

BETHANY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

"You have a place here! Joyfully we profess our faith through God's unconditional love. Here and now God dwells in all of our lives, bears our sins on the cross, and forgives us all."

TODAY WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS EVE

2:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 24, 2020

Holy Communion, Pastor Dave Johnson, presiding



In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

ALL ARE WELCOME

The family of Bethany hopes that your worship experience is spiritually fulfilling and your day begins with our Lord's gifts of peace and joy.

As Christians of the Reformation tradition, we believe that the Sacrament of the Altar is the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood, instituted by Christ Himself as a sign of unity. All baptized and confessing believers are welcome to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. For those who are worshipping online at home, communion kits may be picked up in the parking lot at Bethany on Saturdays between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. and on Sundays between 8 and 8:30 a.m. prior to the 9 a.m. worship service, which is live-streamed on Facebook and available afterwards.

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR PENTECOST SEASON

Minister/Leaders speak regular print—Congregation speaks bold print

THE GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

▼ **Prelude Reflections for Meditation**

▼ **Welcome , Greeting and Announcements**

▲ **Invocation**

We gather together in the name of the Father,
the † Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

▲ **Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who was in the beginning,
who makes a dwelling among us, who covers us with justice and mercy.

Amen.

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

God of goodness and lovingkindness,
we confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbors.

We have turned away from your invitation to new life.

We have turned away from the lowly and downtrodden.

In your abundant mercy, forgive us our sins,

those we know and those known only to you,

for the sake of the one who came to live among us,

Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Hear the good news of peace and salvation!

God forgives us all our sins not through our own work,

but through † Jesus Christ, made known to all people.

With all who come to the manger, rejoice in this amazing gift of grace.

Amen.

▲ *Prayer of the Day*

Almighty God,
 you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light.
 Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence
 and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory;
 through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song

▼ **God's Word from the Scriptures (NRSV)**

A reading from Isaiah 7:13b-15

Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Oh Come, Oh Come Emmanuel

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
 that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

A reading from Matthew 1:18-24

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to

fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.

O Little Town Of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
 yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.
 The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above
 while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
 O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
 and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!

A reading from Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Angels, From The Realms Of Glory

Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
 once you sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth:
 Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.

Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,
 God with us is now residing, yonder shines the infant light.
 Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.

A reading from Ezekiel 34:11-16

For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

The First Noel

The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
 in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain

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

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;
 and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.

Refrain

A reading from John 1:1-4

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

O, Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem; come and behold him,
born the king of angels:

Refrain

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

God from God, Light from Light eternal,
lo! He abhors not the Virgin's womb.
Only begotten Son of the Father; *Refrain*

A reading from Micah 5:2-5

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace. If the Assyrians come into our land and tread upon our soil, we will raise against them seven shepherds and eight installed as rulers.

Go Tell It On The Mountain

Refrain

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
 behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. *Refrain*

Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
 and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

A reading from Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 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." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: '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.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 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." 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. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

We Three Kings

We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,
 field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

Refrain

Oh, star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright;
 westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light!

Born a king on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again;
 king forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign. *Refrain*

A reading from Isaiah 9:6-17

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

The Lord sent a word against Jacob, and it fell on Israel; and all the people knew it— Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria— but in pride and arrogance of heart they said: “The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place.” So the LORD raised adversaries against them, and stirred up their enemies, the Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west, and they devoured Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out still.

The people did not turn to him who struck them, or seek the LORD of hosts. So the LORD cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day—elders and dignitaries are the head, and prophets who teach lies are the tail; for those who led this people led them astray, and those who were led by them were left in confusion. That is why the Lord did not have pity on their young people, or compassion on their orphans and widows; for everyone was godless and an evildoer, and every mouth spoke folly. For all this his anger has not turned away, his hand is stretched out still.

What Child Is This

What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!

A reading from Luke 2:1-7

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.

Away In A Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

A reading from Luke 2:8-14

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!"

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king;
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."

Joyful, all you nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies;
with angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise each child of earth, born to give us second birth. *Refrain*

A reading from Luke 2:15-20

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.

Angels We Have Heard On High

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
 What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song? *Refrain*

Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;
 come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king. *Refrain*

A reading from Isaiah 53

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

It Came Upon The Midnight Clear

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
 from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
 "Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all-gracious king."
 The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.

For lo! The days are hast'ning on, by prophets seen of old,
 when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,
 when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
 and all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.

▼ ***Sermon—God's Word Applied to Life***

THE MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ

▲ ***The Great Thanksgiving and Words of Institution***

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, 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.

