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**BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Rev. Molly Wills, Pastor | Jan Smith, Accompanist

Third Sunday of Advent | Sunday, December 15, 2024

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Vibrantly open to the Spirit, Bethel Lutheran Church seeks to serve God

and its neighbors by joyfully living into the good news of Jesus Christ.

**SPIRIT ART**

A meditative study of scripture through art.

Luke 3:7-18

***HELPFUL WORSHIP INFORMATION:*** *We use the Evangelical Lutheran Worship (red book) as our hymnal, containing both liturgy and hymns. Liturgies are indicated by (ELW p.), found in front of the hymnal and the numbers are on the bottom of the page. Hymns are indicated by (ELW ###), they are found in the back two-thirds of the hymnal and the numbers are on the top of the page. Hymns in the All Creation Sings hymnal (purple book) are indicated by (ACS ###). Songs in the green binder are indicated by (GB ###).*

**GATHERING**

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

**Meditation time** O Come Little Children arr. by Lloyd Larson

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence arr. by Marty Parks

**Welcome & Announcements**

**GATHERING SONG *Come Into His Presence* (GB #17)**

**Confession, Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, alive in the world, reviving creation, arriving soon. **Amen.** Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

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.**

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

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

**SONG OF PRAISE *My Lord, What a Morning* (GB #8)**

**Greeting**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

**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. Amen.**

**SONG OF PRAISE *In His Presence* (GB #12)**

**Word**

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

**Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-20**

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.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God**.

**reading: Isaiah 12:2-6**(read 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 Israel.

**Reading: Philippians 4:4-7**

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.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Acclamation *Help Us O Lord***

(Song Leaders sing 1st time, All sing 2nd time)

**Help us O Lord to hear your word. Open our hearts to feel your word.**

**Give us strength to live your word each day.**

**Gospel: Luke 3:7-18** The holy gospel according to Luke. **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.

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

**Children's Christmas program** *Joy to the World! Christ Has Come!*

Kids: …Hark the Herald, Angels Sing! Glory to the newborn king!

**Congregation:** **Oh come all ye faithful, joyful, and triumphant! Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.**

Kids: Joy to the world, Christ has come!

**Hymn of the Day *Canticle of the Turning* (ELW 723)**

**NICENE Creed (ACS p. 16)**

**Prayers of Intercession** Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

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Description automatically generated**Peace** The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

**Meal**

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

**Offering** Flute Duet: Terri Helland and Emily Koehler

**Offering Prayer**

**Creator God, 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.**

**Thanksgiving at the Table (ACS p. 21)**

…with every breath. **We praise you, O God.**

…into the future. **We rejoice in you, O God.**

…with us now. **We thank you, O God.**

…proclaim the mystery of faith: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

**…**in your church, without end. **Amen.**

**Lord’s prayer (ACS p. 24)**

**Communion song *Now The Heavens Start to Whisper* (ACS #901)**

**Prayer after Communion**

**Sending**

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

**BENEDICTION SONG *Blessing***

**May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you. May God look upon you with favor and give you peace, and give you peace, and give you peace. Amen.**

**Blessing**

God of endings and beginnings, God in the darkness and the light, our hope for the journey, + bless and keep you now and forever. **Amen.**

**SENDING SONG *He Came Down* (ELW #253)**

**Dismissal** Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel. **Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude** My Lord, What a Morning arr. by Sara Glick

**About the Prayer of the Day**

The prayer of the day is inspired by prayer #894 in the seventh-century Gregorian Sacramentary. This Sunday we ask that we heed the preaching of John the Baptist and bring forth fruits of repentance.

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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**WELCOME TO BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH!**

**QUESTIONS OR REQUESTS?** Please contact the church office at 320-395-2125 or bethellutheranlp@gmail.com. For emergency pastoral care needs call Pastor Molly Wills at 320-339-8169 or email pastor@lpbethel.org.

**BULLETIN SUBMISSION DEADLINE:** Wednesdays at noon.

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:** 25th of the month. **CHURCH ADDRESS:** 77 Lincoln AVE N, Lester Prairie, MN 55354, **(Mailing USPS use: PO Box 207)**

**SIMPLY GIVING** offers convenience for you and much-needed consistency for Bethel! If you have any questions, contact Stacy Meyer, Financial Secretary, at finsec@lpbethel.org**.**

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**ONLINE GIVING:** scan QR code

**HEARING ASSIST DEVICES AVAILABLE**—speak to an usher for assistance.

**LARGE PRINT HYMNS AVAILABLE**—contact the office if you are interested.

**For the week of December 15, 2024…**

* Worship: 9:00 am w/ SS Christmas program: *Joy to the World! Christ Has Come!*
* Birthday Party for Jesus!: following worship in the Fellowship Hall, all are welcome!

