

**December 10, 2023**

**Advent 3B**

Pastor Kim Swenson



**Worship Volunteers**

Assisting Minister: Doug Hanson

Reader: Karl Peterson

Alter Guild: Linda Wery

Communion Assistant: Marilyn Meister

Ushers: Todd & Sue Keckhaver

Video Tech: Rick Johnson

## **Call to Worship**

Our God can part the sea.

**God can bring water from a rock,  
and provide bread in the desert.**

Our God can walk on water.

**He can heal the sick,  
and turn water into wine.**

Our God sets the stars in the sky.

**God hears our voice when we cry,  
and is closer than our own breath.**

There is nothing our God cannot do.

**Let us stand in awe. Let us worship God with wonder.**



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for  
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -  
 3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when  
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for  
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is  
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so  
 dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.  
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;  
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.  
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -  
 mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -  
 Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in  
 Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and  
 kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to  
 won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and  
 sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.  
 shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.  
 weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.  
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen

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## **Confession & Forgiveness**

If you spend any time with a child,  
you will quickly notice that children see the world differently.  
For a child, a ladybug is a miracle. A pine tree is a wonder.  
Curiosity is a love language, and water is not only for survival, but for joy.

As adults, we forget this language of awe and wonder,  
and when we do, we distance ourselves from God.  
In confession, we have the opportunity to close that distance.  
So let us return to God with hearts wide open.  
Let us return to God in prayer. Join me in the prayer of confession:

**Holy God, Somewhere in our childhood we face pressure to outgrow awe. We turn into adults who obsess over data and facts. We praise those who have answers, and assume that wonder is an answerless game. Forgive us for closing that door to you. Remind us that the kingdom of God belongs to children. Teach us the ways of awe and wonder, so that like Zechariah, when we find ourselves speechless, our first words will be words of praise. With hearts open wide, we pray. Amen.**

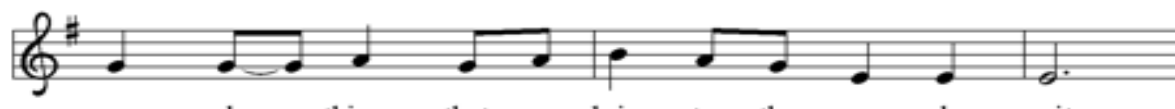
Family of faith, Just as we marvel at mountains and newborns,  
at sunrises and sunsets, God marvels at us.  
There is nothing you could do or leave undone  
that could prevent God from loving you.  
So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:  
**We are forgiven. We are loved. We belong to God. 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.**

Let us pray,

God of the universe, **make our hearts porous. Open our eyes, as if for the first time, so that we might see your world with awe and wonder once again. We often approach scripture with an analytical lens, intellectualizing the stories heard, bringing historical context and textual criticism to the table. For just a moment, pause those instincts to make room for wonder. Help us greet this text with awe and gratitude before we begin dissecting it for truth. Doing so, we will not only find you in the hallways of our thoughts, but in the pathways of our hearts. With gratitude we pray: keep us open. Amen.**

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

**WORD**

**First Reading: Psalm 126** read responsively by full verse

<sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

<sup>2</sup>**Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations,  
"The LORD has done great things for them."**

<sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.

<sup>4</sup>**Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.**

<sup>5</sup>May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.

<sup>6</sup>**Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.**

## Candle Lighting

How does a weary world practice joy?

**By dancing, and throwing birthday parties.**

By hanging Christmas lights, and holding sleepy babies.

By singing loudly, and looking for good news.

**By telling the story of Jesus, and showing up for our community.**

There are a million ways to practice joy.

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

**With God's help, may we bring joy 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.



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 1:57-66**

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

<sup>57</sup>Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. <sup>58</sup>Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

<sup>59</sup>On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. <sup>60</sup>But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." <sup>61</sup>They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." <sup>62</sup>Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. <sup>63</sup>He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. <sup>64</sup>Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. <sup>65</sup>Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. <sup>66</sup>All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

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

## **Sermon**



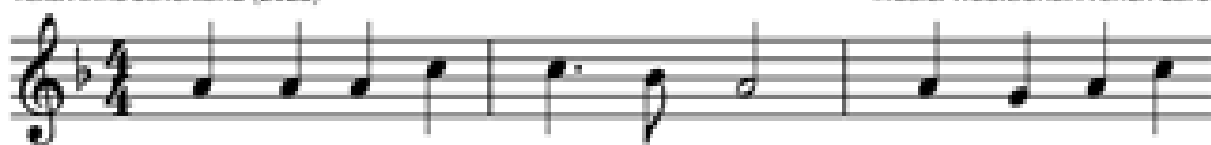
*Isn't it Amazing*

*Gloria ("Angels We Have Heard on High")*

## Sanctified Art

Text: Anna Strickland (2023)