▲ ***The 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 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

The Word is revealed in a manger, in simple bread and wine.
Come meet Christ in this meal.

Distribution of Communion

Post Communion Blessing

The body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
strengthen you and keep you in His grace until He comes again.
In the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

▲ *Prayers of Intercession*

Patient God, we are people who can become impatient.
Help remind us in those times that you are still working and near to us.
Grant us patience as we continue to wait for the world that we know to adjust
and adapt to this pandemic that has consumed our year.
Continue to remind us that this will only last for a season.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Prince of Peace, we pray for peace in our world, among nations, within
communities, and in families. Give wisdom and guidance to our leaders
as they continue to navigate this world in which Covid-19 is still a threat.
Bring peace into our lives as we finish off this exceedingly difficult year.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Emmanuel, God with us, we pray that you be with all of those who are sick,
suffering, and in need of your help and healing. We lift up special concerns for
those who are struggling with their fight against the Corona Virus and those
families who have loved ones who have lost that fight.

We also pray for all those in any need that we name before you now: *the family of
Donna Anderson, Jim Trudeau, Lorrie Walters, Ruby Burrus,
Arlene, Pam Nelson, Joy, Montee, Tim, Barbara, and Ava Johnson Mitchell.* As we all
have waited in anticipation for Christmas to come, help all of us who are waiting
for healing to see that you are already here and near and that you always hear the
prayers we offer up to you, aloud or in silence.

a brief silence

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Wonderful Counselor, be with any and all people who struggle during this Christmas season. With all of the joy that this time of year can bring, there are people who feel lost, alone, and depressed; this time of year only brings about sadness and tears.

We pray for all these people that you will reveal the peace and hope that you brought to this world when you came, and give them a hope that they have never known before.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, send your Spirit upon every one of us here tonight. Just as these candles continue to shine, use us to shine the light of hope for all to see.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We commend to you all for whom we pray, trusting in your never-failing love and grace, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

Amen

Litany of Remembrance

The first candle is lighted.

We light this first candle to remember those whom we have loved and lost.

We pause to remember clearly, their faces, their voices, their bodies.

We embrace and give thanks for the memories that bind them to us in this season of expectation, when all Creation waits for the Light.

A brief silence.

The second candle is lighted.

We light this second candle to remember the pain of loss: loss of relationships, loss of trust, loss of jobs, loss of health, loss of faith, the loss of joy. We acknowledge and embrace the pain of the past, O God, and we offer it to You, asking that into our wounded hearts and open hands You will place the gift of peace, shalom.

a brief silence

The third candle is lighted.

We light this third candle to remember ourselves this Christmas time.

We pause and remember the past weeks, months, and for some of us years, that have been heavy with our burdens. We accept and lay before you, God, the sharpness of memory, the sadness and grief, the hurt and fear, the anger and pain. We accept and lay before you the ways we feel we have fallen short, and the times we have spent blaming ourselves, and you, for all that we have suffered. We accept and lay before you the time we have walked alone, in darkness; and in knowledge of our own mortality.

a brief silence

The fourth candle is lighted.

We light this fourth candle to remember faith, the gift of light and hope that God offers to us in the stories of Christmas, which both also began in abandonment, insecurity, and humbleness, in a time of war and in a poor stable. We remember that the loving God who kept the light shining in the temple and who came to share this life with us promises us comfort and peace.

The Christ Candle is lighted

We light this Christ candle to remember Your faithfulness to your people. You came down to earth, bore our flesh, walked in our shoes, and carried our death in your very self. Remind us that when things become dark, your light still shines.

Silent Night

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

Thanks be to God.

Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Office Hours: 9:00 a.m.—12 noon, Monday and Thursday, and by appointment.

Tuesday and Wednesday: by appointment.

Lori Ward, Secretary

Announcements

Bethany's Annual Meeting will be held on the internet on Saturday, January 30 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom. A link to the meeting will be sent to everyone in the congregation who has an e-mail list. Committee reports are due in the church office on January 8 so that the annual report can be created.

Social Night returns January 5, meeting biweekly online on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. Details coming soon.

Please contact the church office with any additions or updates to the **prayer list** published in our weekly bulletin and newsletter.

Bethany is offering an online Women's Bible Study via Zoom, meeting every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. resuming on January 6 after a Christmas break. Call or e-mail the church office to receive more information and the Zoom link to the discussion group.

Two weekly events at Bethany are open to members and friends: **Community Coffee** at 9 a.m. every Tuesday and **The Men's Breakfast and Bible Study** at 7 a.m. every Thursday. The Men's Breakfast and Bible Study will not be meeting on December 24 and 31.

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