



BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Sunday, December 24, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Worship Leader: Pastor Randy Koppenhaver

Organist: Kathy Bowe

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. How do you experience "love" as we conclude this season of advent? How do you live out your love for Jesus?*

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** {b}

God comes to us in the cry of a child:

Let every heart prepare a welcome.

God comes to us in the whisper of a loving mother:

Let every heart prepare an embrace.

God comes to us, if we are ready or not:

Let every heart prepare to receive the Christ.

So we worship the God who has come, who is here and who will come again.

*OPENING PRAYER {b}

God of majesty and mercy, you are powerful, you are holy, and you are loving. You come among us not as a warrior or tyrant, but as a child, new life born among us, reaching out to embrace us in love. And so we come to worship you this day, trusting your wisdom with Joseph, pondering your mystery with Mary. We offer you our love for all that you have been, all that you are, and all that you will be, Creator, Christ and Spirit, one God. holy and loving, now and forever, Amen.

*OPENING HYMN #83 vs. 1, 4, 5

“People Look East”

PRAYER OF CONFESSION{b}

God of mystery and mercy, You came to offer us love, but we confess we can be stubborn and selfish in the ways we live. You came to reconcile all people, but we often nurse grudges and resist repairing relationships. Forgive who we have been, amend who we are, and direct who we shall be, through Jesus Christ who reaches out to us from the manger and the cross. Amen (time for reflection)

WORDS OF GRACE {b}

Words from Christina Rossetti fit the Advent theme for today:

“Love came down at Christmas; Love all lovely, love divine.

Love shall be our token, Love for plea and gift and sign.”

We meet God’s gift of love in Christ Jesus,

whose forgiveness restores us for whatever lies ahead.

Thanks be to God for this hope!

*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 READING

Luke 1:26-55

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

Mary's Song

⁴⁶ And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—

holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,

from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones

but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things

but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,

remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,

just as he promised our ancestors."

SPECIAL MUSIC

“The First Noel”

Laura Mueller

SERMON

*HYMN #138 all

“What Child is This?”

PASTORAL PRAYER ... 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)

OFFERTORY

*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)

Generous God, we give thanks for all the beautiful resources you have given to us. Let these gifts bring glory and honor to you and beauty and peace to your creation. 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 “The Work of Christmas” by Howard Thurman {a}

When the song of the angels is stilled,

When the star in the sky is gone,

When the kings and princes are home,

When the shepherds are back with their flock,

The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,

To heal the broken,

To feed the hungry,

To release the prisoner,

To rebuild the nations,

To bring peace among others,

To make music in the heart.

Go in hope, peace, joy, and love...to spread the beauty of Christmas.

POSTLUDE

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- The Bethlehem Ladies are looking for help from the congregation with the washing of the communion glasses. We wash communion glasses the 1st Sunday of the month and also a couple extra throughout the year for Easter, Christmas, Lent and Confirmation. There will be one Bethlehem Ladies member scheduled for each washing and we are looking for 1 or 2 more from the congregation to help. A signup sheet with all the dates for the upcoming year is in the Fellowship Hall. Please consider helping us out. Thank you!!
- 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

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

Elder - Traci Rabe (920)894-7903 or trabefamily5@gmail.com

Elder - Lee Watson (920)562-0588 or lwatson@kiel.k12.wi.us

Deacon - Ross Westphalen (920)629-0193 rossw@forhealthycows.com

Deacon/Secretary - Kathy Bowe (920)894-7243 LandKBowe@outlook.com

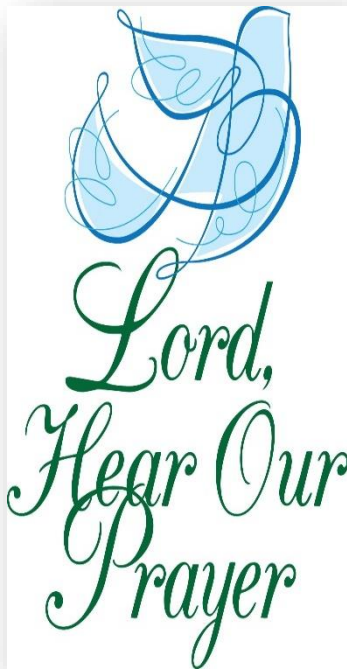
Financial Secretary - Ruthie Rumpff (920)946-5849 srumpff@tm.net

Treasurer - Jane Umland (920)286-2175 jm59umland@gmail.com

Pastor - Randy Koppenhaver (920)286-2531 randynmel5@gmail.com

LOOKING FOR LITURGISTS!

Pastor Randy is looking for persons interested in leading worship services as liturgists. Lead the Call to Worship, Opening Prayer, Prayer of Confession, and Read a portion of the scriptures. A sign-up sheet is on the door to the pastor's office. Let Randy know if you have any questions.



Those in our thoughts and prayers:

Families who have lost loved ones:

Bob Radder

Those struggling with health issues:

Mason Kannell	Jaxxen Kane
Sarah Arnold	Tom Brickbauer
Heidi Konen	Marie Rietbrock
Brenda Voland	Daisy Sippel
Darlene Horneck	Gene Radder
Helen Henning	Dana (Melissa K's sister)
Tom Lefeber	Mary Beth Molitor
Jessica Horneck	
Dawson Horneck	Gary Steinhardt
Crystal	Neal (Louie's Brother)
Elizabeth Quackenboss (Nicole Watson's Gmother)	

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 12/24: 9:30am Worship; 7pm Christmas Eve "Stories and Candles"

Monday 12/25: 9:30 Christmas Worship with Communion

Tuesday 12/26:

Wednesday 12/27: ~Happy Birthday Ryan Jeanty!

Thursday 12/28:

Friday 12/29: ~Happy Birthday Dawn Wirtz!

Saturday 12/30:

Sunday 12/31: 8am Sunday School; 9:30am Worship w/ Children's Program; ~Happy Birthday Cassie Jeanty!

December Pantry Items:

Box of Cereal