**Monday, December 16**

* Bible Study: Noon, bring your lunch to eat while we discuss the Bible

**Wednesday, December 18**

* Choir practice: 5:45 pm
* Advent mid-week service *(Light of the World)*: 6:30 pm
* Book club discussion: following the Advent service

**Next Sunday, December 22**

* Worship: 9:00 am
* Sunday School, *The Chosen*, & fellowship: following worship

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS**

* **CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP SERVICE, w/ HC at** **4:00 pm**
* **NOMINATING COMMITTEE SEEKING 2025 VOLUNTEERS: Open positions include:**

**Council positions:** President, Secretary, Financial Secretary (all 2-year terms),

Finance Board and Education Board (both 2-year terms, they partner with one other board member, only one person from the board needs to attend council meetings)

**Committee positions:** Cemetery 2-year term/need one, Mission Endowment 3-year term/need two, Audit 3-year term/need one, Nomination 1-year term/need four, Synod Assembly in June/one male & one female. Contact Peggy Wick, Ron Foust, or Brian Duncan if you want to serve in 2025!

* **REMINDER**: Email your Annual Reports to [bethellutheranlp@gmail.com](mailto:bethellutheranlp@gmail.com)

**by December 16: *Education Board, Finance Board & Cemetery Committee***

* **REMINDER:** Email your Financial Annual Reports to [bethellutheranlp@gmail.com](mailto:bethellutheranlp@gmail.com)

**by January 10: *Council Treasurer, 2025 Budget & WELCA Treasurer***

* **BETHEL’S ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING, SUNDAY, JANUARY 26**: The meeting will begin immediately following worship. A potluck meal will follow the meeting.Please make every effort to attend this important meeting for our congregation.
* **NO BETHEL BREAKFAST IN DECEMBER:** Since the annual meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2025, the next Bethel Breakfast at Longhorn’s will be on **January 19, 2025**!
* **LEFSE MAKING:** On Sunday, December 8 the group made and packaged 205 rounds of lefse to bring home! Plus, we enjoyed many rejects while making the lefse! We had a great afternoon. Thank you, Julie and Jeff Hanson, for donating the potatoes from our community garden!
* **YOUTH TASK FORCE SOCIAL:** Bethel will host the Youth Task Force Social **on Wednesday, January 15, 12:40 pm-1:40 pm.** We will need volunteers to come early to set up card-making supplies on the tables, pop popcorn, etc., and volunteers to sit at each table to help the students. If you would like to volunteer, contact Pastor Molly.
* **A MULTI-LEVEL AGE GIRL SCOUT TROOP** will meet monthly at our church starting January 18 at 1:00 pm. At the first meeting, they will decide which Saturday of the month to meet and what time. Girls K-12 are invited to join. It will be a multi-level age group because it is the only Girl Scout troop available in Lester Prairie. The leader is Deb Riske. If anyone is interested in joining, contact Deb at 612-804-3188 or [dwriske@gmail.com](mailto:dwriske@gmail.com)
* **FAITH THAT OVERFLOWS 2025:** Registration for GLLM summer programs is open! By registering early, you will not only reserve your place, but you’ll save money too! **The Early Bird Discount ends on February 13, 2025!** Every registration received before then will receive $65 off each registered program (some restrictions apply.) GLLM scholarships are available for any program including youth camps, and retreat programs. Bethel also has scholarships available, contact Emily Koehler or Pete Hallberg if you are interested. Visit gllm.org for more information and register today! If you have questions, contact the office by phone at 320-796-2181 or email [camp@gllm.org](mailto:camp@gllm.org).
* **CREATIVE SOULS RETREAT, FEBRUARY 7-9, 2025:** Escape the cold and snow and enjoy a cozy weekend of creating! Crafters of all skills and projects are invited to a weekend of dedicated time to create and work on projects. No need to think about meals or dishes, because we have those covered. When you need a break, there is space for taking a brisk walk, reading a book, or even enjoying a nap. Join us for a weekend filled with whatever your creative soul needs! Register before the deadline - **Tuesday, January 28!** Visit [gllm.org](http://gllm.org/) for more information and register today!