



**ANOTHER YEAR  
OF GOD'S GRACE**

December 31, 2023



# GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

## ***God's Word for this New Year***

There are two great miracles in Christmas: the one that God has become man for us and for our salvation, and, that he in grace *reveals* the first miracle even to me and blesses each one of us with all its benefit. We continue to celebrate the miracle of the incarnation today.

It is in that pure grace of God that we look forward to a new year. We pray that God would bless, guide, and lead us forward in faith and love as we turn the page and begin 2024 tomorrow.

## ***Before Worship***

Take time for prayer and to review the lessons and the service notes.

## ***General Information***

The restrooms are located in the fellowship hall.  
Visitors – welcome, and please take a moment and sign the guestbook in the fellowship hall.

## ***Serving in Worship***

Music: Rachel Halldorson  
Ushers: Mike Jensen, Kurt Knurr  
Pastor: Wayne Halldorson  
Pastor's Cell: 903-717-1922  
Pastor's Email: grace.tx.pastor@gmail.com

## ***Church Information***

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Prayer Requests: [prayers.grace.wels@gmail.com](mailto:prayers.grace.wels@gmail.com)  
text to 520-236-9673

### ***T-Loop Hearing Assistance***

*If you have a hearing aid with a T-coil, you can connect it to the T-Loop device installed throughout the church building. Headsets are available for anyone needing hearing assistance. Personal ear-buds can also be used with a head set. See Kris Martinson if you need assistance.*



# NEW YEAR'S EVE WORSHIP SERVICE

## 331 From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

CW 331 sts. 1, 3-5



1 "From heav'n a - bove to earth I come to bear good  
3 "This is the Christ, our God most high, who hears your  
4 "He will on you the gifts be - stow pre - pared by  
5 "These are the signs which you shall mark: the swad - dling



news to ev - 'ry home; glad ti - dings of great  
sad and bit - ter cry; he will him - self your  
God for all be - low, that in his king - dom,  
clothes and man - ger dark. There you will find the



joy I bring, where - of I now will say and sing:  
Sav - ior be from all your sins to set you free.  
bright and fair, you may with us his glo - ry share.  
in - fant laid by whom the heav'ns and earth were made."

Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.; Martin Luther, 1483-1546  
Tune: Geistliche lieder, Leipzig, 1539, ed. Valtin Schumann  
Text and tune: Public domain

*Stand*

### **Opening Blessing**

The grace of our Lord ✠ Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

## ***Confession & Absolution***

My dear fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we have come here to worship the one and only true and living God.

He is a holy and righteous God who threatens to punish all those who rebel against his righteous demands.

Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy, that we might begin this new year wrapped up in his grace, mercy, and forgiveness:

**Lord God, heavenly Father, I confess that I have been sinful from the moment my life started. I have sinned against you throughout my life and throughout this past year in what I have said, thought, and done, and what I have left undone.**

**You clearly see, and I openly admit, that I deserve nothing but your eternal punishment.**

**But for the sake of Jesus, your dear Son, I beg you to have mercy on me. Because of his blood shed on the cross, forgive all my sins. Do not look at me, O God, but look at your Son who gave his life for me.**

### ***331 From Heaven Above to Earth I Come***

CW 331 st. 8

8 Wel - come to earth, O no - ble Guest, thro' whom the  
sin - ful world is blest! You came to share my  
mis - er - y, that you might share your joy with me.

Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.; Martin Luther, 1483–1546

Tune: Geistliche lieder, Leipzig, 1539, ed. Valten Schumann

Text and tune: Public domain

God, our Father, assures you that the blood of Jesus his Son † purifies you from all sins. Today, as we prepare to start this New Year, you get a brand new start because of what Jesus has done for you — you are righteous in God’s sight and are forgiven for all your sins. God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

You are God’s own dear child, and will live with Him forever. Do you believe this?

**Yes, I believe.**

Then let us respond to the grace and mercy of God with a hymn of praise:

**331 From Heaven Above to Earth I Come**

CW 331 sts. 14–15

14 My heart for ver - y joy must leap; my lips no  
15 Glo - ry to God in high - est heav'n, who un - to  
more can si - lence keep. I too must sing with  
us his Son has giv'n, while an - gels sing with  
joy - ful tongue that sweet - est an - cient cra - dle song:  
pi - ous mirth a glad new year to all the earth!

Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.; Martin Luther, 1483–1546  
Tune: Geistliche lieder, Leipzig, 1539, ed. Valten Schumann  
Text and tune: Public domain

## ***Prayer of the Day***

Let us pray:

Eternal God, we commit to your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending and commend to your blessing and love the times to come. In the new year, abide among us with your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*Be seated*

# **THE WORD**

## ***First Reading***

Ecclesiastes 12:1–7

<sup>1</sup>Remember your Creator  
in the days of your youth,  
before the days of trouble come  
and the years approach when you will say,  
“I find no pleasure in them” —  
<sup>2</sup>before the sun and the light  
and the moon and the stars grow dark,  
and the clouds return after the rain;  
<sup>3</sup>when the keepers of the house tremble,  
and the strong men stoop,  
when the grinders cease because they are few,  
and those looking through the windows grow dim;  
<sup>4</sup>when the doors to the street are closed  
and the sound of grinding fades;  
when people rise up at the sound of birds,  
but all their songs grow faint;

<sup>5</sup>when people are afraid of heights  
 and of dangers in the streets;  
 when the almond tree blossoms  
 and the grasshopper drags itself along  
 and desire no longer is stirred.  
 Then people go to their eternal home  
 and mourners go about the streets.

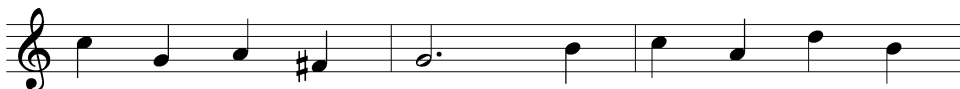
<sup>6</sup>Remember him—before the silver cord is severed,  
 and the golden bowl is broken;  
 before the pitcher is shattered at the spring,  
 and the wheel broken at the well,  
<sup>7</sup>and the dust returns to the ground it came from,  
 and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

**90D O God, Our Help in Ages Past**

Psalm 90D sts. 1–4



1 O God, our help in a - ges past, our  
 2 Un - der the shad - ow of your throne your  
 3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood or  
 4 A thou - sand a - ges in your sight are



hope for years to come, our shel - ter from the  
 saints have dwelt se - cure; suf - fi - cient is your  
 earth re - ceived its frame, from ev - er - last - ing  
 like an eve - ning gone, short as the watch that



storm - y blast, and our e - ter - nal home:  
 arm a - lone, and our de - fense is sure.  
 you are God, to end - less years the same.  
 ends the night be - fore the ris - ing sun.

<sup>22</sup>Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. <sup>23</sup>For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. <sup>24</sup>For,

“All people are like grass,  
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;  
the grass withers and the flowers fall,  
<sup>25</sup>but the word of the Lord endures forever.”

And this is the word that was preached to you.

**Verse of the Day**

Psalms 90:1

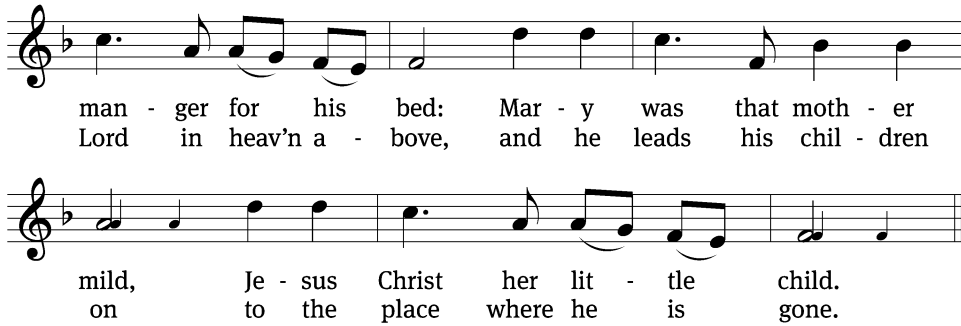
**Alleluia. Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Alleluia!**

**343 Once in Royal David's City**

CW 343 sts. 1, 3

1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly  
 3 And our eyes at last shall see him through his own re -  
 cat - tle shed, where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a  
 deem - ing love, for that child, so dear and gen - tle, is our





man - ger for his bed: Mar - y was that moth - er  
 Lord in heav'n a - bove, and he leads his chil - dren  
 mild, on Je - sus Christ her lit - tle child.  
 to the place where he is gone.

