

**BETHLEHEM UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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Rejoice

**Monday, December 25, 2023
Christmas Day**

Worship Leader: Pastor Randy Koppenhaver

Organist: Polly Jeanty

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

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

RINGING OF THE BELLS

CALL TO WORSHIP AND LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE {a}

One: Clouds and thick darkness surround God.

His throne is built on righteousness and justice.

Many: Fire proceeds before him, burning up his enemies on every side.

(Lighting of the Christ candle)

One: His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees it and trembles!

One: The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of the whole world!

Many: Heaven has proclaimed God's righteousness, and all nations have seen his glory.

HYMN/CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP #107 all "Joy to the World"

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE "Good Christian Men Rejoice"

*OPENING PRAYER {c}

One: We wish that Mary and Joseph had been spared the hard road to Bethlehem,

All: **but we rejoice that they endured the journey. God is with us in good times and bad!**

One: We are glad that the shepherds listened to the heavenly praise choir,

All: **and we rejoice that they found their way to the stable. God leads us to the highest good!**

One: We are not surprised that Mary thought carefully about the experience of the shepherds,

All: **and we rejoice that she treasured their words. God inspires the humble!**

One: We are one with the lowly shepherds as they return with joy to their flocks,

All: **and we too praise and glorify God. God's love is wonderful! Amen.**

HYMN #123 vs. 1,2,4

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

PRAYER OF CHRISTMAS QUESTIONING{c}

One: "If only the spirit of Christmas would last!"

All: **Can God's love break through, to bring an end to terror and fear?**

One: "If only the spirit of Christmas would last!"

All: **Can God's friendship be experienced, and bring the quarreling and the hostile together?**

One: "If only the spirit of Christmas would last!"

All: **Can God's generosity be influential and meet the needs of the homeless and the poor?**

One: "If only the spirit of Christmas would last!"

All: **Can God's glory be known, and move us all to return praise and prayer, thanksgiving and service, week by week?**

(time for reflection)

WORDS OF GRACE {c}

One: The gift of Jesus, the supreme gift of God's love, is both a call to confession and a response of action.

All: **We will ponder, with Mary, the meaning of it all, and we will resolve, with the shepherds, to leave the routine and known and risk, for the sake of God's Chosen One.**

One: God's pardon and God's active peace will be yours,

All: **and God will go with us on this new and exciting way.**

Thanks be to God! Amen.

*RESPONSE

“Gloria in Excelsis Deo”

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 62:6-12

Upon your walls, O Jerusalem,
I have posted sentinels;
all day and all night
they shall never be silent.
You who remind the LORD,
take no rest,
and give him no rest
until he establishes Jerusalem
and makes it renowned throughout
the earth.
The LORD has sworn by his
right hand
and by his mighty arm:
I will not again give your grain
to be food for your enemies,
and foreigners shall not drink
the wine
for which you have labored;
but those who garner it shall eat it

and praise the LORD,
and those who gather it shall drink it
in my holy courts.

Go through, go through the gates,
prepare the way for the people;
build up, build up the highway,
clear it of stones,
lift up an ensign over the peoples.
The LORD has proclaimed
to the end of the earth:
Say to daughter Zion,
'See, your salvation comes;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.'
They shall be called, 'The
Holy People,
The Redeemed of the LORD';
and you shall be called, 'Sought Out,
A City Not Forsaken.'

Psalms 97 – p.678 in hymnal - Leader reads odd verses, people read even verses

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!'

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.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

SPECIAL MUSIC "Love is Christmas" Laura Mueller & Polly Jeanty

LITANY FOR CHRISTMAS DAY by Fran Pratt, 2015

Gracious, generous God:

On this day we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, Your Son, Your Self in human form.

We celebrate the Son of God.

We are transfixed by the story of Jesus.

We looked for a warrior;

You sent a baby.

We looked for royalty;

You were born to peasants.

We looked for power

You showed us meekness.

We looked among rulers and politicians;

You were found among cattle and shepherds.

We looked for military victory;

You gave us resurrection.

We looked for riches;
You gave us selflessness.

We looked for a king;
You gave us a servant.

We worship Jesus, the humble hero of God's Redemption Story.

May we become more sensitive to the themes of that story
seeking peace,
embracing vulnerability,
humbling ourselves,
looking for glory in lowly places.

May we recognize our part in the story,
our place as Christ-followers
our calling to gentleness and humility
our opportunities to give our most profound gifts.

May we grow ever more like Jesus, and live in the light of His presence and example.

Amen

*HYMN #125 vs. 1,2,4

“Angels from the Realm of Glory”

HOLY COMMUNION

(God's table is open to ALL, regardless of affiliation or membership. Please hold the elements until all have been served and we will partake together. All bread is gluten free. The inner circles are grape juice, the outer rings are wine.)

INVITATION

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And with you also.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth...we join the whole creation to lift our hearts in joyful praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

We give you thanks, holy God...and to proclaim the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

CONSECRATION OF THE ELEMENTS

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

THE DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (worshiptraining.com)

As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world. Empower us by your Spirit, O God, to be Christ's presence in the world even as Jesus was God-with-us. Give us courage to speak his truth, to seek his justice, and to love with his love. Keep us faithful in your service until Christ comes in final victory and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

RESPONSE #82 v. 1

"O Come let us Adore Him"

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.

*HYMN #121 all

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

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

OFFERTORY

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE Doxology to tune of "The First Noel"

**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.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION ^(b)

Generous and loving God, your gift to us in Christ Jesus still draws us to manger and opens our hearts with wonder. Bless our gifts in his name, so that they may draw others to your love, to find the blessing we have discovered in the One born for us. Amen.

*CLOSING SONG #110 all "Go Tell it on the Mountain"

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/> (c) Sparks, David. *Prayers to Share-Year B*, Wood Lake Books, 2002

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

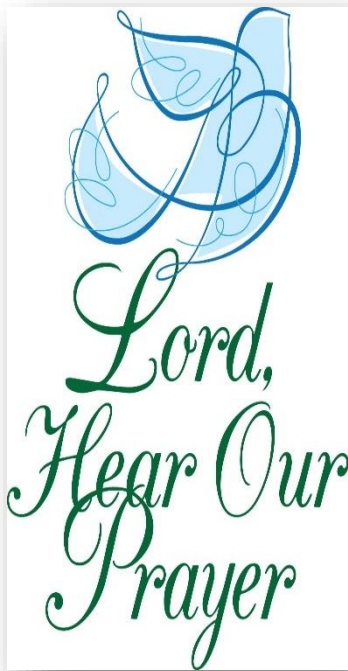
Treasurer - Jane Umland (920)286-2175 jm59umland@gmail.com

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

Sarah Arnold

Heidi Konen

Brenda Voland

Darlene Horneck

Helen Henning

Tom Lefeber

Jessica Horneck

Dawson Horneck

Crystal

Elizabeth Quackenboss (Nicole Watson's Gmother)

Jaxxen Kane

Tom Brickbauer

Marie Rietbrock

Daisy Sippel

Gene Radder

Dana (Melissa K's sister)

Mary Beth Molitor

Gary Steinhardt

Neal (Louie's Brother)

Those unable to worship with us:

Merlin and Doris Mae Ninmer

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**