

# BETHEL LUTHERAN

E.L.C.A.

G R O V E C I T Y

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent  
December 15, 2024

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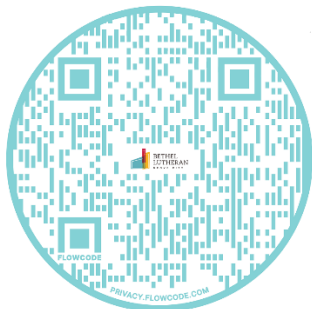
Worship Services 8:30 A.M. & 10:30 A.M.

Welcome

to Bethel Lutheran

We extend special greetings to all our guests who are with us today. Your presence, along with our members and friends, is truly valued. Know that all of God's people are always welcome here at Bethel.

If you would like to know more about Bethel Lutheran, her pastor, the Rev. Peter I. Ray, or any of the parish's programs and activities, please contact the church office (875-0510). You may also check out our website by scanning the QR code below. Again, welcome; and may you have a blessed week!



## **Worship and young children**

All children are welcome in worship. They are a valued part of this faith community.

In addition, Bethel's Nursery (for children up to approximately four years of age) has paid staff at both services. This is available to meet the needs of your family and the worshiping needs of the congregation.

We have a "Parentseeker" paging system for optimal communication between nursery and parents worshiping in the sanctuary.

Children's bulletins are also available in the narthex for younger children to help them make age-appropriate connections with our weekly themes.

Bethel has video monitors in the narthex and hallways if your child gets restless.



*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.*

- ❖ Quiet reverence before the liturgy allows prayer and meditation.
- ❖ Please do not bring food or drinks into the sanctuary during worship.
- ❖ Throughout the service, **C** means the congregation responds as the **bold print** indicates.
- ❖ As a worship courtesy, **please silence or turn off** all cellular phones and other communication devices during the service.

# Gathering

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### PRELUDE

*Shepherd's Spiritual*

Gabriel Choir

*(please stand and face the baptismal font)*

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

C **Amen.**

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

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

P God of mercy,

C **We confess that we have sinned.**

**We trust earthly powers and human authority alone.**

**We grow fearful. We cling to false comforts.**

**Amen.**

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

P God in our midst,  
C **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.**

## **PROCESSIONAL HYMN**

He Came Down

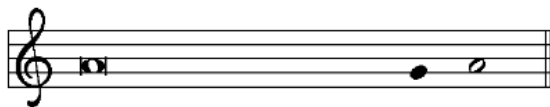
ELW #253

## **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



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



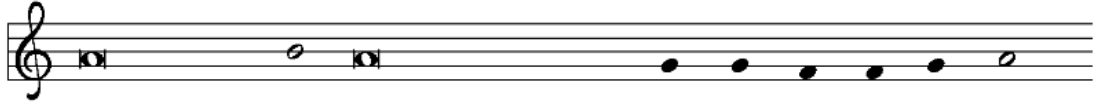
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



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 wor-ship and praise,



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



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra-cious Lord. A - men.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

**P** 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.

*(please be seated)*

# LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

HYMN

*O Come, O Come, Emanuel*

ELW #257, v.1, 2 & 3



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive  
2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things  
3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on  
4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
far and nigh: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;  
Si - nai's height in an - cient times you gave the law  
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
teach us your will and guide our way.  
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.  
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



# Word

FIRST READING (10:30)

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.*

- <sup>14</sup> Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;  
shout, O Israel!  
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter Jerusalem!
- <sup>15</sup> 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.
- <sup>16</sup> On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
Do not fear, O Zion;  
do not let your hands grow weak.
- <sup>17</sup> 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  
<sup>18</sup> as on a day of festival.
- I will remove disaster from you,  
so that you will not bear reproach for it.
- <sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

P The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM (10:30)

Isaiah 12:2-6

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> With joy you will draw water  
from the wells of salvation.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be known in all the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

*(please stand, as able)*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



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



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

P The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

C **Glory to you, O Lord.**

## 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.*

<sup>7</sup> John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" <sup>8</sup> Bear fruits worthy of repentance. 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. <sup>9</sup> Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

<sup>10</sup> And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" <sup>11</sup> In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." <sup>12</sup> Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" <sup>13</sup> He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." <sup>14</sup> 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."

<sup>15</sup> As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup> 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 thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> 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."

<sup>18</sup> 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.