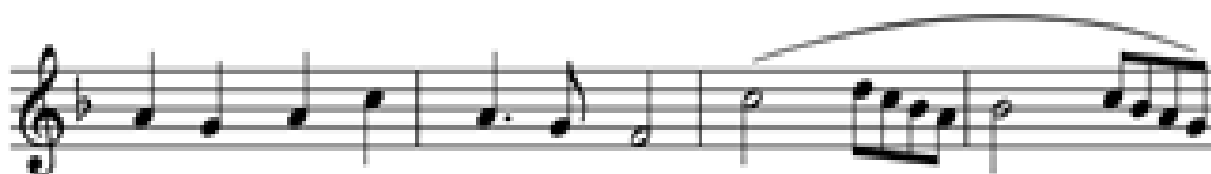
**Music:** Traditional French Carol



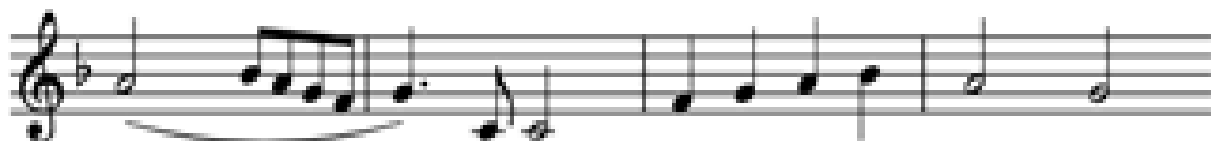
Seeds with-in the so - il grow Deep un - der the  
Deep - er, deep - er grow the roots Reach - ing up - ward  
Cell by cell a plant is built Toward the sun the  
Ev - en when the earth seems bare Plant the seeds of



ground be - low      Plant - ed when the      earth was bare  
grow the shoots      Through the earth they      weave and snake  
leaves will tilt      Nour - ished by the      sun and rain  
hope with care      If you wat - er      in the drought



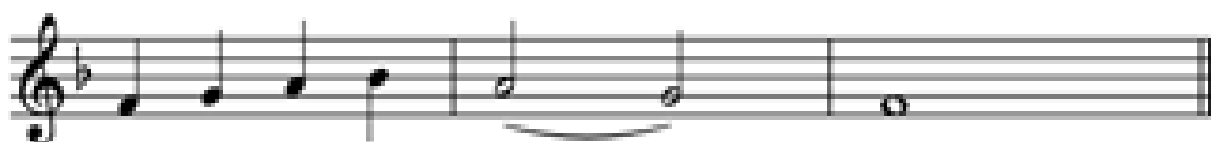
No life show-ing	an - y - where	Glo -
Un - til so - il	starts to break	Glo -
To bring forth its	seed and grain	Glo -
You will reap with	joy - ous shout	Glo -



ri - a      Is - n't it a - ma - zing?



Glo -

$$n = 2$$


Is - n't it a - ma - zing?

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

We believe in a God who knows our names,

**who counts the hairs on our heads, and carries the dreams in our hearts.**

We believe that God's fingerprints are all over creation,

**and that God is forever speaking to us in a million different ways.**

We believe that awe and wonder,

**goosebumps and laughter,**

**telling stories and paying attention,**

are all ways that we can say thank you

to our creating, sustaining, and loving God.

**Therefore, we commit ourselves to moving**

**through this world with eyes wide open,**

**with porous hearts, and grateful spirits.**

We commit ourselves to living lives of awe wonder, and gratitude,

**trusting that these things will forever draw us deeper into God's loving arms.**

We believe.

**We stand in awe. Thanks be to God!**

### **Prayers of the People**

Holy God, Christ with us, once again we bow our heads. Once again, we close our eyes. Once again, we draw ourselves closer to you in prayer. Meet us here. Surround us with your loving presence.

From sunrise to sunset, you fill us with awe. For that, we pause to give you gratitude. Thank you for the way the sun shines through our windows, for the mist rising off the river, for the warmth of a cup of coffee, for the joy of returning home, for the beauty of a crowded table, and for the glory of a sky full of stars.

For what else are we thankful for this day? (pause)

God of glory, **hear our prayer.**

God, we are in constant awe of you. The story of Zechariah and Elizabeth reminds us that there is nothing you cannot do, and there is no grief that you do not know. For that we give thanks. However, even with this good news at hand, we know that there are many in this world who cannot find the energy to practice awe or wonder because they are so deep in grief.

So today, gracious God, we pray for those for whom awe feels out of reach.

Be with every parent who worries about a sick child.

Be with every child who worries about a sick parent.

Be with every person waiting on the doctor's phone call,

waiting on the next month's paycheck, waiting for the next warm meal.

For whom else do we pray for his day? (pause)  
God of glory, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, surround those with broken hearts who are trying to stitch the pieces together, praying that one day they might be able to feel awe again. All the while, we will keep gathering together and turning to you to remind us that you are the God of the impossible. You are the one who floods our world with awe. You are the one who knows our names. In your holy name we pray. **Amen.**

### **Peace**

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

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*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**

With hope in our hearts, we unite our voices once more to pray the words your son taught us.

**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 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior  
 2 He comes the pris - 'ners 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 -  
 bond - age 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.

Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702–1751

Music: CHESTERFIELD, Thomas Haweis, 1734–1820

### 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.**

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

**SENDING**



1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing  
 2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is  
 3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the  
 4 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new



of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,  
 plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,  
 bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,  
 life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming



trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look  
 that in course the flow'r may flour - ish. Peo - ple, look  
 bright as sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo - ple, look  
 with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look



east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.  
 east, and sing to - day— Love, the Rose, is on the way.  
 east, and sing to - day— Love, the Star, is on the way.  
 east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965

Music: BESANÇON, French carol

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## 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 ✠ remain upon you  
now and forever. **Amen.**

### **Funding for Mission & Budget**

Monthly Receipts through 12/03/23 \$ 4,266.00  
Monthly Budget Expenses:..... \$ 21,490.00  
  
YTD Receipts through 11/30/23..... \$ 211,257.00  
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.

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

**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.

**Midweek Advent Services:** Continue at Bethel December 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm. We will be alternating with Resurrection through December 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Budget meeting:** is today following worship. Copies of the proposed budget are available in the lounge.

**Christmas Eve Worship:** There will be no morning worship on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>. 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](http://sanctifiedart.org)  
Communion Liturgy written by Pastor Melissa Bills.

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