



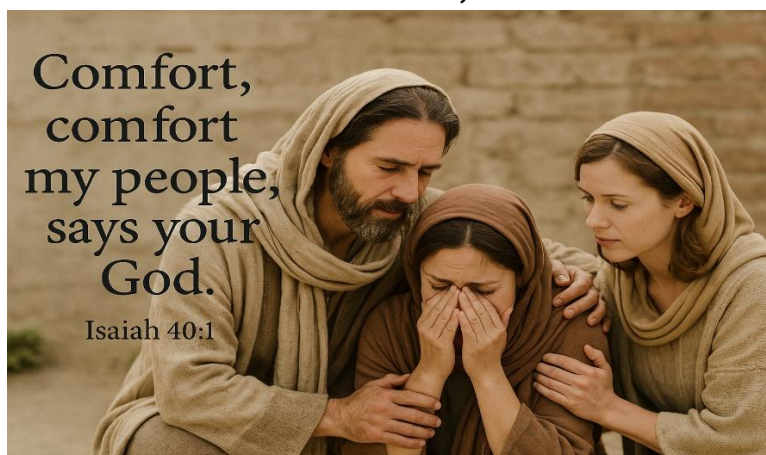
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Pastor Frank Gantt
(470-214-3401)

December 14, 2025



Affiliation: Church of the Lutheran Confession

<https://clclutheran.org/>

WELCOME: *To all who are present today, we offer a heart-felt welcome in Jesus' name.*

Today's Theme: *God speaks His comfort into a world weary with guilt and fear by announcing that He Himself has come to rescue and restore His people. In Christ, the promised Savior, sinners receive the forgiveness that quiets the anxious heart and brings a peace no circumstance can overturn. And wherever this Gospel is proclaimed, the blind see, the burdened rejoice, and every questioning heart finds its final answer in Him who is the One who ends our warfare and pardons our iniquity.*

ORDER OF WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER: *We ask the Lord's blessings on our worship.*

HYMN: #61

Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People

**Comfort, comfort ye My people,
Speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
Comfort those who sit in darkness,
Mourning 'neath their sorrow's load.**

**Speak ye to Jerusalem
Of the peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover,
And her warfare now is over.**

**Yea, her sins our God will pardon,
Blotting out each dark misdeed;
All that well deserved His anger
He will not more see or heed.
She hath suffered many a day,
Now her griefs have passed away;
God will change her pining sadness
Into ever-springing gladness.**

**Hark, the Herald's voice is crying
In the desert far and near,
Bidding all men to repentance,
Since the Kingdom now is here.
Oh, that warning cry obey!
Now prepare for God a way!
Let the valleys rise to meet Him,
And the hills bow down to greet Him.**

**Make ye straight what long was crooked,
Make the rougher places plain;
Let your hearts be true and humble,**

As befits His holy reign;
For the glory of the Lord
Now o'er earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token
That His Word is never broken.
Amen.

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Cong: (spoken) Amen.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

Pastor: Beloved in the Lord: Let us draw near with a true heart to confess our sins unto God, our Father, imploring Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to have mercy upon us and to forgive us.

Pastor: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Cong: Who made heaven and earth.

Pastor: I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."

Cong: And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Pastor: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. For this reason we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cong: O most merciful God, who has given Your only begotten Son to die for us, have mercy upon us and for His sake grant us remission of all our sins, and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will

and true obedience to Your Word, so that by Your grace we might come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Pastor: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To them that believe on His name He gives the right to become children of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

Pastor: Grant this, Lord, unto us all.

Cong: Amen.

Pastor: Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.

GLORY TO GOD: *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates!

Behold, the King of Glory waits;

The King of kings is drawing near,

The Savior of the world is here.

Life and salvation He doth bring,

Wherefore rejoice and gladly sing:

We praise Thee, Father, now,

Creator, wise art Thou!

A Helper just He comes to thee,

His chariot is humility,

His kingly crown is holiness,

His scepter, pity in distress,

The end of all our woe He brings;

Wherefore the earth is glad and sings:

We praise Thee, Savior, now,

Mighty in deed art Thou!

O blest the land, the city blest,
Where Christ the Ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes
To whom this King in triumph comes!
The cloudless Sun of joy He is,
Who bringeth pure delight and bliss.
We praise Thee, Spirit, now,
Our Comforter art Thou!