(please be seated)

**SERMON**

Rev. Peter I. Ray

(please stand, as able)

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

*Now the Heavens Start to Whisper*

ACS #901



1 Now the heav - ens start to whis - per, as the veil is grow - ing thin.  
2 Heav - y clouds that block the moon - light now be - gin to drift a - way.  
3 Christ, e - ter - nal Sun of jus - tice, Christ, the rose of wis - dom's seed,



Earth from slum - ber wakes to lis - ten to the stir - ring, faint with - in:  
Dia - mond bril - liance through the dark - ness shines the hope of com - ing day.  
come to bless with fire and fra - grance hours of yearn - ing, hurt, and need.



seed of prom-ise, deep-ly plant-ed, child to spring from Jes - se's stem!  
Christ, the morn-ing star of splen-dor, gleams with-in a world grown dim.  
In the lone - ly, in the strang-er, in the out-cast, hid from view;



Like the soil be - neath the frost-line, hearts grow soft to wel-come him.  
Heav-en's em - ber fans to full-ness; hearts grow warm to wel-come him.  
Child who comes to grace the man-ger, teach our hearts to wel-come you.

## **APOSTLES CREED (10:30)**

**C I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.\***

**On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P 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.*

P 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,

**C Receive our prayer.**

P 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 (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

**C Receive our prayer.**

P 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 and oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, class, or age. Lord, in your mercy,

**C Receive our prayer.**

P God who embraces, help us notice the places where your people are hurting or sick. (*We pray especially for . . .*) Show your compassion and remember your people in love. Lord, in your mercy,

**C Receive our prayer.**

P God who abides, you dwell among the people of this congregation. Deepen our relationships with one another, and make us aware of the diverse talents and gifts present here (*specific ministries may be named*). Lord, in your mercy,

**C Receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

P 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,

C **Receive our prayer.**

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

C **Amen.**

Gathering • Word • Meal • Sending

# Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

## SHARING OF THE PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C **And also with you.**

*(You may share a sign of God's peace such as a handshake, wave, hug or other appropriate greeting.)*

*(please be seated)*

## OFFERING

*An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, and the care of those in need. If you are a first-time visitor, it is our privilege to have you worship with us. Please do not feel the need or obligation to give a financial offering. Your presence is gift enough to God and to us.*

Our members and friends have the privilege to participate in faithful financial stewardship. Scan the QR Code below where you can give electronically.



*(please stand, as able)*

### OFFERTORY RESPONSE

Musical notation for the Offertory Response, consisting of four staves of music in G major (one flat) and 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right spir-it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of your sal-va-tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir-it."

Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right  
spir-it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take  
not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of  
your sal-va-tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir-it.



## OFFERTORY PRAYER

A 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.

C Amen.

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.



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



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

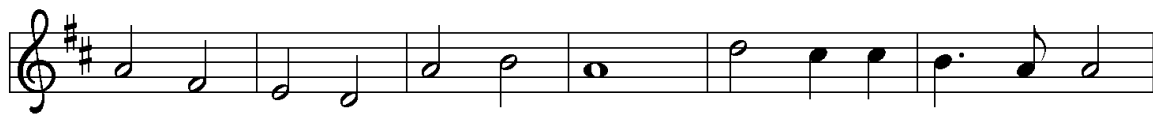


It is right to give our thanks and praise.

## PREFACE

It is indeed right, our du - ty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you,  
al - mighty and merciful God, through our Sav - ior Je - sus Christ.  
You comforted your people with the promise of the Re - deem - er,  
through whom you will also make all things new  
in the day when he comes to judge the world in righ - teous-ness.  
And so, with all the choirs of an - gels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heav - en,  
we praise your name and join their un - end - ing hymn:

## SANTUS (Holy, Holy, Holy)



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.



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

P Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:  
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.  
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.  
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.  
Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.  
Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.  
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,  
the Word made flesh.

P 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.

P Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

C **Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

P With this bread and cup  
we remember your Word dwelling among us,  
full of grace and truth.  
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.  
We look with hope for his coming.

C **Come, Lord Jesus.**

P Holy God, we long for your Spirit.  
Come among us.  
Bless this meal.  
May your Word take flesh in us.  
Awaken your people.  
Fill us with your light.  
Bring the gift of peace on earth.

C **Come, Holy Spirit.**

P All praise and glory are yours,  
Holy One of Israel,  
Word of God incarnate,  
Power of the Most High,  
one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

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.

C Amen.

*(please be seated)*

## COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

Bethel welcomes to the Lord's table all baptized Christians who believe that Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of this meal. Children and adults who want to receive a blessing instead of bread and wine may cross their arms over their chest as they come forward. All are welcome!

## AGNUS DEI (Lamb of God)



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, grant us peace.

**DISTRIBUTION HYMN**

*We Are Waiting for Jesus*

ACS #905



1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.  
2 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.  
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



Sun of jus - tice, shine up - on us; we are trust - ing in your prom - ise.  
Lov - ing Shep - herd, walk be - side us; stir our hearts, and gent - ly guide us.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.  
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

*(please stand, as able)*

**PASTORAL COMMENDATION**

P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ  
strengthen and keep you in his grace.

C Amen.

## POST COMMUNION PRAYER

A 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.

Gathering • Word • Meal • Sending

# Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission out into the world.

## 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.

CLOSING HYMN

*Prepare the Royal Highway*

ELW #264

## DISMISSAL

A Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE