

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."*

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

9:00 am Sunday, December 15, 2024

Pastor Dave Johnson

TODAY'S REFLECTION

Christ's presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good news—and cause for exultation—for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent. "

Joy



All baptized and confessing believers are welcome to receive Holy Communion.

*We hope that your worship experience is spiritually fulfilling
and your day begins with our Lord's gifts of peace and joy*

▼ **Prelude Reflections for Meditation**

▼ **Welcome Greeting—Prayers and Praises**

▲ **Opening Hymn**

“Christ Be Our Light”, page 9

▲ **Confession & Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
alive in the world, reviving creation,
arriving soon. **Amen.**

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

Silence for Reflection

God of mercy,

we confess that we have sinned.

We trust earthly powers and human authority alone.

We grow fearful. We cling to false comforts.

God of might,

we confess that we have sinned.

We have turned away from our neighbors.

We have trusted false promises.

God in our midst,

confess that we have sinned.

We plead: come to us.

Bring your mercy to birth in us.

A righteous branch springs forth:

it is Christ the Lord, our Savior,

in whom we have forgiveness, life, and mercy.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,

receive the grace and forgiveness of God

through † Christ Jesus, whose day draws near. **Amen.**

▲ Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people,
Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and 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)

The First Reading is from Zephaniah 3:14-20

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

▼ God's Word from the Psalms (NRSV)

Isaiah 12:2-6

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,
 for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.

Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth.

Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

▼ God's Word from the Scriptures (NRSV)

The Second Reading is from Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

▲ **God's Word from the Gospel (NRSV)**

The Holy Gospel according to Luke 3:7-18

Glory to you, O Lord.

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

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

▼ **Hymn of the Day**

"Arise Your Light Has Come", page 10

▲ **The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

▲ *Prayers of the Church*

For the Church, the world, for one another, and for the sake of all people, let us pray to the Lord.

A brief silence

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gifts you lavish upon us in Jesus! Thank you for every blessing you grant in this sin-damaged and death-shadowed world. Thank you for your peace that passes human understanding and endures past human malice. Whatever our circumstances, give us hearts filled with joy and hope. Give us grace to thank you for Jesus, and to lead others to the joy of knowing him. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Make your Church beautiful with faithfulness, holiness, and joy. May its love for Jesus gladden many hearts. Let your persecuted Church rejoice in knowing you are near. Let their gentleness be known to everyone, even their tormentors. Guard all our minds and hearts in Christ Jesus our Lord. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Turn your face toward those whom it is easy to ignore: prisoners, refugees, and people in mental institutions, nursing homes, or homeless shelters. Help us to shed the light of your love upon them through acts of simple human kindness. Help us to speak your word of peace, forgiveness, and salvation to them through our words of encouragement and mercy. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bless the people of this congregation. Let us be a people in whom your Word is fulfilled: “Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. He will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.” Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Make the leaders of every nation acknowledge your justice, and govern in obedience to it. Let faithfulness spring up from every human heart, and your righteousness look down from the sky. Strengthen, protect, and guide our military, first responders, and aid workers. Show them your steadfast love and direct their deeds in righteous pathways. Bring the blessing of peace to us all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Help all who suffer to turn to Jesus, who made the deaf hear, the blind see, and the lame walk. We especially pray for those we name before you now (either in silence or out loud). Give them grace to not worry about anything, but lift their needs to you by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Grant your peace to them and all who love them, and guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, as we await the coming of your Son in glory, we also anticipate reunion with our beloved dead. Help us comfort all who grieve. Make us gentle, joyful, and steadfast in love. And we pray: rejoice over your people with gladness. Renew us in love. Exult over us with loud singing. Remove from us all sin and evil, so that we will not bear their reproach. Bring us, with all whom Jesus has redeemed, into your everlasting home, where we shall rejoice in your goodness forever. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For all these things; for all we lift before you in the silence of our hearts; and for everything that you know we need, we pray in the name and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and commend into your mighty and merciful hands. **Amen.**

▲ **Sharing of the Peace**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Greet each other with a sign of Christ's peace.