THE GREETING

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

Cong: And with your spirit.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Pastor: God our Father, You sent the true Son of David, Your only Son, to become a curse for us by hanging Him from the tree of the cross. By the sacrifice of His flesh, He has opened the way to eternal life through the forgiveness of our sins. As we have been baptized into His death, strengthen our faith in Him always that we might remain heirs of Your heavenly kingdom; through the same, Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Cong: Amen.

FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON: Isaiah 40:1-9

(ESV) Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. (2) Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. (3) A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (4) Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. (5) And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (6) A voice

says, “Cry!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. (7) The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. (8) The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. (9) Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”

SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON: Philippians 4:4-9

(ESV) Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. (5) Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; (6) do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (8) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (9) What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Apostolic 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.

HYMN: #63

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

On Jordan's banks the Baptist's cry

Announces that the Lord is nigh;

Come, then, and hearken, for he brings

Glad tidings from the King of kings.

Then cleansed be every Christian breast

And furnished for so great a Guest.

Yea, let us each our hearts prepare

For Christ to come and enter there.

For Thou art our Salvation, Lord,

Our Refuge, and our great Reward.

Without Thy grace our souls must fade

And wither like a flow'r decayed.

Lay on the sick Thy healing hand

And make the fallen strong to stand;

Show us the glory of Thy face

Till beauty springs in every place.

**All praise, eternal Son, to thee,
Whose advent sets Thy people free,
Whom, with the Father, we adore,
And Holy Ghost forevermore.
Amen.**

THE SERMON: Matthew 11:2-10

(ESV) Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples (3) and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” (4) And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: (5) the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. (6) And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” (7) As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (8) What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. (9) What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. (10) This is he of whom it is written, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’

“The Right Question”

OFFERTORY

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me;
Cast me not away from Your presence
And take not Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation
And uphold me with Your free Spirit.**

THE OFFERING OF THANKFUL HEARTS

GENERAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN: #60

Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding

**Hark, a thrilling voice is sounding!
"Christ is nigh!" we hear it say;
"Cast away the works of darkness,
O ye children of the day!"**

**Startled at the solemn warning,
Let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her Sun, all sloth dispelling,
Shines upon the morning skies.**

**Lo, the Lamb, so long expected,
Comes with pardon down from heaven.
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
One and all, to be forgiven.**

**That, when next He comes with glory
And the world is wrapped in fear
He may shield us with His mercy
And with words of love draw near.**

**Honor, glory, might, dominion
To the Father and the Son,
With the everlasting Spirit
While eternal ages run!
Amen.**

Pastor: Blessed Lord, who has caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our instruction, cause us to receive them in such a

way that we might hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by the patience and comfort which Your Word gives we may hold onto and ever cling to the blessed hope of everlasting life which You have given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Cong: Amen.

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Cong: Amen.

SILENT PRAYER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK'S SCHEDULE

Today @ 12:00 PM – Atlanta Circuit Trip

Monday @ 9:00 AM – Wayne Everhart

@ 4:00 PM – Loganville Service

Wednesday @ 9:30 AM – Advent Service #3

Thursday @ 5:00 AM – Pastor to EC to pick up Josiah

Sunday @ 9:00 AM – Bible Class

@ 10:00 – Divine Service with Holy Communion

VOTERS' MEETING REPORT: At the special voters' meeting last Sunday, the voters elected the following to serve as officers of Faith Lutheran Church: President – Leonard Benter; Treasurer – Art Pontow; Recording Secretary – Ron Turner. The voters also determined to increase pastor's compensation by 4.19%.

ATLANTA CIRCUIT TRIP: Pastor will be leaving today for the Atlanta circuit trip. Lord willing, he will be home Tuesday evening.

MID-WEEK ADVENT SERVICE: Our special mid-week Advent services concludes this week as we consider "The Miracle of the Method." The service begins at 9:30 AM, and will be streamed to both Faith's and Zion's YouTube channels.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE: Please keep in mind that our annual Christmas Eve service is scheduled for 7:00 AM on Wednesday December 24. Please consider joining us as we meditate on the birth and purpose of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Pastor Gantt will also stream a special online Christmas Day meditation for your devotion on the anniversary of our Savior's birth.

