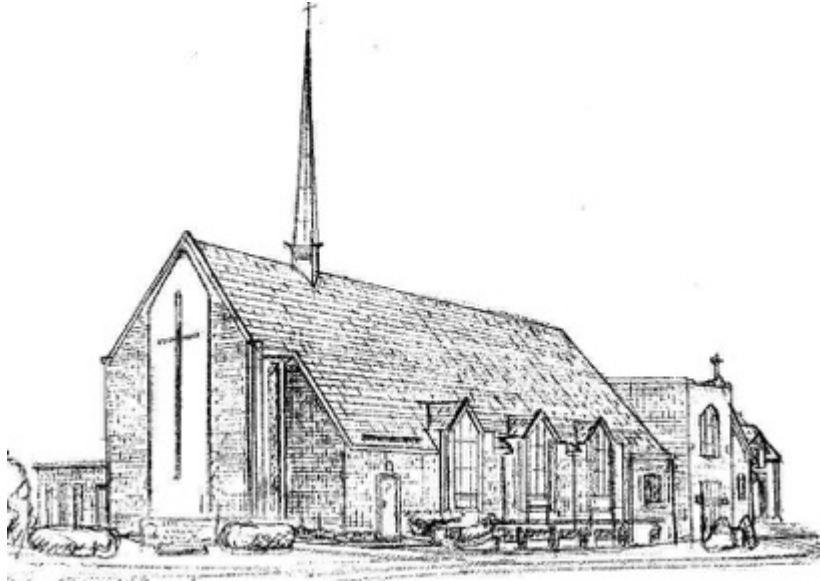


BETHLEHEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH



Serving, accepting, and loving all.

Bulletin

December 15, 2024

**Daniel P. Smail & Ellen S. Lundie, Pastors
Laura M. Henri, Organist and Director of Choirs**

**1719 Mt. Royal Boulevard – Glenshaw, PA 15116
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Sunday, December 15, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent, Year C

Introduction

Christ's presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good news—and cause for exultation—for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.

GATHERING

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lighting the Advent Wreath: Advent 3

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe.
Your prophets spoke of a day when the desert would blossom
and waters would break forth in the wilderness.
Bless us as we light the candles on this wreath.
Strengthen our hearts as we prepare for the coming of the Lord.
May he give water to all who thirst,
for he is our light and our salvation.
Blessed be God forever.
Amen.

PRELUDE

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (8:00)

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
alive in the world,
reviving creation,
arriving soon.
C: Amen.

A: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God
and of one another.
Silence is kept for reflection.

A: God of mercy,
we confess that we have sinned.
We trust earthly powers and human authority alone.
We grow fearful. We cling to false comforts.

A: God of might,
we confess that we have sinned.
We have turned away from our neighbors.
We have trusted false promises.

A: God in our midst,
we confess that we have sinned.
We plead: come to us.
Bring your mercy to birth in us.

P: A righteous branch springs forth:
it is Christ the Lord, our Savior,
in whom we have forgiveness, life, and mercy.
By the power of the Holy Spirit,
receive the grace and forgiveness of God
through † Christ Jesus,
whose day draws near.

C:Amen.

GATHERING SONG NO. 254 Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

BETHLEHEM CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2024 (10:30)

THE STORY OF WHEN CHRIST WAS BORN

PAGEANT SONGS

ELW 279 O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, verse 1

1 O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893

ELW 277 AWAY IN A MANGER, verse 1

1 Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

Text: North American, 19th cent.

ELW 270 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, verse 1

1 Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king;
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all you nations, rise;
join the triumph of the skies;
with angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, alt.

ELW 290 GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN, verse 1

Refrain

Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born!

1 While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. *Refrain*

Text: African American spiritual, refrain; John W. Work Jr., 1872-1925, stanzas, alt.

WOV 464 WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE, verse 1

1 We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.

Refrain

Oh, star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!

Text: John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1820-1891, alt.

ELW 267 JOY TO THE WORLD, verse 1

1 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.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

APOSTOLIC GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C And also with you.

KYRIE (ELW Pg. 138) (8:00)

In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,

and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. **A - men.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Let us pray.

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING Zephaniah 3:14-20

The prophet Zephaniah's message is mostly one of judgment for sin. This reading, however, which comes from the conclusion of the book, prophesies joy for Judah and Jerusalem. Judgment has led to repentance, and God's salvation is at hand.

A reading from Zephaniah,

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you;
he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

“Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness;

he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing

¹⁸ as on a day of festival.”

I will remove disaster from you,

so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.

And I will save the lame

and gather the outcast,

and I will change their shame into praise

and renown in all the earth.

²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;

for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

A: The word of the Lord.

C : Thanks be to God.

PSALM Isaiah 12:2-6 (Sung responsively)

² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not | be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might, and has become | my
salvation.

