



*Christmas*  
MYSTERY

December 10, 2023

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## SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor Tim Denney | Office Phone (218) 722-4364 | Cell (517) 392-8494 | [www.dulutheran.org](http://www.dulutheran.org)

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### WELCOME

We are glad that you have chosen to spend time with us in worship. In our worship, we gather, before Jesus, our Good Shepherd, to offer him our love and praise. Our Lord builds us up in faith through his Word and equips us for living now and in eternity. Our prayer is that the good news of Christ's love touches your heart and transforms your life. Whether you're worshipping with us here this morning or watching online, we are happy you have joined us today.

### WORSHIP SERVICE

The goal of our worship is to praise God and enrich your faith through his Word. To make your experience this morning easier, the worship folder you're holding has the entire order of service. The pieces marked [P] are spoken by the pastor, and the parts marked [C] are to be spoken or sung by the congregation.

### FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Our congregation enjoys the "worshiping family." Each service includes a children's message which teaches God's truth to your kids. Parents with small children are an essential part of God's kingdom. That's why children are never considered an inconvenience to our worship. We also want your family to be comfortable. There is a cry room outside the main doors to the right if you need a moment.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Christmas at SOTH and LLC:** For everything coming up in December, please go to [www.dulutheran.org/christmas23](http://www.dulutheran.org/christmas23)

**Midweek Advent:** This **Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>**, will be our last Midweek Advent service at **7:00 PM**. The Youth Group will be serving a spaghetti supper for fundraising in place of the potluck soup supper at **6:00 PM** that evening. On **Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>**, there will not be a Midweek Advent service, in its place we will have the Little Lambs Christmas program at **6:00 PM**. There will not be a typical Advent meal on the 20<sup>th</sup>. After the preschool Christmas program there will be food and refreshments provided. We hope you can join us for these special services as we prepare our hearts for the birth of our Savior.

**Caroling at Duluth Heights Lodge Senior Living:** If you are interested in caroling with the choir on **December 14<sup>th</sup>**, please get in touch with Becky Miller for details.

**Sunday School Christmas Service:** On **Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>** we will be having our Sunday School Christmas Service at 9:00 AM. In this service, the students will be sharing the good news of Jesus' birth to us in word and song. We hope that you can join us on the 17<sup>th</sup> for this special service!

**Little Lambs Christmas Program:** On **Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM**, Little Lambs Learning Center will have their annual Christmas Program. The toddlers and preschoolers of Little Lambs will be singing about the birth of our Savior.

**The King is Born! Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>.** Kids ages 3-11 are welcome to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior with music, stories, crafts, and, of course, birthday cupcakes! Don't hesitate to contact Ryan Bogart if you want more information or are interested in helping. You can register your kids by going to this link: <https://form.jotform.com/233285692755165>. **If you would like to help out, go to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050849ABAF28ABF94-46538138-theking>.**

**A Giving Tree** is in the entrance area decorated with ornaments of items the Women's Care Center needs for the Christmas holiday. Please tape the ornament to the unwrapped gift and place it in the box by the tree. If you have questions or want someone to shop for you, contact Kim Kirkland. We will be collecting now through **December 17<sup>th</sup>**.

# LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

- P: We light two Advent candles remembering Jesus who came in history. He came into a world of sin and death.
- C: **We remember Jesus who came as the promised Messiah. John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord.**
- P: We hear his call to repent.
- C: **We light two Advent candles as a sign of our repentance and desire for renewal.**
- P: Even in the darkness, the light of God's promise shines brightly forth. The Bethlehem Candle bids us to hear the Word of God with penitent and faithful hearts, and so to make ready for the coming of the Lord.
- C: **It is written in the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare the way for the Lord."**

## OPENING HYMN

### "Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes"

CW 12

1 Hark the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, The Sav - ior  
2 He comes the cap - tives to re - lease, In Sa - tan's  
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, The bleed - ing  
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, Your wel - come

prom - ised long; Let ev - 'ry heart pre -  
pris - on held. The gates of brass be -  
soul to cure, And with the trea - sures  
shall pro - claim, And heav'n's e - ter - nal

pare a throne And ev - 'ry voice a song.  
fore him burst; The i - ron fet - ters yield.  
of his grace To en - rich the hum - ble poor.  
arch - es ring With your be - lov - ed name.

