

Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A
December 21, 2025



Pastor Diane Martinson

Musician: Beth Schulz

Worship Assistants

Assisting Minister: Doug Scholes

Reader: Peggy Hansen

Altar Guild: Debbie Kasulke

Communion Assistant: Peggy Hansen

Ushers: Marsha Scholes & Kay Smith

Video Tech: Cindy Michalski

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

GATHERING

Welcome

In the hustle and bustle, **it is hard to feel still.**

Our to-do lists are long; **it is hard to be present.**

Yet, we are called to stillness; **We long to be still.**

What can you let go of, so that you might rest?

What can we not do, so that we might be present with Christ?

In the name of the ☩ Triune God in whose presence we wait,
the Holy Parent, fulfilling the promise,
the Holy Child, waiting to be born,
the Holy Spirit, illuminating the way. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn *Savior of the Nations, Come vs 1,2,4*



- 1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come; vir - gin's son, make here your home.
- 2 Not by hu - man flesh and blood, but the mys - tic Breath of God,
- 3 Won-drous birth—oh, won-drous child—from his throne, a vir - gin mild!
- 4 From God's heart the Sav - ior speeds, back to God his path-way leads;



Mar - vel now, O heav'n and earth: God has cho - sen such a birth.
was the Word of God made flesh, fruit of wom - an, blos - som fresh.
Ver - y God, and Mar - y's son, ea - ger now his race to run!
out to van-quish death's com - mand, back to reign at God's right hand.

5 Now your manger, shining bright,
hallows night with newborn light.
Night cannot this light subdue;
let our faith shine ever new.

6 Praise we sing to Christ the Lord,
virgin's son, incarnate Word!
To the holy Trinity
praise we sing eternally!

Text: attr. Ambrose of Milan, 340–397; Martin Luther, 1483–1546; tr. hymnal version
Music: NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEILAND, J. Walter, *Geistliche Gesangbüchlein*, 1524
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Confession & Forgiveness

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God
and of one another.

Ever-present God,

we long to feel you close.

We long to feel your presence in our lives.

**We long for you to break through the chaos
and suffering of this world.
However, if we're honest, we rarely stand still
long enough to feel you in our midst.
Forgive our rushing and distractions.
Forgive our wandering hearts, and center us in this space.
Remind us that even in the time of Herod,
even on the longest nights, you are always there. Amen.**

Family of faith, even when we doubt God's presence,
even when we fail to notice God's fingerprints in this world,
God is always moving closer to us.
Hear and believe the good news this Advent season:
Nothing can keep God's love away.
We are seen. We are forgiven. We are not alone. Amen.

Hymn of Praise

Blessed Be the God of Israel



1 Blessed be the God of Is - ra - el who comes to set us free
2 With prom-ised mer - cy will God still the cov - e - nant re - call,
3 My child, as proph-et of the Lord you will pre-prepare the way,



and rais - es up new hope for us: a Branch from Da-vid's tree.
the oath once sworn to A - bra-ham, from foes to save us all;
to tell God's peo - ple they are saved from sin's e - ter - nal sway.



So have the proph-ets long de-clared that with a might-y arm
that we might wor - ship with-out fear and of - fer lives of praise,
Then shall God's mer - cy from on high shine forth and nev - er cease



God would turn back our en - e - mies and all who wish us harm.
in ho - li - ness and righ - teous-ness to serve God all our days.
to drive a - way the gloom of death and lead us in - to peace.

Text: Carl P. Daw Jr., b. 1944, based on Luke 1:68-79

Music: FOREST GREEN, English folk tune

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Prayer of the Day

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

Immanuel, we turned off alarm clocks. We poured cups of coffee. We slipped shoes onto our feet and combed back fly-away hairs. We traveled to this room and settled into this space, all in hopes of drawing closer to you. So as we hear your Word read aloud, help us to feel your presence in our midst. For we are reaching out our hands. We are reaching out our hearts. Speak to us now. With hope we pray, Amen.

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

WORD

Candle Lighting – Love

In a world full of fear,

where do you see the presence of love?

We see love all around us.

We see love when people hold open the door. We see love in a warm embrace, a homemade casserole, a phone call after a long day. We see love in random acts of kindness and intentional acts of empathy. We see love all around us.

Even in a fearful world, love is all around us.

Today we light the candle of love as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, love is here. Love is world-changing. Love is shining bright. We only have to look for it.

Thanks be to God for a love like that! Amen.

