

December 3, 2023
Advent 2B
Pastor Kim Swenson



Worship Volunteers

Assisting Minister: Doug Hanson
Reader: Doug Scholes
Alter Guild: Peggy Hansen
Communion Assistant: Gayle Peot
Ushers: Charlie & Sharon Hilla
Video Tech: Yvonne Pamperin

Call to Worship Please rise in body or spirit. The congregation is invited to say the **bold** words.

Family of faith, one of the greatest joys of worship is that it is not a solo act. We gather together. We find joy, and God, in the act of connection. So as we begin our worship, I invite you to turn and face someone you are close to so that you can see one another.

Now repeat these phrases after me:

Welcome to worship. **Welcome to worship.**

I am glad you're here. **I am glad you're here.**

Surely God is in this space. **Surely God is in this space.**

I see God in your face. **I see God in your face.**

Let us worship together. **Let us worship together.**

Opening Hymn

Prepare the Royal Highway

Cranberry 264



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
Music: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.
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Confession & Forgiveness

Family of faith, one of the ways we find joy in a weary world is through connection. The prayer of confession is a place of connection with God.

In the prayer of confession we get to come before God with our full, messy, honest selves. And in the midst of that mess, God tells us that we are loved, claimed, and forgiven.

There is no greater joy than that.

So join me in the prayer of confession, not because you have to, but because you can. Let us connect with our merciful God.

God of laughter,
God of open front doors and family reunions,
we confess that we often doubt good news.

**We move through this world
waiting for the other shoe to drop,
waiting for life to fall apart,
waiting for our humanity to get the best of us.**

Instead of leaning into joy, we lean into scarcity.

We lean into fear. We lean into isolation.

Forgive us for forgetting that joy is amplified when shared.

**Heal the wounds we have from past hurts,
and teach us how to throw open our doors like Elizabeth.
Show us how to find joy in connection. Amen.**

Faith family,


I imagine that when we come before God with the truth of our lives,
God meets us like Elizabeth meets Mary in our scripture today.

The door is thrown open. There is laughter. There is joy.

There is embracing—and it is holy.

So trust this; believe this: You are claimed. You are loved.


You are forgiven. And you are sent to serve. Find joy in that. **Amen.**




1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
 2 Though I am small, my . . . God, my all, you . . .
 3 From the halls of pow'r to the for - tress tow'r, not a
 4 Though the na - tions rage from . . . age to age, we re -



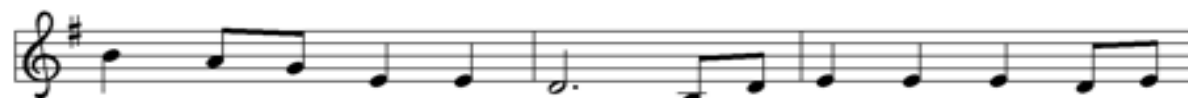
God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
 work great . . . things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
 stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
 mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
 depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
 jus - tice tears ev - 'ry ty - rant . . . from his throne.
 liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.




You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
 Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
 The hun - gry poor shall . . . weep no more, for the
 This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
 those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
 food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry
 prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be



name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
 strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
 mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
 crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.



Refrain
 My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your jus - tice burn.



Wipe a - way all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

Prayer of the Day

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Holy God, **We know that you are near. We know that you are standing at the door, you are running down the driveway, you are inviting us in— into your Word, into relationship, and deeper into joy. So as we approach your Word, O God, we pray: do not let us pass you by. Do not allow distraction or doubt to get the best of us. Do not let us walk down this road without you. Instead, give us the wisdom to turn and run your way. Give us the wisdom to hear your wisdom, to let it sink into our bones and change us. With hope and gratitude we pray. Amen.**

Bethel Choir

The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11 read responsively by full verse

¹Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

²**Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.**

³A voice cries out:

"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.**

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶**A voice says, "Cry out!"**

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

**All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.**

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸**The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.**

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

**¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.**

¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Candle Lighting

How does a weary world practice peace?

By listening before we speak and saying sorry when we need to.

By advocating for justice and caring for our neighbor.

By practicing Sabbath and forgiving seventy times seven.

By choosing grace over hate and opening the door for each other.

There are a million ways to practice peace.

So today we light the candle of peace as a reminder and a charge.

With God's help, may we bring peace into a weary world. Amen.



1 Light dawns on a wea - ry world when eyes be - gin to
 2 Love grows in a wea - ry world when hun - gry hearts find
 3 Hope blooms in a wea - ry world when crea-tures, once for -



see all peo - ple's dig - ni - ty. Light dawns on a
 bread and chil - dren's dreams are fed. Love grows in a
 lorn, find wil - der - ness re - born. Hope blooms in a

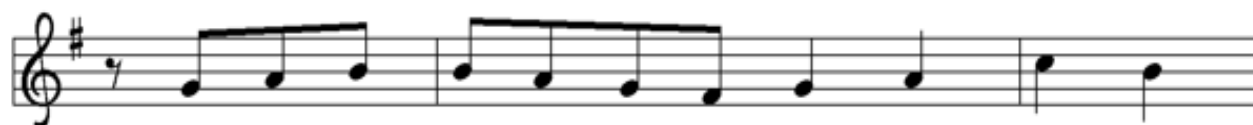


wea - ry world: the prom-ised day of jus - tice comes.
 wea - ry world: the prom-ised feast of plen - ty comes.
 wea - ry world: the prom-ised green of E - den comes.



