what we need for today. Forgive us in the same way that we forgive others. Do not abandon us when we are tempted, but pull us away from what is evil. For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours—now and forever. † Amen.**

## † Communion — The Way of Love †

### Sharing the Lord's Peace

Jesus says, “Make peace with each other ♦ **before you come to the Lord's altar.** By this all people will know that you are my disciples: ♦ **if you love each other.**”

### Offering & Musical Offering

Jesus says, “Do not store up things on earth. To be my disciple you must give up everything you own. Sell your possessions and give to the poor.” We offer all we have to the Lord, while also offering gifts to support this communion.

### Pledge of Allegiance

♪ *We come before you, Lord, to bow. We lay our lives at your feet now. All things are yours, we own nothing! Our lives are in your hands this day. Give what we need, O Lord, we pray. Please protect us, provide for us! Watch over us, ever with us, always love us!* ♪ (LSB 816) Jesus says, “If you pledge your allegiance to me before others, then I will pledge my allegiance to you before my heavenly Father.”

♦ **I pledge allegiance to one God, the all-powerful Father, who is the Creator of Heaven and Earth, of all things visible and invisible.**

♦ **I pledge allegiance to one Lord, Jesus Christ, who is God's only Son. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He loved and he suffered. Under Pontius Pilate, he was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day he was raised from the dead. He ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. He is coming to judge the living and the dead. His Kingdom will not end.**

♦ **I pledge allegiance to the Holy Spirit, who is the giver of life, the holy universal Church, the communion of saints, the baptism for forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life in the age to come. † Amen.**

### Thanksgiving — Εὐχαριστία

Let us give thanks to our Creator! ♦ **It is right to give him thanks and praise!**

Father, we praise and thank you, ♦ **for you provide, protect, love, and renew us and all creation!** ♦ We are grateful for all that you give, especially for... Father, we thank you for marrying yourself to us and uniting Heaven and Earth, Spirit and Flesh, and Christ and the Church through your Son Jesus! ♪ *Let all creation be humble and rejoice in awe and fear. We give thanks to our Lord Jesus who brings heaven to us here. He is giving himself to us and his presence has come near.* ♪ (tune: LSB 621)

## † Words of Our Lord Jesus †

On the night before our Lord Jesus was crucified, he revealed his Way of rescuing all creation from the Way of Civilization. Before supper, Jesus humbly washed the feet of his students and enemies. Jesus said, ♦ **“Follow my example. Love each other, even your enemies, in the same way I have loved you.”** ♦ During supper, Jesus then took the bread and broke it. He gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is being given for you. Do the same for each other in my memory.” After supper, Jesus then took the cup and gave thanks. He said, “This is my blood of the covenant which is being shed for you, for the forgiveness of your sin. Do the same for each other in my memory.” ♪ *Oh come Lord Jesus come and dine and give yourself through bread and wine. Feed us so we may have new birth, and bring your rule ov'r all the earth. Come now, come now! Our Lord Jesus and bring your healing love to us!* ♪ (LSB 357)

## Sharing the Bread & Wine

Jesus says, “I am the bread of life. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood is united with me and will be raised from the dead.” As we feed on the Bread of Heaven ♦ **we are made members of Christ’s Body.** ♦ We no longer live for ourselves ♦ **but Christ lives within us.** ♦ We invite all Baptized members of the holy universal Church, who give their undivided allegiance to Jesus and are at peace with their brothers and sisters in Christ, to join us ♦ **as the Creator’s Lamb mysteriously gives himself to us in, with, and under this bread, wine, and communion.** ♪ *Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing; Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King. Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.* ♪ (tune: LSB 368)

## Song — “*God We Long For Our Own Comfort*” (tune: LSB 803)

- ♪ *God, we long for our own comfort; we want life that's full and sure — Stones to bread, right now, abundant; we forget what shall endure. When we look to things around us for our pleasure, out of greed, God, we pray that you'll remind us: it's your Word we really need.* ♪
- ♪ *We confess we push the limits; faith gives way to testing pride: “Be dramatic, make a statement, prove that God is on your side.” When we're tempted to show others that you'll do what we request, God, remind us to be humble — not to put you to the test.* ♪
- ♪ *We bow down to what is evil to achieve the things we choose; We don't see when sin is subtle; we don't see what we might lose. May we look again to Jesus who, though tempted, turned from wrong. By your Spirit, guide and lead us; keep us watchful, faithful, strong.* ♪

## Ἀγάπη Feast & Text Discussion

Jesus says, “Do you love me? Then feed my sheep.” We now move to our Bible study room to continue devoting ourselves ♦ **“to the Apostles’ teaching, to communion with each other, to the sharing of bread, and to prayer.”**

## Sent to “Do the Same in My Memory”

Christ Jesus, you are the Lamb, who has laid down your body and blood for us, ♦ **help us to be lambs who do the same for each other in your memory.** † Amen.

Jesus says, “Go and live this truth: ♦ **The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!** ♦ Heal the sick, raise the dead, ♦ **cleanse the unclean, and cast out evil spirits.** ♦ Freely you have received from the Creator, ♦ **now freely you must give.** ♦ I am sending you like lambs among wolves, ♦ **but do not fear, take up your cross and follow me.**”

♫ *Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.* ♫ *He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders, and wonders of his love.* ♫ (tune: LSB 387)

### Blessing

Jesus says, “Blessed are you in your poverty and suffering, for you are in the Creator’s Kingdom. Blessed are you in your humility, for you will inherit the earth. Blessed are you when you are merciful and peaceful, for you will find mercy and peace.” † **Amen.**

\* Faith & Film: “Signs” (Jan 5, 12) | “The Woodsman” (Jan 19, 26) | “The Chosen” Season 5 (Feb 9, 16, 23, Mar 2, 9, 16, 23, 30)

\* Growing in H.O.P.E.: Wednesdays @ DG (5:30 pm food/fellowship, 6:00 pm study)

**Questions & Conversations:**

Jan 7 (potluck) — “Spiritual Disciplines”

Jan 14 — “The Bible & Inspiration”

Jan 21 — “Biblical Interpretation”

Jan 28 — “Violence in the Old Testament”

\* Game Night: First Fridays @ DG (6 pm, BYOB), Jan 2, Jan 30, Mar 6

### Weekly Calendar | December 28 - January 4, 2025

<b>Sun, Dec 28</b>	9:30 am	Liturgy & Αγάπη Feast   Matthew 3:1—4:25
<b>Mon, Dec 29</b>		
<b>Wed, Dec 31</b>		
<b>Sat, Jan 3</b>	7-9 am	Breakfast & Devotion
<b>Sun, Jan 4</b>	9:30 am	Liturgy & Αγάπη Feast   Matthew 5:1—7:29

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