## CONFESSION OF SIN & GOD'S PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS

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P: Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.

C: **Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low.**

P: The rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

C: **And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind will see it.**

P: Brothers and sisters in Christ, one day our Savior will come in glory to deliver his people. Therefore, let us prepare our hearts to meet him by humbly seeking his forgiveness.

C: **Almighty God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. We have not loved you with all of our heart, and we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. Deepen within us sorrow for the wrong we have done, and the good we have left undone. Lord, you are full of compassion and mercy; may your forgiveness give peace to our hearts, strength to our will, and rest to our souls.**

P: All mankind has seen the salvation of our God. Christ came in human flesh to redeem our fallen race. With his perfect life, he kept the law in our place. With his innocent death, he paid the penalty for our sins. Therefore, at Christ's command and by his authority, I announce to you forgiveness of all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

## RESPONSE OF FORGIVENESS

**"Oh, Taste and See"**  
p. 39 in front of Hymnal

*Sing after a brief introduction...*

**Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.  
Bless-ed are they who take ref-uge in him.  
Your Word, O Lord, is e-ter-nal;  
It stands firm in the heav-ens.  
Your faith-ful-ness con-tin-ues for-ev-er.  
Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.  
Bless-ed are they who take ref-uge in him.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

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P: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for your only Son. By his coming give us strength in our conflicts and shed light on our path through the darkness of this world; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

## ✠ READINGS FROM GOD'S WORD ✠

## FIRST READING

2 Peter 3:8-14


- <sup>8</sup> But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
- <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.
- <sup>11</sup> Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup> as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.
- <sup>14</sup> So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

## PSALM OF THE DAY


Psalm 98

p. 103 in the front of the Hymnal

*Refrain*



*Psalm tone*



Sing to the LORD a new song,\*  
for he has done marvelous things.

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

He has remembered his love and his faithfulness  
to the house of Israel;\*  
all the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.

*Refrain*

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth,\*  
burst into jubilant song with music;

make music to the LORD with the harp,\*  
with the harp and the sound of singing.

Shout for joy before the LORD, the King.\*  
He will judge the world in righteousness  
and the peoples with equity.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son\*  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning,\*  
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

*Refrain*

## GOSPEL READING

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Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup> It is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way” —

<sup>3</sup> “a voice of one calling in the desert,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.’”

<sup>4</sup> And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. <sup>6</sup> John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> And this was his message: “After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup> I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise be to you, O Christ.

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## CONFESSION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

(THE 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.**

## CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry An - nounc -  
 2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin And fur -  
 3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, Our ref -  
 4 Stretch forth your hand, our health re - store, And lift

es that the Lord is nigh; Come, then, and lis - ten,  
 nished for a guest with - in, And let us all our  
 uge and our great re - ward. With - out your grace we  
 us up to fall no more. Oh, make your face on

for he brings Good news a - bout the King of kings.  
 hearts pre - pare For Christ to come and en - ter there.  
 waste a - way Like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.  
 us to shine, And fill the world with love di - vine.

- 5 All praise to you, eternal Son,  
 Whose advent has our freedom won,  
 Whom with the Father we adore  
 And Holy Spirit evermore.

## † THE MESSAGE †

### CHRISTMAS MYSTERY

#### “The Mystery of the Messiah’s Messenger”

Isaiah 40:1-9

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice of one calling: “In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. <sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, “Cry out.” And I said, “What shall I cry?” “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. <sup>7</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.” <sup>9</sup> You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!”

