

BETHEL  
LUTHERAN

E.L.C.A.

G R O V E C I T Y

1st Sunday after Christmas  
December 29, 2024

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Worship Service 10:00 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.

Never been to a "Lutheran" or "liturgical" church? It might at first seem strange with all the singing and sitting down and standing up. Know all we do has meaning and function. Pastor Ray is happy to explain any confusing things for you. 😊

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.

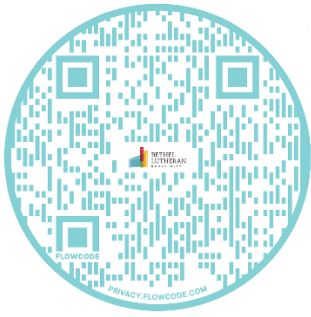
We have a "Parentseeker" paging system for optimal communication between nursery and parents worshiping in the sanctuary.

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.



*On the first Sunday of Christmas we find the boy Samuel and the boy Jesus, both in the temple, both growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and humankind. We too have returned to the house of God “to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God,” who has gifted us with a savior. As the festival continues, “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” It is Christmas, still.*



- ❖ 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

*(please stand and face the baptismal font)*

### OPENING DIALOGUE

P Come! Look upon the baby Jesus,  
cradled in the arms of his mother.

C **Seeing this wondrous sight,  
may our hearts be comforted  
and our spirits filled with peace.**

P Come! Listen to choirs of angels  
announcing good news to all people.

C **Hearing this marvelous song, may we too sing:  
Glory to God in the highest!**

P Come! Receive this ancient story in your heart,  
not as history but as a gift.

C **Opening our hearts to this great mystery,  
may Christ be born in us today.**

### PROCESSIONAL HYMN

*Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

ELW #254

## 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.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

**P** O Lord, God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, 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)*

Gathering • Word • Meal • Sending

# Word

## FIRST READING

**Luke 2: 1-7**

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

P The Word of the Lord.  
C Thanks be to God.

## REFLECTION

### Luther's reflections on the birth of Jesus

Behold Christ lying in the lap of his young mother. . . . What can be sweeter than the Babe, what more lovely than the mother! . . . Look at the Child, knowing nothing. Yet all that is belongs to him, that your conscience should not fear but take comfort in him. Doubt nothing. Watch him springing in the lap of the maiden. Laugh with him. Look upon this Lord of Peace and your spirit will be at peace. . . . You will see how great is the divine goodness, which seeks above all else that you should not despair. Trust him! Trust him! Here is the Child in whom is salvation. To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of his most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to judge this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come, not to judge you, but to save. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, p. 33)

## HYMN

*'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime*

ELW #284

## SECOND READING

Luke 2:8-16

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

## REFLECTION

### **Luther's reflections on the shepherds and angels**

Look at the shepherds. They were watching their flocks by night, and an angel came and made them apostles, prophets, and children of God. . . . This is a great miracle that the shepherds should have believed this message. They might easily have thought to themselves, "Are we two shepherds worthy that the whole host of heaven should be marshaled for us and all the kings on the earth and the dwellers in Jerusalem be passed by?" I know I would have appealed to common sense and I would have said: "Who am I compared to God and angels and kings? It is an apparition." But the Holy Spirit, who preached through the angels, caused the shepherds to believe. They were so strong in the faith that they were worthy to be spoken to by angels and to hear every angel in heaven singing a cantata just for them. This is a pure wonder that enters not into the heart of man. Our God begins with angels and ends with shepherds. Why does he do such preposterous things? He puts a Babe in a crib. Our common sense revolts and says, "Could not God have saved the world some other way?" (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 36, 40)

## **HYMN**

*It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*

ELW #282

## THIRD READING

Matthew 2:1-12

<sup>1</sup>In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

<sup>5</sup>They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup>And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." <sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

## REFLECTION

### **Luther's reflections on Herod and the wise men**

When the Wise Men received the divine revelation that the king of the Jews was born, they made straight for Jerusalem, for, of course, they expected to find him at the capital in a lordly castle and a golden chamber. Where else would common sense expect to find a king? But because they were so sure of themselves, the star left them. Then they were sorely tried, and had they relied solely on human wisdom, would surely have said: "Confound it! We have come all this way for



nothing. The star has deceived us. The devil has led us by an apparition. If a king had been born, would he not be in the capital and in a palace? But when we come, the star disappears and we find no one who knows anything about him. Can it be that we foreigners should be the first to have news of him in the royal city? Everyone is so cold and unfriendly that no one offers to go with us and show us the child. They do not believe themselves that to them a king is born, and shall we come and find him?

