

The Sunday after Christmas

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

P.O. Box 98, Okabena, MN 56161

A member congregation of the
Church of the Lutheran Confession

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WELCOME To all of you who are visiting our service this morning, we extend a most cordial welcome in Jesus' name. It is our hope that you will feel at home in our midst and will be blessed by our message of Christ crucified and risen for the sins of the world.

If you are looking for a church home or would like to know more about our beliefs and practices, please see the pastor. He will be glad to visit with you at your convenience. Be sure to join us again.

Prelude Mrs. Kathy Lueck

Hymn 111 *Thou Who Roll'st the Year Around*

P: Today we mark the end of another year of our lives and the start of a new one. Every thought, every word, and every action is now behind us. Not a single moment of the past can be changed. Actions cannot be undone. Words cannot be taken back. Sinful thoughts cannot be withdrawn. As we survey the past twelve months of 2023, we bow our heads in humble repentance and confess:

C: "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rages; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

P: The sinfulness of mankind is universal. All of us, without exception, are unclean before God because of our sin. Our depravity is total, we are completely sinful by nature. We are lost unless we have forgiveness. Therefore we rejoice in the Word of our God:

C: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

1. Now greet the swiftly changing year With joy and penitence sincere.
Rejoice! Rejoice! With thanks embrace Another year of grace.
3. This Jesus came to end sin's war; This Name of names for us He bore.
Rejoice! Rejoice! With thanks embrace Another year of grace.

P: We have passed through another springtime, summer, and fall, and are now in the midst of winter. Though the seasons pass without our notice, they teach us that our lives grow shorter and shorter each day:

C: So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

P: 2023 brought sickness to some of our members. There were hospitalizations, surgeries, and tests of faith. Our earthly bodies, which the Lord created to live forever, have been infected and ruined by sin. The Lord graciously hears and answers our prayers.

C: "I am the LORD who heals you." "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

4. His love abundant far exceeds The volume of a whole year's needs.
Rejoice! Rejoice! With thanks embrace Another year of grace.
5. With Him as Lord to lead our way In want and in prosperity,

What need we fear in earth or space In this new year of grace.

P: 2023 was a year where God was present among us in His Word and Sacraments. Faithfully and eagerly the Lord came through His means of grace to bless us with the assurance that we are His forgiven children in Christ.

C: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

P: 2023 was a year of many changes. On a global and personal level, changes have come for good or bad. As we step into 2024, more change is likely. Nevertheless, our greatest need and our greatest hope will never change:

C: "Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, today, and forever."

6. "All glory be to God on high, And peace on earth!" The angels cry.
Rejoice! Rejoice! With thanks embrace Another year of grace!

Scripture Lessons

Hymn 112:1-4 *To God the Anthem Raising*

Sermon Isaiah 55:6-7

Seek the Lord while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the Lord,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.

The One Limit to God's Unlimited Grace...

The Offertory

Offering of Thankful Hearts

The Communion Liturgy

Distribution Hymns 711, 87, 647, 646, 109, 105

Choir *"Hallelujah! Joy to the World!"*

CLOSE COMMUNION If you have not attended a Communion Service with us in the past, please note that we practice Close-Communion. This means that only communicant members of our congregation (or of a sister congregation in the CLC) are offered the Lord's Supper. This is not a judgment on you or your faith, but is a Scriptural practice that most churches once followed in humble obedience to Christ. If you would like to know what is involved in becoming a communicant member, please speak with the pastor.

HOLIDAY DRIVE We are holding a holiday wish drive for the Helping Hand Pregnancy Center in Worthington, and also for our Christian Day School here at St. John's. See the wish list for the Center in the entryway. There is a giving tree for the school on the wall by the downstairs steps.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS Those who were elected (or re-elected) to office will be installed during the service next Sunday.

ENVELOPES Offering envelopes are usually ordered early in the year in order to get the best pricing. If you prefer to not receive envelopes, please either indicate this to the Treasurer, or place your box on top of the mailboxes.

CLC NEWS Pastor Thomas Schuetze, Lakewood, CO has the calls to Marquette, and Iron River, MI. (The two congregations are 87 miles apart. Some of the work in Iron River is done virtually.) Pastor Aaron Ude, Rapid City, SD has the call to Mankato.

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USHERS 12/31 Trevor B., Tim Z., Joshua E., Christian K., David R.
01/07 Kendall B., Larry B. Jonathen L.
01/14 Phil S., Nathan V., Anthony F., Daniel R.

CLEANING (Wk. 3) E. Bass, S. DeWall
J. Kazemba, J. Thaemlitz