ILC NOMINATIONS: Nominations for ILC Professor and ILC President: The Board of Regents announces the following nominations to fill the professorship vacated by the resignation of Professor David Schaller prior to the 2025-26 academic year: Paul Krause, David Reim, David Schaller, Dan Sullivan, and David Ude. In addition, the following and only person has been nominated for the office of President of Immanuel Lutheran College: Daniel

Schierenbeck. The term of the ILC President's call is for two years, extending to the end of Academic Year 2028. All comments from members of CLC congregations regarding these candidates are to be received by email or letter no later than midnight January 17, 2026 (letters postmarked January 7, 2025) to: Mr. James Burkhardt; 217 Windy Lane; Rockwall, TX 75087; email:jeb6217@yahoo.com.

CALL NEWS: Pastor Emeritus David Schierenbeck has accepted the call to serve as Assistant to the Pastor at Berea Ev. Lutheran Church, Inver Grove Heights, MN, after he concludes serving as vacancy pastor of Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Red Wing, MN, at the end of January. <> Pastor Cory Drehle of Berea Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD, has received the call to Living Hope Lutheran Church, Appleton, WI. <> Pastor Ben Libby of Redeemer Ev. Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, WY, has returned the call to Holy Cross Ev. Lutheran Church, Phoenix, AZ. <> Pastor Dave Naumann of St. John's Lutheran Church, Clarkston, WA, and Peace Lutheran Church, Orofino, ID, has returned the call to Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Spokane, WA. <> Pastor Terrel Kesterson of Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia, IL, has returned the part-time call to Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Red Wing, MN. <> Pastor Emeritus Michael Eichstadt has accepted the vacancy call to Holy Cross Ev. Lutheran Church, Phoenix, AZ. <> Pastor Ben Libby of Redeemer Ev. Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, WY, has received the call to Messiah Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI.

Isaiah 40 Revisited

Imagine a vast desert at the edge of dawn. The world still sleeps beneath a canopy of deep blue, the last stars flickering like tired lamps in the sky. A thin band of gold begins to push upward along the horizon—not enough to brighten the land, but enough to promise that darkness is losing its grip. In the foreground kneels a lone exile beside a dry riverbed. His garments are covered with dust, his hands rest loosely in his lap, and his shoulders sag beneath the accumulated weight of years lived under guilt, regret, and longing. He is not simply tired; he is dispirited, inwardly convinced that the story of his life has become an abandoned one.

Into that stillness steps the Lord's messenger. He comes silently, without spectacle, without the rumble of distant thunder or the blaze of consuming fire. Instead, he brings with him something much gentler—presence. The light around him is not harsh but warm, as though the dawn itself were drawing nearer in his company. He does not seize the exile by the arm or command him to stand. He simply kneels beside him, placing himself within reach, so that even the posture of the messenger preaches its own kind of promise.

Then he speaks the first word heaven intends for weary sinners to hear: "Comfort." The word lands not as a suggestion but as a declaration. It is not a platitude or a thin reassurance. It is God's own assignment: Comfort My people. Comfort them because I am not finished with them. Comfort them because their sins are forgiven. Comfort them because I am coming to them Myself.

As that word settles over the moment, the desert begins to change. The jagged stones that once made the path treacherous now seem to ease themselves into the earth. The uneven ground lifts. The deep valleys rise with a slow, steady gentleness. What once looked impossible to cross now stretches forward like a road intentionally built for the arrival of a king. The barren landscape is becoming a prepared place.

The exile lifts his face, blinking against the softening darkness, and looks toward the messenger. Behind the herald, the horizon grows brighter, unveiling a radiance that no longer belongs to morning but to Majesty. And the messenger's voice continues—not merely describing the future but unveiling a present reality: “Behold, your God!”

Not a distant God... Not a reluctant God... Not a God waiting for you to climb up to Him. A God who comes with might and tenderness, who gathers lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart.

Here, in this unfolding scene, the exile at last understands: the comfort spoken to him is not the comfort of improved circumstances, nor the comfort of positive thinking, nor the comfort of pretending the past did not happen. It is the comfort of God Himself drawing near with forgiveness, declaring that the hard sentence of judgment has been lifted, and that the exile is not forgotten but restored.