Hymn *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* Vs 4

**O come, O Branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.**

Refrain

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

Text: Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum, Köln, 1710; tr. composite
Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.
Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

First Lesson: Isaiah 41:5-10

⁵The coastlands have seen and are afraid;
the ends of the earth tremble;
they have drawn near and come.

⁶Each one helps the other,
saying to one another, "Take courage!"

⁷ The artisan encourages the goldsmith,
 and the one who smooths with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the
 anvil, saying of the soldering, "It is good,"
 and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved.

⁸ But you, Israel, my servant,
 Jacob, whom I have chosen,
 the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth
 and called from its farthest corners,
 saying to you, "You are my servant;
 I have chosen you and not cast you off";

¹⁰ do not fear, for I am with you;
 do not be afraid, for I am your God;
 I will strengthen you; I will help you;
 I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

Word of God. Word of Promise! **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation:

Canticle of the Turning



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
 God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
 won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.

The musical notation is written on three staves in G major (one sharp). The melody is simple and melismatic, with many notes beamed together. The lyrics are written below the staves, aligned with the notes. The first staff begins with a '1' indicating the start of the acclamation.

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.

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

The Gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

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

Sermon

Hymn of the Day We're Not Alone (Tune ELW 283)



Fear all a - round you tells you you're a - lone____
Give me your hand to hold when you feel frigh-tened
When peo - ple live in fear____ for their safe - ty
For - ward we march to - geth - er toward God's kin - dom



Urg - ing you to build walls and i - so - late
We can up - hold each o - ther in____ our fear
Let us put priv - ilege on the line____ for them
Build - ing a big - ger ta - ble, not tall - er walls



I know your fear be - cause I feel it, too____
Per - son by per - son, we'll find strength to - geth - er
Stand with our sib - lings in____ sol - i - dar - i - ty
Work - ing to - geth - er, no - thing is im - poss-i - ble



When fear grows deep in - side us, re - mem - ber what u - nites us



No, no-thing can di - vide us; we're not a - lone

Affirmation of Faith

We have seen the valley.

We have seen a sky without stars.

**We have seen the longest night,
and still we believe.**

We believe in a with-us God.

We believe in the hope of tomorrow.

We believe that good news is louder than fear.

We believe this good news is for all people.

**So even when our knees shake,
even when our voice trembles,
even when fear is all around us,
we will hold onto that good news.**

We will reach for each other.

We will look for God in our midst.

We will sing songs of joy.

We will proclaim:

Unto us, love is born.

**We have seen the longest night,
and we have seen unimaginable love.
So still, we believe. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

In the anticipation of these days, prepare our hearts for your arrival. Stir our spirits through the gifts of artists, musicians, poets, and preachers, as together we proclaim your advent among us. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

The earth breaks forth in singing as it heralds the Messiah's coming. Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in announcing this holy birth. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

You send your saving grace and peace to the nations. Lead us in work for justice and care for the common good. May we meet the Christ-child we seek in the faces of our neighbors. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

When tears of grief, exhaustion, or loneliness come, or physical or emotional hurt overwhelms us, come to our aid. Uphold all who are anxious, who know the challenges of depression, or who are ill. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Surround expectant parents and those suffering from infant loss with communities of support. Bless young children and new parents. Guide us in ways that provide safety for all children and those who care for them. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

For what else are the people of God praying for?

We give thanks for all who have treasured the gospel and lived in faithful service. Strengthen our earthly journeys until, at the last, your face shines upon us and we are held in your in love. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

Amen.

Peace

Glory to God in the highest, **and peace to God's people on earth.**

Please pass the peace of Christ with one another. Please be seated.

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

MEAL

Invitation to the Offering

Fear isolates, but love draws us close. When we give, we extend our hands in compassion, building a world where fear is met with kindness and grace. Let us offer our gifts as acts of love that shine in the shadows.

Offering

Offering Prayer

Let us pray, **God of love, bless these gifts and make them signs of Your presence in the world. May they bring comfort to the hurting, strength to the weary, and light to those who walk in fear. Teach us to love as You love—freely, fully, and forever. Amen.**

The Great Thanksgiving

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

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Blessed is our brother Jesus, the coming one who makes all things new; who, on the night when he was betrayed, while speaking of the fulfillment of salvation, took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said: **"This is my body, which is for you. Do this to remember me."**

In the same way, he also took the cup, after supper, saying: **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, to remember me."**

Remembering the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus,
we await the day until Christ comes again, crying,

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

We see the hungry in our world, and we cry,

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

We see the broken, the sick, the dying, and we cry,

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

We see those we consider less than ourselves, and we cry,

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

We cry, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and we wait...