Text: Cecil F. Alexander, 1818–1895, abr., alt.  
 Tune: Henry J. Gauntlett, 1805–1876  
 Text and tune: Public domain

## ***Gospel Reading***

Luke 13:6–9

<sup>6</sup>Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. <sup>7</sup>So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’

<sup>8</sup>“ ‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. <sup>9</sup>If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’ ”



1 A - cross the sky the shades of night this New Year's Eve are  
 2 Be - fore the cross, sub - dued, we bow, to you our prayers ad -  
 3 We now re - mem - ber, as we pray, our dear ones in your  
 4 Then, gra - cious God, in years to come, we pray your hand may



fleet - ing. We deck your al - tar, Lord, with light, in sol - emn  
 dress - ing, re - count - ing all your mer - cies now and all our  
 car - ing who bright - ly shine in end - less day, past death and  
 guide us, and, on - ward through our jour - ney home, your mer - cy



wor - ship meet - ing; and, as the year's last hours go by, we  
 sins con - fess - ing. We ask you, Lord, this com - ing year to  
 all de - spair - ing. When ends our life, Lord, as your own, bring  
 walk be - side us un - til at last our ran - somed life is



raise to you our ear - nest cry, once more your love en - treat - ing.  
 keep us in your faith and fear and crown us with your bless - ing.  
 us with them a - round your throne, the joys of heav - en shar - ing.  
 safe from per - il, toil, and strife when heav'n it - self shall hide us.

Text (sts. 1-2, 4): James Hamilton, 1819-1896, alt.; (st. 3): Gregory J. Wismar, b. 1946

Tune: adapt. Nicolaus Decius, c. 1485-after 1546; plainsong, 10th cent.

Text (st. 3): © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: CCLI no. 11133502

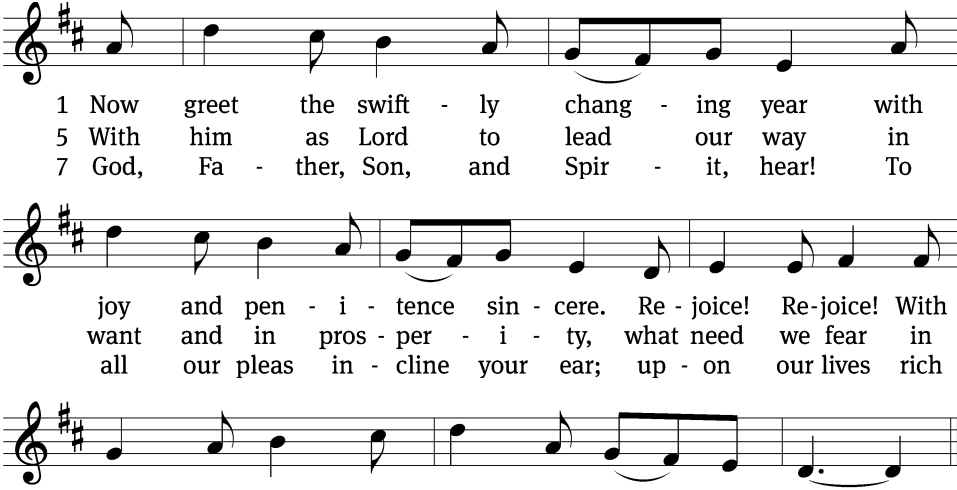
Text (sts. 1-2, 4) and tune: Public domain

## Sermon

Luke 13:6-9 "God's Business for 2024"

## 368 Now Greet the Swiftly Changing Year

CW 368 sts. 1, 5, 7



1 Now greet the swift - ly chang - ing year with  
5 With him as Lord to lead our way in  
7 God, Fa - ther, Son, and Spir - it, hear! To  
joy and pen - i - tence sin - cere. Re - joice! Re-joyce! With  
want and in pros - per - i - ty, what need we fear in  
all our pleas in - cline your ear; up - on our lives rich  
thanks em - brace an - oth - er year of grace.  
earth or space in this new year of grace?  
bless - ing trace in this new year of grace.