### MESSAGE NOTES

**#1 A voice \_\_\_\_\_ the people for the coming \_\_\_\_\_.**

⇒ Isaiah 40:1-3; Malachi 4:5,6; Mark 1:1-4

⇒ A messenger who came with the specific purpose of announcing the Savior.

⇒ Temptations and distractions can leave us unready to welcome our Lord.

**#2 A messenger who \_\_\_\_\_ the road with a clear \_\_\_\_\_.**

⇒ Isaiah 40:3-5; Luke 3:12-14; Mark 1:7; John 1:29

⇒ John the Baptist preached repentance to the people calling them to turn from sin.

⇒ John’s preaching reminds us of our need to hear the truth of God’s law and gospel.

**#3 God is still equipping \_\_\_\_\_ to proclaim \_\_\_\_\_ to the world.**

⇒ Isaiah 40:6-9; Luke 1:77; Matthew 9:37; Hebrews 4:12

⇒ John accomplished God’s work of preparation by using the powerful Word of God.

⇒ The Lord is using us to prepare hearts and proclaim the good news of Jesus’ birth.



## WORSHIPING THE LORD WITH OUR OFFERINGS

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*Members of Shepherd of the Hills respond to their Savior's love with offerings that are given joyfully and freely according to how the Lord has blessed them. If you are a guest today, please know that there are no expectations for you to make a donation. If you wish to support us by making an online offering, visit our website: [www.dulutheran.org](http://www.dulutheran.org) and click on the "Give" tab.*

### ✠ PRAYERS ✠

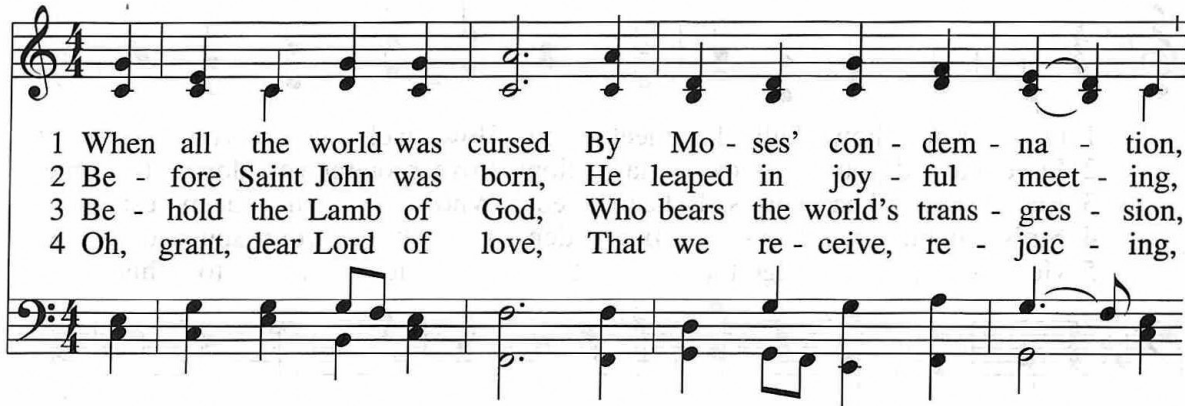
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#### RESPONSIVE PRAYER