Refrain

The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs;



the hills and moun-tains shall break forth with sing - ing!



We shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace,



as all the world in won-der ech - oes sha - lom.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953

Music: TEMPLE OF PEACE, William P. Rowan, b. 1951

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Gospel Skit: Luke 1:24-45

The Holy Gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

²⁴After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, ²⁵This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon


Please rise in body or spirit.

Text: Anna Strickland (2023)

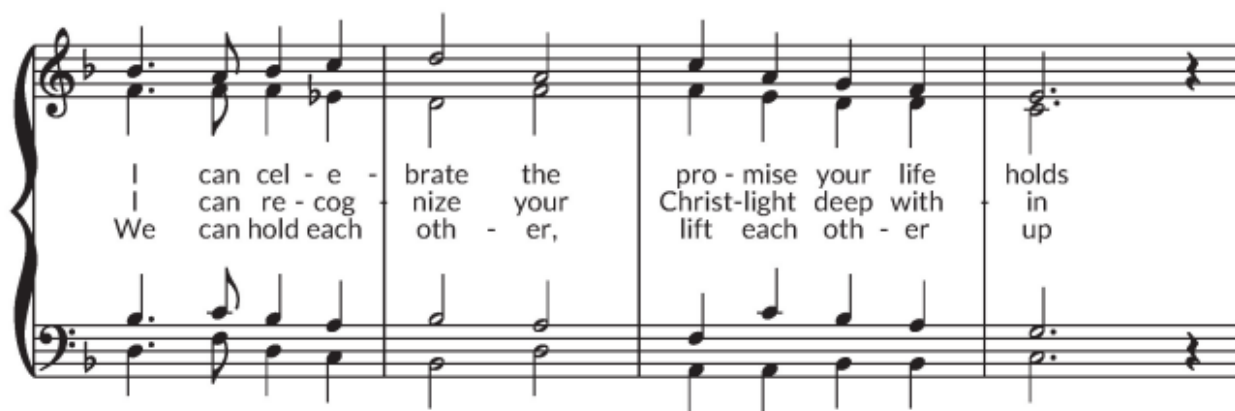
Music: Gustav Holst (1906)



I can cel - e - brate you, I can hold your joy
I can re - cog nize good fruit that you will bear
We can hold each oth - er in our joy and fear



When the load is crush - ing and you've lost your voice
When your own self - doubt hides gifts you have to share
Know - ing that the Spir - it moves when we are near



I can cel - e - brate the pro - mise your life holds
We can re - cog nize the your Christ-light deep with in
can hold each oth - er, lift each oth - er up

Affirmation of Faith *Together let us confess our faith.*

We believe that joy is a sacred gift,
existing on a plane deeper than happiness,
stemming from the truth that we belong to God.
We believe that joy is not meant for isolation.
Joy is meant to be shared,
weaving us together in laughter and in hope.

And when joy feels impossibly out of reach,
we believe that part of being sacred community
is leaning on one another.
So together we say: I will share my joy when yours runs out.
You will share your joy when mine runs out.
And in doing so, we will both see God. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of today and God of tomorrow, We come to you this morning to thank you for the way that joy binds us together. Thank you for contagious laughter, for inside jokes, for stories around dinner tables that can make us laugh until we cry. Thank you for comedy shows, for the familiar sound of a loved one's chuckle, and for the universality of smile lines. What a gift you have given us.

For what else are we thankful for this day? (pause)
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Our text today reminds us that joy is better when shared, so today we thank you in particular for the Elizabeths and the Marys in our lives. Thank you for the people who spark joy in us. Thank you for the people who pull us out of our shells, who teach us how to dance and show us how to laugh. Thank you for those who declare, "Blessed are you."

In a moment of gratitude, we lift their names to you now. . . (pause)
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, although we know that joy is better when shared, there are days when that is easier said than done. Like Elizabeth, who stayed in isolation for months after receiving her good news, we too have a tendency to choose fear over joy. Without the help of someone at our door, we can often keep our joy to ourselves.

For whom do you pray for this day? (pause)
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

So gracious God, when those days come, when the waters of fear rise, when isolation steals our joy, comfort us. Comfort us like a shepherd with their flock. Gather us into your arms and carry us to safer ground that we might experience joy in the ways you have in store for us. And until that promised day, like Mary and Elizabeth, we will do our best to keep finding one another. Like Mary and Elizabeth, we will do our best to open the door to one another, to you, and to the joy that connection brings. In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always,
And also with you.