And now, the desert of Isaiah becomes your own. For Scripture paints this picture not as a distant memory but as a present mercy. You, too, know what it is to feel exiled—estranged by sin, weighed down by sorrows you cannot always easily name, surrounded at times by landscapes that feel barren and unending. You know what it is for life to press in from every angle. You may know all too well how quietly questions accumulate in the heart: “Is God near? Does He care? Does He remember me?”

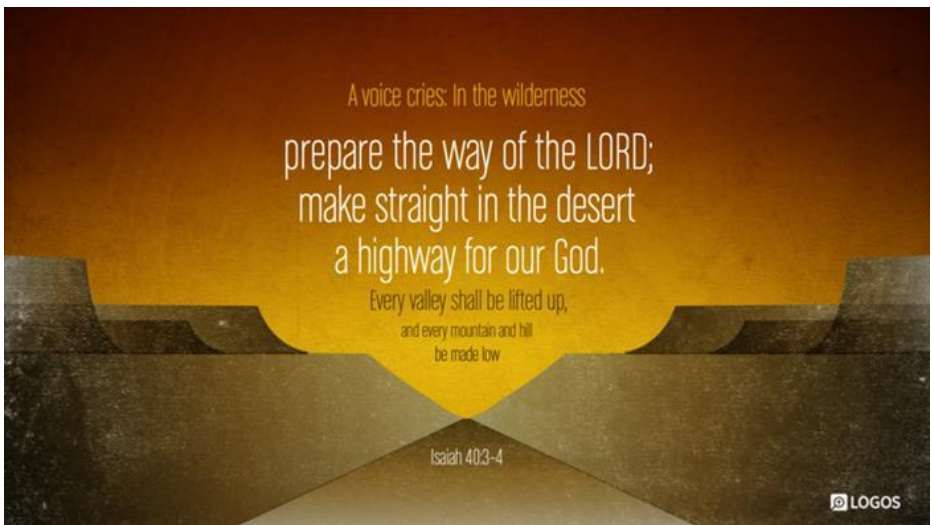
Isaiah would have you see yourself in that kneeling figure at dawn. For the same God who sent comfort to His ancient people sends comfort to you now—not in the form of simple encouragement, but in the form of His Son. Jesus is the One who steps into your desert, who speaks forgiveness into your failures, who lifts your face to see that the horizon is not empty but filled with the radiance of His coming. He is the Shepherd who gathers you, the King who levels the mountains of guilt, the Lord who makes straight the twisted paths of doubt and fear.

And your deserts, too, begin to shift. Not always outwardly—not always in ways visible to others—but inwardly, as the comfort of

Christ smooths the roughness of your fears, raises the low valleys of despair, and straightens the crooked paths of mistrust. One word from Him can re-draw the landscape of the heart.

“Comfort, comfort My people,” He says still. Not because you have earned it, but because He has chosen you. Not because you are strong, but because He is your strength. Not because you see the way forward, but because He is already on His way toward you to comfort You with His forgiveness.

And so the picture ends with the exile rising—not because he found strength within himself, but because the voice that called him now gives him new life. The dawn has fully broken. The King is near. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.



Daily Bible Readings for Home Devotions

December 15 - December 20, 2025

Mon Matthew 11:2-10 When John sends disciples to ask Jesus to confirm His Messiah-ship, He points to the prophecies which He has fulfilled. He then turns and extols John's role in the coming Kingdom of God.

Tues Romans 10:9-15 It is with heart and mouth that Jesus is honored and salvation is enjoyed by both Jew and non-Jew. The Lord our righteousness provides preachers of the gospel to speak to the heart.

Wed Matthew 1:18-23 The Lord appears to Joseph in a dream to let him know that Mary has not been unfaithful to her promise. This miracle of God-with-us is not something Joseph or we would have thought up.

Thurs Isaiah 60:1-5 The coming of the LORD means the coming of light in darkness and nations will be drawn to that light. As John also writes: "In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind" (Jn1:4).

Fri Psalm 98 Although Jesus' coming in Bethlehem was without earthly fanfare, His coming to judge the earth will be reason for shouting and singing and sounding of trumpets. Joy to the world, the LORD is come!

Sat Psalm 4 God's children may have troubles, but they know that all blessings come from the LORD. To Him they will look and from Him receive greater joys than worldly prosperity can bring (v7).