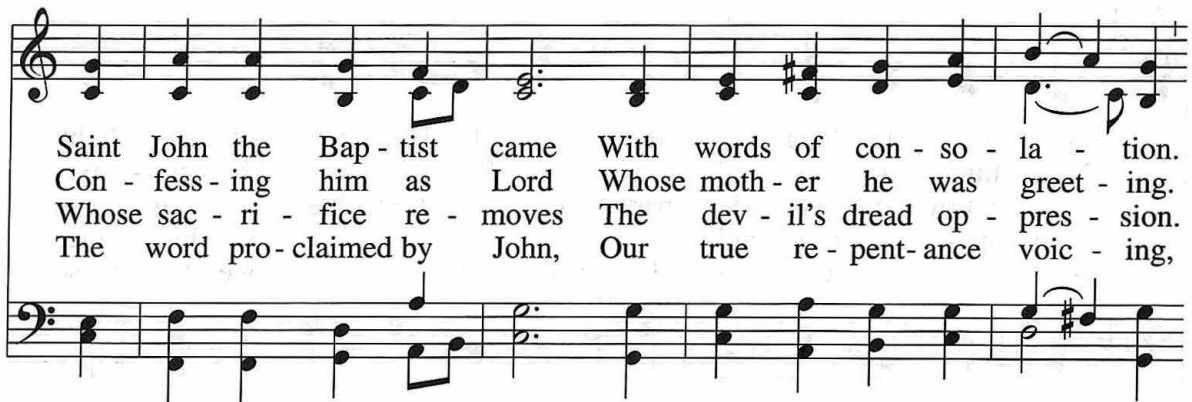
- P: Eternal Father, throughout the centuries you repeated and affirmed your promise to send the offspring of the woman to crush the serpent's head. Through your prophets of old, you continually directed the eyes of your people to the advent of the Savior.
- C: **We praise you, O Lord, for keeping your promise and sending your Son to destroy the works of the devil.**
- P: As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our King, use your mighty Word to shatter our pride and to rouse us from spiritual slumber and apathy.
- C: **Move us to take to heart the words of John the Baptist: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."**
- P: You sent your Son to redeem us from sin. Let this good news be our joy and strength. Use it to cheer the lonely, encourage the fearful, and give hope to the despairing. In these days before Christmas, spare us from the stress of deadlines and the frenzy of commercialism.
- C: **Fill our lives with the message of your peace and the music of your grace.**
- P: Direct our eyes not only to the manger but also to the skies, where we will see your Son coming again, not as a lowly child but as the Lord of lords.
- C: **Lift up our hearts in joyful anticipation of that day.**
- P: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.
- Silent prayer.*
- P: Come quickly, Lord Jesus, in your grace, in your power, and in your glory.
- C: **Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.**

#### LORD'S PRAYER

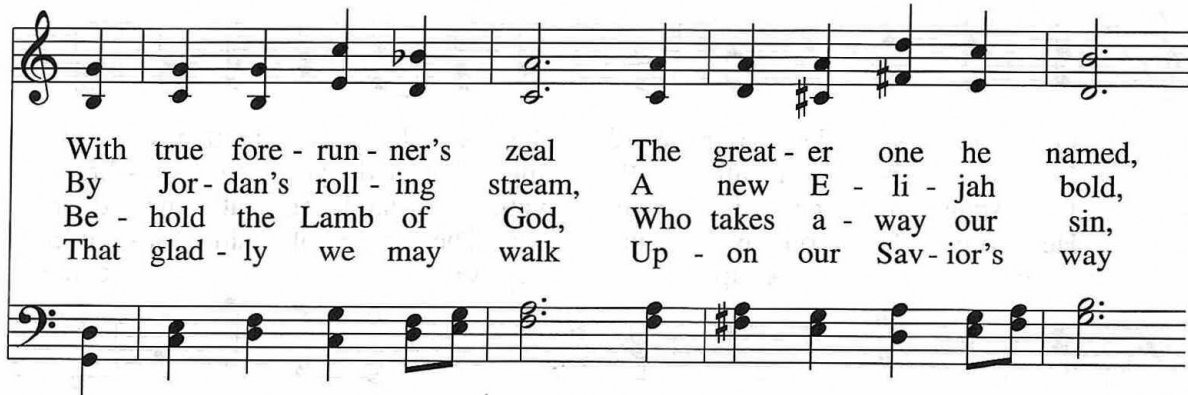
**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**