Text: tr. Jaroslav J. Vajda, 1919–2008, alt.; Cithara Sanctorum, Levoca, 1636

Tune: Alfred V. Fedak, b. 1953

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### Offering

### Prayer of the Church

Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things.  
**His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.**

The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness  
to the nations.

**All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.**

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he  
appears?

**If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?**

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.

**My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.**

When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

Lord Jesus, as the old year passes away, we are reminded of how swiftly life passes. We are strangers and pilgrims in this world; our real home is with you in heaven. Help us to keep our eyes on that heavenly goal, and not to become distracted by the temporary joys or perils of this life which soon pass away. Bless all our efforts to serve and glorify you in this New Year, and remind us of your constant love, presence, guidance and direction.

**Thank you for all that you've allowed into our lives over this past year, the blessings along with the hard things, which have reminded us how much we need you and rely on your presence and grace every single day.**

We pray for your Spirit to lead us each step of this New Year. We ask that you would guide and bless our decisions with unity, and turn our hearts to deeply desire you above all else. We ask that you would open doors needing to be opened and close the ones needing to be shut tight. We ask that you would help us release our grip on the things to which you've said "no," "not now," or "patiently wait." We

ask for help to pursue you first, above every dream and desire within our hearts.

**We pray for your protection over our families, friends, and our country. We ask for your hand to cover us and keep us distanced from the evil intent of the enemy; that you would be a barrier to surround us, and that we'd be safe in your hands. We pray that you would give us discernment and insight beyond our years, to understand your will, to hear your voice in Holy Scripture, and to know your ways and pursue them with all our strength.**

*(Special prayers & private petitions . . .)* Hear the prayers of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world, that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again, and that you would guide each step of this new year, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### ***Apostles' Creed***

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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 into hell.**

**The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

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

### ***Blessing***

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look on you with favor and ✠ give you peace.  
**Amen.**

#### ***Acknowledgments***

Setting Eight (German) from Christian Worship  
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### **783 Abide with Me**

CW 783



1 A - bide with me, fast falls the e - ven - tide.  
2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day;  
3 Come not in ter - rors, as the King of kings,  
4 Thou on my head in ear - ly youth didst smile,



The dark - ness deep - ens; Lord, with me a - bide.  
earth's joys grow dim, its glo - ries pass a - way;  
but kind and good, with heal - ing in thy wings,  
and though re - bel - lious and per - verse mean - while,



When oth - er help - ers fail and com - forts flee,  
change and de - cay in all a - round I see;  
tears for all woes, a heart for ev - 'ry plea;  
thou hast not left me oft as I left thee;



help of the help - less, O a - bide with me.  
O thou who chang - est not, a - bide with me.  
come, Friend of sin - ners, thus a - bide with me.  
on to the close, O Lord, a - bide with me.

- 5 **I need thy presence ev'ry passing hour;  
what but thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?  
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!**
- 6 **I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless;  
ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still if thou abide with me.**
- 7 **Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;  
shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.  
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;  
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## ***Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!***

Pastor and family also want to thank our flock for the generous gifts and the cards they received at Christmastime!

## ***Bible Classes***

This week our regular midweek Bible Classes will also be on hold.

## ***A Look at our Church Library***

On Giving Advice to God - Part 1 & 2

Wanting to strengthen your devotional life? Are you looking for something meaty that challenges your spiritual growth? "On Giving Advice to God" Parts 1 & 2 by Daniel Deutschlander is available in the church library for you to check out. Developing the theme "The Wisdom of God and the Foolishness of Man", the author reminds the reader how far God's wisdom goes beyond our human thoughts and understanding. Part 1 takes us from Advent through Ascension, following along the church year and the familiar accounts of Scripture we've come to anticipate year after year. The insights you are sure to gain will deepen your understanding and appreciation for God's wisdom and magnanimous love! Part 2 takes us through Pentecost and beyond. Once you get into it, you may even be tempted to buy a copy for your own personal library because you will want to come back to this again and again - one read through is not enough! It makes a great couples' devotion too, and offers plenty of discussion opportunities each time. Your devotional life will never be the same!

## ***Upcoming Schedule***

Today	9 / 10 am	Bible Class / Christmas 1 Worship
Tomorrow	all year	Happy 2024!
Jan. 7	9 / 10 am	Bible Class / Epiphany Worship