³ **With joy you | will draw water
from the wells | of salvation.**

⁴ And you will say in that day:
Give thanks to the LORD, call | on God's name;
make known the deeds of the LORD among the nations; proclaim that
this name | is exalted.

⁵ **Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done | gloriously;
let this be known in | all the earth.**

⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, O | royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy | One of Israe

SECOND READING: Philippians 4:4-7

Despite being in prison, Paul is remarkably upbeat as he writes this letter. Here, he urges his friends in Philippi to trust God with all their worries and concerns with the hope that they will experience God's joy and peace.

A reading from Philippians,

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 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.

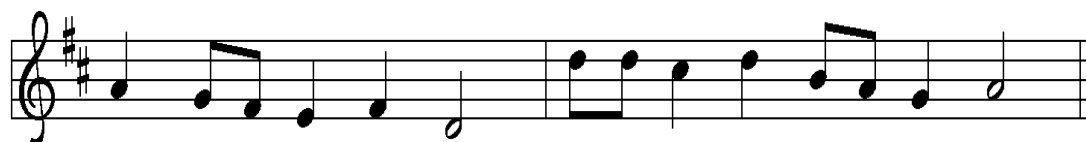
A The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (ELW Pg. 142)



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the



words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity, and vocational integrity.

P: The holy gospel according to Luke.

C Glory to you, O Lord

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What, then, should we do?” ¹¹ In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise.” ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³ He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning

in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” ¹⁸ So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON – *The Rev. Ellen S. Lundie (8:00)*

HYMN OF THE DAY NO. 248 People Look East

Text: Eleanor E. Farjeon, 1881-1965

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NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;**

**he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

L: As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

God who reforms, fill your church with courage to do your will. Empower your people in taking risks that bear fruit. Raise up leaders who will proclaim the good news. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God who creates, you hold in balance diverse ecosystems. Encourage efforts to protect wild lands from devastation. Care for animals and people in the path of destructive fires, storms, and other disasters. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God who leads, this world cries out for true justice. Guide legislatures, judges, and lawyers in actions steeped in love and restoration. Increase the desire to advocate for all who are confronted with discrimination. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God who embraces, help us notice the places where your people are hurting or sick; especially those we name within our hearts (*A moment of silence...*). Show your compassion and remember your people in love. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God who abides, you dwell among the people of this congregation. Deepen our relationships and make us aware of the diverse talents and gifts present here. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God who consoles, we thank you for the time we have had with loved ones who have died. Comfort us with the promise of everlasting life in you. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ.

C: Amen.

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

MEAL

OFFERING - *Offering boxes are located in the narthex and in back of the sanctuary.*

OFFERING PRAYER

L: Let us pray, Creator God,

C: you made the whole world,

even the farthest stars,

and you draw near to feed us.

We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine.

Strengthen us with this food

that we may live in expectation

for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING



PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy...we praise your name and join their unending hymn

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (ELW Pg. 144)

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Holy God, the Beginning and the End,
our Salvation and our Hope,
we praise you for creating a world of order and beauty.
When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair,
you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.
At this end of the ages
your Son Jesus came to bring us your love
and to heal all the suffering world.
In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.
Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.
Remembering, therefore,

his life, death, and resurrection,
we await his coming again
in righteousness and peace.

Send your Spirit on us
and on this bread and wine we share:
strengthen our faith,
increase our hope,
and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
in your holy Church,
both now and forever.

Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

P Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

C **Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

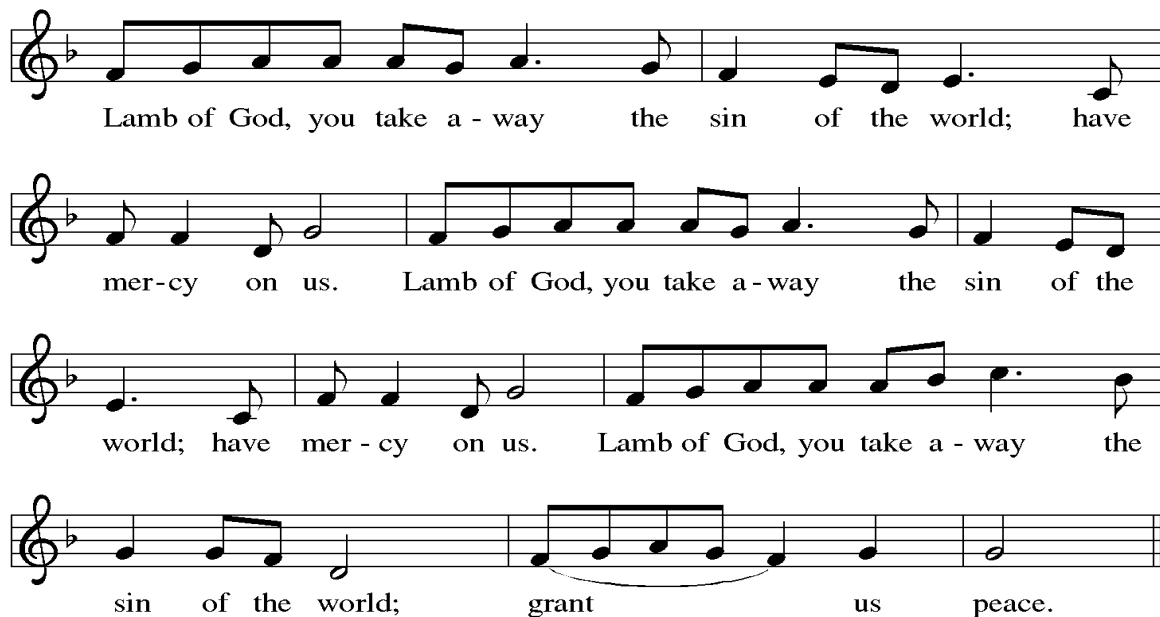
**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P God feeds us with tender mercy. Come to the table.

COMMUNION SONG (ELW Pg. 146)



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMN

NO. 263 Savior of the Nations, Come

Text: attr. Ambrose of Milan, 340-397; Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. hymnal version

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POST COMMUNION PRAYER

L: Let us pray.

Generous God,

we thank you for the gift of life,

for the bread of salvation.

We thank you for coming among us,

for leading us into peace.

We thank you for showering us with mercy,

for sending us into the world.

Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us

as we feed the hungry in your name.

C: Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

P: God of endings and beginnings,

God in the darkness and the light,
God, our hope for the journey,
✠ bless and keep you now and forever.
C: Amen.

SENDING SONG NO. 266 All Earth is Hopeful

Text: Alberto Taulé, b. 1932; tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, b. 1946
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DISMISSAL

L: Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

C: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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Children's Space

We encourage children to worship in the sanctuary as much as possible. However, we know that some days, a break may be needed. Please stop in the lounge for shorter breaks where there are coloring activities and snacks provided. All children must be accompanied by an adult. The nursery is also available downstairs in the Fellowship Hall with the ability to hear the service.

Altar Flowers – The flowers on the altar today are dedicated to the glory of God and the adornment of his house as this 3rd Sunday of Advent (known as “Gaudete Sunday”) which celebrates the joy of Christ’s coming to earth.

Are You Interested in Becoming A Member at Bethlehem Lutheran?

Dear friends, as we are in the autumn months this is a time think about new starts and blessed beginnings. Have you been visiting Bethlehem, considering becoming a member of the congregation? Do you have questions about our congregation or the ministry we share here? Please feel free to reach out to one of our pastors (Pastor Dan, d.smail@belc.org or Pastor Ellen, e.lundie@belc.org), they would be delighted to spend some time with you, answer your questions, and faithfully discern the next steps. Thank you for being an important part of this joy filled family of faith!

2025 Flower Chart

The 2025 Flower Chart is here and is now posted on the wall in the hallway across from the office. Start to think of important dates and events that you and your family would like to honor or remember someone on and sign up for altar flowers on that date or on a date that is open close to it.



Our Blessing Box

Our outdoor food pantry has been a blessing to our community providing needed items to those who are food insecure. Your generosity shows your commitment to do God's work but still day after day the box is being emptied by those in need. Here are some of the most desired foods:

Single serve meals Cereals small individual packages Pop Tarts

Granola bars Individual: fruit cups, rice pkg., potato pkg.

Single serve pkgs. Peanut butter -- crackers small sized boxes

Hearty soups with lift off tops Tuna—in foil packages Ensure individual bottles

Individual packages of cookies Single serve Coffee packets Cans of Stew

Cans of spam Grab and go items—single serve with lift off lids

Small size Deodorants small bottles or shampoo individual bars of soap

NO MEDICATIONS OF ANY KIND



Bible Study

Advent Classes final session on December 18th. We have a morning opportunity at 10:30am and also an evening one at 7:00p. Everyone is still welcome to attend if your schedule allows.

Annual Report

Committee Chairs - Start thinking about your committee report for inclusion into our annual report to the Congregation....**All reports are due to the office by January 6, 2025.**



Saturday, January 25th at 7:00pm

Join us for a fun night to fight off the winter cold with a **Chili Cook Off and Family Game Night!**

Please contact the church office if you would like to bring chili and enter the cook off for your chance to be named Bethlehem's very own ***Chili Champ for 2025!***

In addition to great food, we will once again host a **Pictionary** team game, but please feel free to bring along your own game, if you'd like!

If you'd like to attend the event (no cooking required), please RSVP to the church office. This is helpful for planning, but not required.



Hope to see you there!