Send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts of bread and wine,
and upon us, your gathered community.

Empower us, fed by your body and blood, to be your Body in the world:

to feed the hungry, to heal the broken, pray for the sick,
to welcome the hurt and the marginalized,
to be as Christ to one another. Amen.

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.

Lamb of God, *to the tune of Still, Still, Still*



Lamb of God, you take a - way our sin. Lord, have mer-cy
on us, and may your peace be with us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way our sin.

Prayer After Communion

Let us pray, Loving God,
**In a world racked with fear,
you gather us together.
You set the table.
You meet us here.
You nourish our bodies
as you nourish our spirits.
You remind us that this is a joyful feast,
and that fear cannot win every time.
So with renewed courage,
with renewed hope,
with renewed conviction,
send us out into the world.
Help us to feed others as you have fed us.
With gratitude we pray, Amen.**

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

SENDING

Announcements

Blessing

In a fearful world, may you look for God's spirit.
May you reach for each other's hands.
May you choose courage whenever you can.
And in all things, may you remember
that good news is louder than fear.

In the name of the Triune God,
the one who calls,
the one ☩ who journeys with us
and the one who sends,
grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness,
and good news to share today and always. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn *Fling Wide the Door*



1 Fling wide the door, un - bar the gate; the King of glo - ry
 2 He is the rock of our be - lief, the heart of mer - cy's
 3 Oh, hap - py towns and bless - ed lands that live by their true
 4 Come, Lord, our Sav - ior, Je - sus Christ; our hearts are o - pen



comes in state; the Lord of lords and King of kings, the
 gen - tle self. His king - ly crown is ho - li - ness; his
 king's com - mands. And bless - ed be the hearts he rules, the
 wide in trust. Oh, show us now your love - ly grace, up -



Sav - ior of the world who brings his great sal - va - tion
 scep - ter is his love - li - ness; he brings our sor - rows
 hum - ble plac - es where he dwells. He is the right - ful
 on our sor - rows shine your face, and let your Ho - ly



to the earth. So raise a shout of ho - ly mirth and
 to an end. Now glad - ly praise our king and friend, and
 Son of bliss who fills our lives and makes us his, cre -
 Spir - it guide our jour - ney in your grace so wide. We



praise our God and Lord, Cre - a - tor, Spir - it, Word.
 wor - ship him with song for sav - ing us from wrong.
 a - tor of the world, our on - ly strength for good.
 praise your ho - ly name, from age to age the same!

Text: Georg Weissel, 1590–1635; tr. Gracia Grindal, b. 1943

Music: MACHT HOCH DIE TÜR, J. A. Freylinghausen, *Geistreiches Gesangbuch*, 1704

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Dismissal

Go in peace. Keep awake. **Thanks be to God.**

Funding for Mission & Budget

Monthly Receipts through 12/8/25	\$6,551.50
Monthly Budget Expenses:	\$20,033.00
YTD Receipts through 11/30/25:	\$209,184.00

Bethel Weekly

Christmas Eve Service: We are still in need of volunteers for the 4:00 Christmas Eve service. Please sign up **TODAY**. If 4:00 doesn't work for you please consider joining Resurrection at their 6:30 service.

New Music/Choir Director: has been hired! Rowen Erickson will begin with the New Year. Plan to attend a special Readings and Carols service on January 4th and stay afterwards to welcome her during fellowship.

Reverse Advent Calendar: Don't forget to keep checking the list and adding items for the Resurrection Food Pantry.

Thank You: to Pastor Diane Martinson for leading today's worship and Beth Schulz for providing the music.

Baby Shower: Elta & Laurance, our Haitian friends & students are expecting a baby boy mid February. We would like to shower them with gifts of needed baby boy items. Please bring items to church by January 11th. A wish list is included in the bulletin.

Office Hours: Please note that the office will be closed from December 23rd to Jan 1st. Ashley will still be in and out throughout that time to set up for the next services and anything else that needs to be done. If you need the office please email the church at bethelonbond@yahoo.com and Ashley will get back to you as soon as possible. You can also reach out to Cindy Michalski. For Pastoral emergencies please contact Pastor Melissa Pagel (920)684-9024.

Annual Reports Due: All Bethel committee and organization chair-persons are asked to turn in their annual reports to the church office **by January 15th** so that the 2025 Annual Report can be printed and made available to the congregation by February 1st.

Aebleskiver: The council has decided that Aebleskiver will be canceled for this year. Due to staffing changes and the amount of volunteers needed they feel it is best that we find other fundraising opportunities throughout the year.

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