

BETHLEHEM UNITED

CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Sunday, December 10, 2023

Second Sunday of Advent

Guest Worship Leader: Rev. Darren Beachy

Organist: Polly Jeanty

If listening from your car, please tune your car radio to 101.3 FM

***= Please rise in body or spirit**

CENTERING THOUGHT: We gather together in this season of Advent anticipating hope, praying for peace, attempting to cultivate joy and share love amidst commotion, grief, despair and uncertainty. What does "peace" mean to you? What brings you inner peace? What prevents you from feeling peace? How can we, as Christians, encourage and usher peace into God's Kingdom?

RINGING OF THE BELLS

THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE ^(a)

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP #216 v.1 "While We are Waiting, Come"
While we are waiting, come. While we are waiting, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, While we are waiting, come.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

*CALL TO WORSHIP (Inspired by Isaiah 40) ^{a}

Leader: A voice cries out declaring God's presence.

Comfort, O Comfort my people, says God.

All: We come preparing the way of the Lord.

Together, we actively wait for God's peace.

Leader: A voice cries out declaring God's equity.

Valleys shall be lifted and Hills be made low.

All: We come to make straight in the desert, a highway.

Together, we're pressing toward God's peace.

Leader: A voice cries out declaring steadfastness.

Grass withers, flowers fade, but God's word stands forever.

All: We lift up our voices with strength and good tidings.

Together, we carry out God's peace.

*OPENING PRAYER {a}

Let us pray,

Spirit of God, who dwells within our hearts,

Wean it from that which aims to separate us from you.

In this moment of collective worship

Take the dimness of our souls away.

Let us seek you. Let us find you.

Teach us to feel that you are always nigh

As we lift up our voices with strength to worship you.

Amen.

*OPENING HYMN #90

"Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION^{b}

God of mercy, We confess that we resist change, even when your Word compels us to reconsider our actions or opinions. We are set in our ways, and prefer to consider the changes others should make. Forgive us.

By the power of your Holy Spirit, give us new eyes for seeing, new ears for hearing so that we follow Jesus more faithfully day by day.

(time for reflection)

WORDS OF GRACE {B}

Friends, trust that peace and forgiveness are God's gift to you this day through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Receive the renewing power of the Holy Spirit and be at peace with God, with yourselves and with each other. **Thanks be to God! Amen!**

*RESPONSE

"Gloria Patri"

Glory be to the Father, And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;

**As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen, Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:
'In the wilderness prepare the way of
the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for
our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the LORD shall
be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!'
And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight" ',

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the
field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon
it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for
ever.
Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
'Here is your God!'
See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

SERMON

*HYMN #390

“It is Well with my Soul”

PASTORAL PRAYER ^(b) ... 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CALL TO THE OFFERING^(B) (Jingle Change for the month of December supports the Christmas Fund)

Leader: This Sunday in Advent celebrates God’s gift of peace. When we look around the world, we see so many places where peace is missing, in neighborhoods and nations. But because we know the gift of God’s peace, we can trust that our gifts will help restore true peace to souls and situations by the power of the Spirit.

OFFERTORY

Polly Jeanty

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE Doxology to tune of “O Come, O Come Immanuel”
**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above ye, heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Rejoice, Rejoice, Immanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION ^(b)

God of promise, we offer our gifts in Jesus’ name, for we know peace through his forgiveness and faithfulness. Bless our gifts and our lives. Help us share the peace you offer with lives that touch ours throughout the world you love. Amen.

*CLOSING SONG

“Go Now in Peace”

***Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of ev’ry day.
Go now in faith. Steadfast strong and true.***

***Know he will guide you, in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love. A-men, A-men, A-men.***

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

**liturgies and prayers used with permission from (a) ucc.org, and (b) <https://presbyterian.ca/worship/>

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- For some time, the Merry Christians have been collecting cash register receipts only from the Kiel Piggly Wiggly store. No other area store receipts are of any use to us. We receive a monetary rebate for every dollar that is spent on groceries. Please help us help others by placing your used store receipts in the box under the mailboxes in the fellowship hall. Thank you! Bethlehem Merry Christians
- TODAY Sunday, Dec. 10 – 3:30pm – “Sing Joy” a concert by the United Christmas Choir – The 50+ member choir has members from four area UCC churches, including Bethlehem’s Kathy Bowe, Lora Mathes, Marie Mueller, Rick Rabe, and Pastor Randy. The concert will be held at St. Peter’s UCC in Kiel.
- For many years Bethlehem UCC has supported Heifer International through an auction hosted by the Bethlehem Merry Christians. In order to make a donation in 2023, the Merry Christians are asking you to make a monetary gift by Sunday, December 10. Checks can be made payable to: Bethlehem Merry Christians. And mailed to: Lora Mathes, 21607 CTH C, Kiel, WI 53042. Thanks in advance for your generosity to help those in need. ~Bethlehem Merry Christians



COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

InCourage Domestic Abuse Shelter of Manitowoc is hosting a charity event on Sat. Feb 24 – info on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall.

2023 Bethlehem UCC Leadership Team

Elder/President - Steven Voland (920)286-0162 or svoland44@gmail.com
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Treasurer - Jane Umland (920)286-2175 jm59umland@gmail.com
Pastor - Randy Koppenhaver (920)286-2531 randynmel5@gmail.com

December Worship Services:

- Sunday, December 10; 9:30am – Second Sunday of Advent Service
- Sunday, December 17; 9:30am – Third Sunday of Advent - Children's Christmas Program
- Thursday, December 21; 7:00pm – Blue Christmas Service
- Sunday, December 24; 9:30am – Fourth Sunday of Advent Service
- Sunday, December 24; 7:00pm – Christmas Eve Stories & Candlelight Service
- Monday, December 25; 9:30am – Christmas Day Communion Service



Those in our thoughts and prayers:

Families who have lost loved ones:

Bob Radder

Those struggling with health issues:

Sarah Arnold

Heidi Konen

Brenda Voland

Darlene Horneck

Helen Henning

Tom Lefeber

Jessica Horneck

Dawson Horneck

Crystal

Elizabeth Quackenboss (Nicole Watson's Gmother)

Marie Rietbrock

Daisy Sippel

Dana (Melissa K's sister)

Mary Beth Molitor

Sandra Tesch

Gary Steinhardt

Neal (Louie's Brother)

Those unable to worship with us:

Merlin and Doris Mae Nimmer

Other Concerns:

Those affected by war in Israel.

Those affected by the earthquake in Afghanistan.

This Week at Bethlehem:

Today Sunday 12/10: 8am Sunday School; 9:30am Worship

Monday 12/11:

Tuesday 12/12: 6:30pm Consistory

Wednesday 12/13: 6:00pm Confirmation Class; ~Happy Birthday Darlene Horneck and Krista Taylor!!

Thursday 12/14: ~Happy Birthday Steve Sheets and Ivan Salm!

Friday 12/15:

Saturday 12/16:

Sunday 12/17: 8am Sunday School; 9:30am Worship w/ Children's Program

December Pantry Items:

Box of Cereal