How desolate for the birth of a king! If a puppy were born there would be some little stir, and here a king is supposed to be born and everything is so still. . . . Should not the people be singing, capering, lighting lamps and torches, bedecking the streets with roses and mayflowers? What a miserable king we are seeking! What fools we have been to let ourselves start on this quest!" Nature wants to feel and be certain before believing, but grace will believe before she feels. Faith steps gaily into the darkness, trusting simply in the Word.

But having come, they decided to inquire of the king before returning. At their report, Herod the king "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Why was Herod terrified and all Jerusalem with him? *He* had good reason to be afraid because he had tyrannized over the Jews for thirty years. . . . Now Herod had a crafty plan. "The Jews," thought he, "will hide the truth from me, but I will find out the town where this king is to be born and also the time, and then if they hide him, I will catch him anyway. I will kill so many babies that he cannot escape." So he called the scribes to him and said, "Where is Christ to be born?" Then perhaps through fear, the scribes answered him that in the Prophet Micah it is written that He should be born in Bethlehem. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 50-52)

**HYMN**

*The First Noel*

ELW #300

**FOURTH READING**

**John 1:1-5, 14-18**

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

<sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup>From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

## REFLECTION

### Luther's reflections on the Word made flesh

Let us, then, meditate upon the Nativity just as we see it happening in our own babies. I would not have you contemplate the deity of Christ, the majesty of Christ, but rather his flesh. Look upon the baby Jesus. Divinity may terrify man. Inexpressible majesty will crush him. That is why Christ took on our humanity, save for sin, that he should not terrify us but rather that with love and favor he should console and confirm.

This is the word of the prophet: "*Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given*" (Isaiah 9:6). This is for us the hardest point, not so much to believe that He is the son of the Virgin and God himself, as to believe that this Son of God is ours. That is where we wilt. . . . Truly it is marvelous in our eyes that God should place a little child in the lap of a virgin and that all our blessedness should lie in him. And this Child belongs to all mankind. God feeds the whole world through a Babe nursing at Mary's breast. This must be our daily exercise: to be transformed into Christ, being nourished by this food. Then will the heart be suffused with all joy and will be strong and confident against every assault. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 33, 16)

**HYMN**

*Of the Father's Love Begotten*

ELW #295

## NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,\*  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P Filled with good news of great joy, let us offer our prayers for the church, the earth, and all people.

**A brief silence.**

P For those who teach and those who learn, we pray. Bless the education ministries of your church. Guide Sunday school teachers, college and seminary professors, and Bible study leaders (specific institutions or instructors may be named) in our ongoing faith formation and curiosity.  
God of grace,

**C Receive our prayer.**

P For the thriving of creation, we pray. Protect the habitats of pangolins and porcupines, penguins and parrots, and all wild animals and creeping things. Increase our knowledge of the natural world and the care of its inhabitants.  
God of grace,

**C Receive our prayer.**

P For the nations of the world, we pray. Raise up rulers who lead with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Let your peace rule in their hearts and in all lands (places of war and conflict may be named). God of grace,

**C Receive our prayer.**

P For the well-being of your people, we pray. Keep watch over all who travel this holiday season. Accompany those who are alone or ill (especially). Console parents and children whose relationships are strained or severed.  
God of grace,

**C Receive our prayer.**

P For the ministry of this place (the local congregation or ministry setting may be named), we pray. Let the word of Christ dwell among us. In times of conflict, clothe us in love and move us to forgiveness. God of grace,

**C Receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

P For your holy, beloved, and chosen ones of every time and place, we give thanks. Draw us all into everlasting praise and joy. God of grace,

C **Receive our prayer.**

P We commend these prayers to you, O God, trusting your grace made known to all, through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

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.



**OFFERTORY SONG** *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*

ELW #490 (1 & 5)

**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

P God of heaven and earth,  
from the beginning, you have called forth life,  
in which you take delight.  
The trees, the fields, and the seas sing for joy.  
Bless now these gifts, received from your bounty,  
that we may join the chorus of creation  
to tell of your salvation from day to day.