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

MEAL

Offering

Offering Prayer

Let us pray, **God of righteousness,**
You have saved us from the worst the world can do
and have promised to redeem
the whole creation when Christ comes again.
In faith and hope we offer our gifts of money and self,
that we may be part of what you are doing in the world even now,
as we watch for Christ's coming in glory. Amen.

Great Thanksgiving *(set to O Come, O Come Emmanuel)*

The God of grace be here with you.
The God of grace be also with you.
Lift up your hearts in thanks and praise.
Our hearts and hopes to God we raise.
Rejoice! Rejoice! For holy is the Lord,
On earth and in the heav'nly heights adored.

When Jesus sat at table with his friends,
He took the bread, and blessing it, he said:
"This is my body, offered for you;
Take, eat, this meal of grace and truth."
Rejoice! Rejoice! We share this living bread,
And seek a day when all shall be fed.

When supper ended, Jesus took the cup.
He blessed it and he raised it up.
"This cup is life poured out for you.
My promise to make all things new."
Rejoice! Rejoice! We share the cup of peace
With those who thirst for justice and release.

O Spirit, fire of hope sent from above
Unite us in salvation and love.
Bless these, your gifts of bread and wine

And fill us with your joy divine.

Rejoice! Rejoice! We share this meal

And bless our God, who feeds and heals.

The 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 "Com - fort, com-fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!" So says our God.
2 For the her-ald's voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far and near,
3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain.



Com-fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn-ing un - der sor - row's load.
call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the reign of God is here.
Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be-fits God's ho - ly reign.



To God's peo - ple now pro-claim that God's par - don waits for them!
Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way.
For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their war is o - ver; God will reign in peace for-ev - er.
Val - leys, rise to greet the Sav - ior; hills, bow down in hum-ble fa - vor.
and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

After Communion Blessing & Prayer

Let us pray, God in whom we place our hope, **in this meal you have given us a taste of life with you; a future in which the mighty have been cast down from their thrones and the lowly have been lifted up, a future you ask us to co-create with you here and now. Send us forth into the world to do as Christ taught us, revealing your love through our words and deeds, showing others the greatness of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

SENDING

Announcements

Closing Hymn

Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Cranberry 656



- 1 Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Chris-tian love;
- 2 Be - fore our Fa - ther's throne we pour our ar - dent prayers;
- 3 We share our mu - tual woes, our mu - tual bur - dens bear,
- 4 From sor - row, toil, and pain, and sin we shall be free;



the u - ni - ty of heart and mind is like to that a - bove.
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our com - forts and our cares.
and of - ten for each oth - er flows the sym - pa - thiz - ing tear.
and per - fect love and friend - ship reign through all e - ter - ni - ty.

Text: John Fawcett, 1740–1817, alt.

Music: DENNIS, Johann G. Nägeli, 1773–1836, adapt.

Blessing

Family of faith,
as you leave this place
you go into a weary world -
go speak tenderly.
Do the good that is yours to do.
Choose connection.
Hold onto hope.
You are God's beloved.

So go rejoicing.
The world needs it.

The God of peace bless you,
the love of Christ sustain you in hope,
and the anointing of the Spirit \mp remain upon you
now and forever. **Amen.**

Advent Fest Crafts & fellowship follows immediately downstairs.

Funding for Mission & Budget

Monthly Receipts through 11/26/23 \$ 18,421.50

Monthly Budget Expenses:..... \$ 21,490.00

YTD Receipts through 10/31/23..... \$ 193,145.00

Yearly Budget..... \$ 257,876.00

The Bethel Weekly

Fellowship Hour: Please, if you are able to help on a future date in December, sign up in the hallway.

2024 Offering Envelopes: Are available in the lounge. Please do not use until January.

Bethel Photo Directory: If you haven't already done so, please submit a recent photo for the new church directory. It can be emailed to the church or brought to the office for scanning.

Sanctified Art: Devotional cards and booklets are available in the lounge. They offer prayers and reflections throughout your Advent journey.

Door Wreaths: Bonnie Madsen has beautifully adorned our church for the Advent and Christmas seasons. If you would like to contribute "In Memory of" or to the Glory of God for the wreaths, please put your money in an envelope marked "Wreaths" and return to the church office.

Midweek Advent Services: Continue at Resurrection December 6th. We will be alternating with Resurrection through December 20th.

Budget meeting: is December 10th following worship. Copies of the proposed budget are available in the lounge. If you take one, please remember to bring it

back for the meeting.

Christmas Eve Worship: There will be no morning worship on Sunday, December 24th. Our evening services will be at 4pm with the Tone Chimes doing special music and 9pm with the Choir sharing special music.

Christmas Day: There will be no worship at Bethel.

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Liturgy adapted from How Does a Weary World Rejoice?
written by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org
Communion Liturgy written by Pastor Melissa Bills.