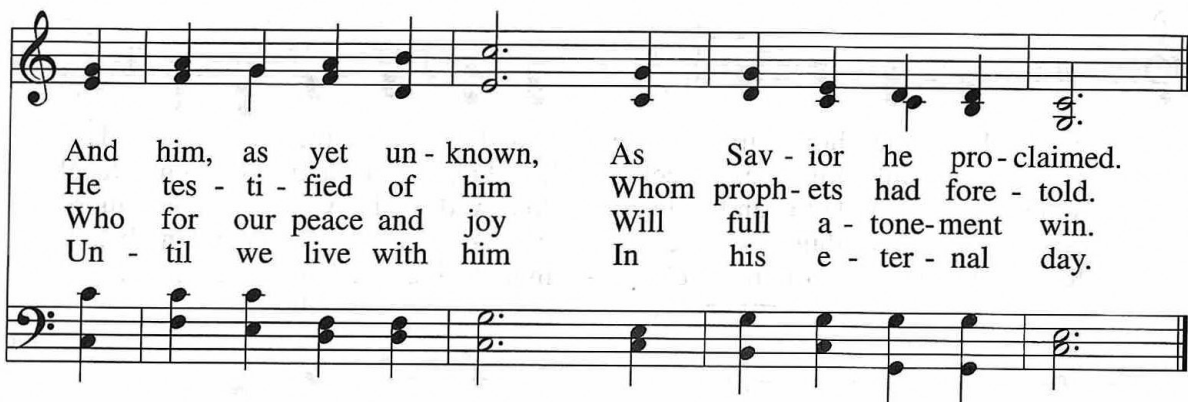
1 When all the world was cursed By Mo - ses' con - dem - na - tion,  
 2 Be - fore Saint John was born, He leaped in joy - ful meet - ing,  
 3 Be - hold the Lamb of God, Who bears the world's trans - gres - sion,  
 4 Oh, grant, dear Lord of love, That we re - ceive, re - joic - ing,



Saint John the Bap - tist came With words of con - so - la - tion.  
 Con - fess - ing him as Lord Whose moth - er he was greet - ing.  
 Whose sac - ri - fice re - moves The dev - il's dread op - pres - sion.  
 The word pro - claimed by John, Our true re - pent - ance voic - ing,



With true fore - run - ner's zeal The great - er one he named,  
 By Jor - dan's roll - ing stream, A new E - li - jah bold,  
 Be - hold the Lamb of God, Who takes a - way our sin,  
 That glad - ly we may walk Up - on our Sav - ior's way



And him, as yet un - known, As Sav - ior he pro - claimed.  
 He tes - ti - fied of him Whom proph - ets had fore - told.  
 Who for our peace and joy Will full a - tone - ment win.  
 Un - til we live with him In his e - ter - nal day.

## CLOSING PRAYER

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P: Almighty God, grant to your Church the Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes from above. Let nothing hinder your Word from being freely proclaimed to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, so that we may serve you in steadfast faith and confess your name as long as we live, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

## BLESSING

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P: 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.

C: Amen.

## CLOSING HYMN

**"Lord of the Living Harvest"**

CW 559

Printed on the back page.



1 Lord of the liv - ing har - vest That rip - ens o'er the plain,  
2 As la - b'ers in your vine - yard, Lord, give us work to do,  
3 Be with us, God the Fa - ther; Be with us, God the Son



Where an - gels soon will gath - er Their sheaves of gold - en grain,  
Con - tent to bear the bur - den Of wea - ry days for you,  
And God the Ho - ly Spir - it, Most bless - ed Three in One.



Ac - cept our hands to la - bor, Our hearts to trust and love,  
To ask no oth - er wa - ges When you will call us home  
Make us your faith - ful ser - vants You right - ly to a - dore,



And be with us to has - ten Your king - dom from a - bove.  
Than to have shared the la - bor That makes your king - dom come.  
And fill us with your bless - ing Both now and ev - er - more.