**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.



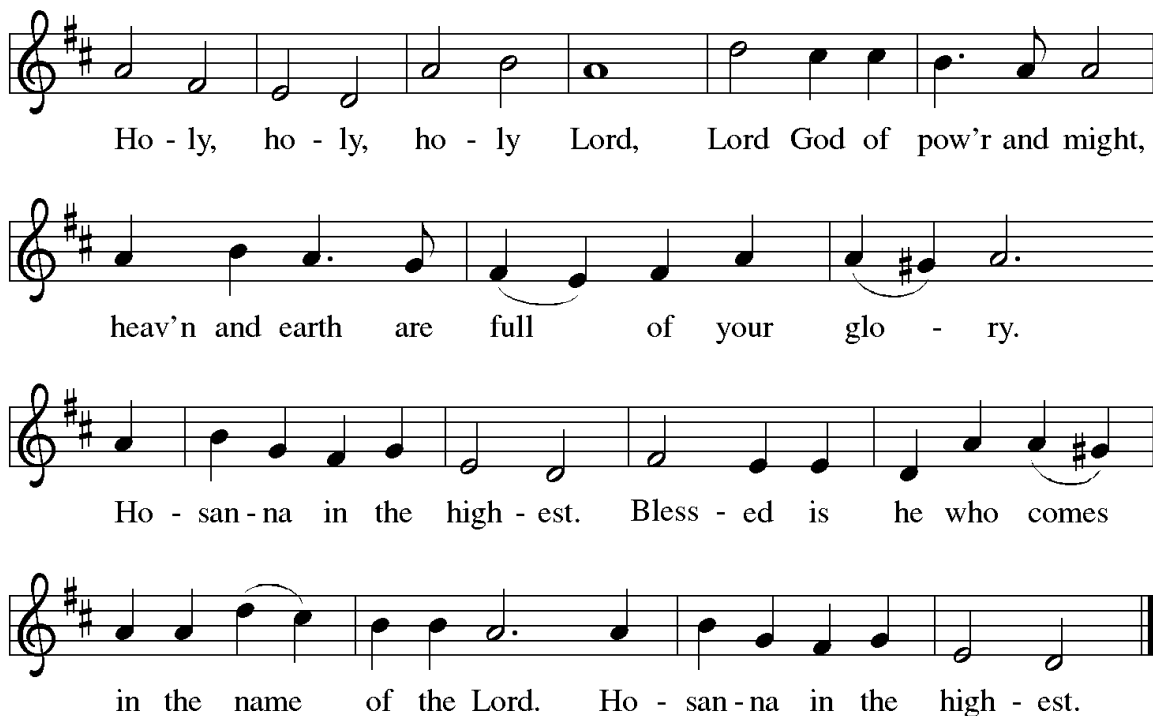
## THE PREFACE

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.  
In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened  
the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vis - ion of your glo - ry,  
that be - holding the God made vis - i - ble,  
we may be drawn to love the God whom we can - not see.  
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:

The image shows a musical score for a vocal part, likely a soprano or alto, in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The score consists of ten staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. The music features a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, with some rests. The lyrics are: "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. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vis - ion of your glo - ry, that be - holding the God made vis - i - ble, we may be drawn to love the God whom we can - not see. 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:"



## SANCTUS *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.

## EUCHARISTIC 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.

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.**

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 A child has been born for us, a Son given to us.  
Come, receive the gift of Jesus.

C **Amen.**



1 In a far - off place, Je - sus comes to earth.  
 2 For the poor in heart, Je - sus comes to earth.  
 3 In our deep - est night, Je - sus comes to earth:



Sheep and cat - tle grace the site. As the  
 Hum - ble shep - herds start the news. For each  
 ra - diant star to light our way. Sum - mer's



an - gel songs be - gin, like the whis - per of the wind,  
 home-less in - fant born, for the meek and those who mourn,  
 heat or win - ter's chill, with a warm and lov - ing will,



na - ture's hope a - wakes a - gain; Je - sus comes.  
 for the wear - y and the worn, Je - sus comes.  
 to a world that needs him still, Je - sus comes.

# Sending

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

## BLESSING

**P** May the Word that Mary brought to birth  
carry you into new and abundant life.  
May the Word that Joseph cradled in his arms  
enfold you with love and strength.  
May the Word that angels proclaimed in song  
bring harmony to our world.  
And the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, the ✝ Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon you and remain with you always.

**C** Amen.

## CLOSING HYMN

Cold December Flies Away

ELW #299

## DISMISSAL

**P** Glory to God in the highest!

**C** And peace to God's people on earth!

**P** Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## POSTLUDE