THE MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ

▼ **Offering and Presentation of the Gifts**

October—December Mission Designation ~ **Adopt-A-Family/Senior**

▼ **Offering Prayer**

Creator God,

you made the whole world,

even the farthest stars,

and you draw near to feed us.

We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine.

Strengthen us with this food

that we may live in expectation

for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

▼ **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 and Distribution of Communion**

God feeds us with tender mercy.
Come to the table..

Let Us Break Bread Together



1 Let us break bread to - geth - er on our knees;
2 Let us drink wine to - geth - er on our knees;
3 Let us praise God to - geth - er on our knees;



let us break bread to - geth - er on our knees.
let us drink wine to - geth - er on our knees.
let us praise God to - geth - er on our knees.



When I fall on my knees, with my face to the ris - ing



sun, O Lord, have mer - cy on me.

Text: African American spiritual

Music: BREAL BREAD TOGETHER, African American spiritual

▼ **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.**

▼ **Post Communion Prayer**

Generous God,
**we thank you for the gift of life,
 for the bread of salvation.**
**We thank you for coming among us,
 for leading us into peace.**
**We thank you for showering us with mercy,
 for sending us into the world.**
**Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us
 as we feed the hungry in your name. Amen.**

THE SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world

▼ **Closing Hymn**

“Soon And Very Soon”, page 11

▼ **Announcements**

Anyone is welcome to make announcements at this time.

▲ **Blessing and Dismissal**

The Lord bless you and keep you.
 The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
 The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.
 In the name of the Father and the † Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Christ, Be Our Light



1 Long - ing for light, we wait in dark - ness. Long - ing for
 2 Long - ing for peace, our world is trou - bled. Long - ing for
 3 Long - ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long - ing for
 4 Long - ing for shel - ter, man - y are home - less. Long - ing for
 5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
 hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone
 wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,
 warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,
 hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
 has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.
 bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.
 shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.
 to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.



Refrain
 Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957

Music: CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT, Bernadette Farrell

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Arise, Your Light Has Come!

1 A - rise, your light has come! The Spir - it's call o - bey;
 2 A - rise, your light has come! Fling wide the pris - on door;
 3 A - rise, your light has come! All you in sor - row born,
 4 A - rise, your light has come! The moun - tains burst in song!

show forth the glo - ry of your God which shines on you to - day.
 pro - claim the cap - tive's lib - er - ty, good tid - ings to the poor.
 bind up the bro - ken - heart - ed ones and com - fort those who mourn.
 Rise up like ea - gles on the wing, God's pow'r will make us strong.

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947

Music: FESTAL SONG, William H. Walter, 1825–1893

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Soon and Very Soon



1 Soon and ver - y soon
 2 No more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King,
 3 No more dy - in' there,
 4 Soon and ver - y soon



soon and ver - y soon
 no more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King,
 no more dy - in' there,
 soon and ver - y soon



soon and ver - y soon
 no more cry - in' there, we are goin' to see the King.
 no more dy - in' there,
 soon and ver - y soon



Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, we're goin' to see the King!

Coda after stanza 4



Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu -



jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah.

Text: Andraé Crouch, b. 1945

Music: VERY SOON, Andraé Crouch

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Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church

130 O'Dill Drive, Norway, Michigan 49870 www.norwaybethany.org
OFFICE PHONE 906-563-8472 EMAIL bethanyoffice@norwaymi.com

Pastor Dave Johnson

PHONE/TEXT 651-769-3365 EMAIL ftp565@yahoo.com

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MORE SPECIAL WAYS TO GIVE THROUGH YOUR TIME AND TALENTS

Sunday Worship Lectors and Communion Assistants are needed

Service Assistant to advance projected bulletin slides

Maintenance chores around the facility

Christian Education Volunteers

BETHANY WEEKLY EVENTS CALENDAR

Sunday	9:00 am Worship, in the Great Room and Facebook Live-Stream/Video
Tuesday	9:00 am Community Coffee in Great Room 9:00 am Cover Girls in Classroom
Wednesday	10:00 am Women's Bible Study via ZOOM
Thursday	7:00 am Men's Breakfast and Bible Study in Great Room 10:00 am Women's Bible Study in Conference Room

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