

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."*

FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

9:00 am Sunday, December 28, 2025

Pastor Bonnie Billock



TODAY'S REFLECTION

As we celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas, our gospel today confronts us with the death of innocent children at the hands of Herod. The birth of Christ does not remove the power of evil from our world, but its light gives us hope as we walk with all the "holy innocents" of past generations and today who have suffered unjustly. In our gathering around word and meal, God continues to redeem us, lift us up, and carry us as in days of old.

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**

"Away In A Manger" page 9

▲ **Confession & Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty Savior,
Prince of Peace. **Amen.**

Trusting in God's steadfast love and faithfulness,
let us confess our sin.

Silence for Reflection

Reconciling God,
**we yearn for your presence to transform
our grief, pain, and despair.**

**We confess that we have not always prepared
room in our hearts for your love;
we have not always recognized
your presence among us;**

we have not always embraced your message of peace.

**We cry out, weary with the burden of violence,
oppression, and fear.**

**We confess our failure to make room
for those seeking refuge;
our participation in violent systems
that harm your innocent ones;**

our reluctance to embody your good news.

Be born in us today

and teach us to sing the joyful song of your salvation. Amen.

God's grace upon grace flows over you. † Christ's presence redeems the whole creation.
Your sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad! **Amen.**

▲ *Prayer of the Day*

O Lord God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers.

As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, 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 Isaiah 63:7-9

I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord, the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, because of all that the Lord has done for us and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not act deceitfully," and he became their savior in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

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

▼ *God's Word from the Psalms (NRSV)*

Psalms 148

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.

**He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds,
which cannot be passed.**

Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

Young men and women alike, old and young together!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.

**He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the Lord!**

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

The Second Reading is from Hebrews 2:10-18

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me." Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

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

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

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 2:13-23

Glory to you, O Lord.

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son." When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more." When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazarene."

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

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

▼ **Hymn of the Day**

“O, Come, All Ye Faithful”, 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**

With gratitude for the gift of Christ the Savior, let us draw near to our heavenly Father in prayer, asking his mercy for the Church, the world, and all who need his loving-kindness.

A brief silence

Protect your Church, dear Lord, from the malice of its enemies, and from every temptation to forsake, ignore or distort your holy Word. Make it a light shining in the world’s darkness, and a safe haven in our earthly pilgrimage. Use it to draw many hearts to love and trust Jesus, the Redeemer of the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Shield and strengthen Christians who face nakedness, famine, peril and sword on account of Christ. Strengthen our witness to their plight and to their faith. Soften the hearts of those who hate them. We pray also on behalf of our sister congregations, companion dioceses, and for your missionaries throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Make this congregation into a company of the upright, who delight in, study, and proclaim your mighty works of salvation. Clothe us with love, binding us together in perfect harmony. Grant that by our words and our lives, our neighbors may see the power and majesty of your redemption, and come to faith in your dear Son. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We plead on behalf of children who are abused, abandoned, and aborted here and throughout the world. Keep them in your merciful care. Form us all into a people that cherishes these little ones. Conform them to the image of their infant Savior, your well-beloved Son Jesus. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Give to the rulers of the world that holy fear that is the beginning of wisdom, so that they study your works and perform your precepts. Let uprightness, justice, and mercy guide those who take counsel for the nations. Bestow the blessings of food and shelter, health and employment, justice and peace, upon all the people of the earth. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Though angels proclaimed peace and good will at the birth of Jesus, violence, injustice, and evil still trouble the world. Shield and guide all who risk their lives on behalf of others. Prosper all they do that conforms to your will. Support their loved ones with hope and patience. Heal and comfort those who are wounded, and redeem those who have fallen. Establish your peace in the world and in every heart, so that the arts of war need no longer be practiced among us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Be gracious and merciful to all whose lives are shadowed by suffering in this season of light, *especially for those we name before you now (either in silence or out loud)*. Grant that they may behold your salvation, dwell in the light of your love, revealed in Christ, and glorify you in the company of all who love them. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have let your face shine upon our beloved dead, O God, and have bestowed on them the fullness of your salvation. With gratitude and affection, we commend them into your care. Give to us the fortitude of your saints and martyrs, for though now we see Jesus through the eyes of faith, we long to see him face to face. Until that day, grant that he may dwell in us richly, filling us with peace, love, forgiveness, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience – the enduring gifts of Christmas that shall last forever. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, merciful Father, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **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**

God of glory,

**great are your wonders among us
and many are the blessings you bestow.**

**Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world,
that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace,
through Christ our Savior. 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 is now in flesh appearing.
Come to the feast of joy!

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**

Incarnate God,
you are among us at this table.
May we treasure this gift and ponder in our hearts
the mystery of your presence.
Move us to discover the wonders of your love
in the everyday moments of our lives,
through Christ born in us. Amen.

THE SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world

▼ **Closing Hymn**

"We Three Kings" 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.**

Glory to God in the highest!
And peace to God's people on earth!
Go in joy. Embody God's redeeming grace.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Away in a Manger



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for his bed, the lit - tle Lord
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing; the ba - by a - wakes, but lit - tle Lord
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay close by me for -



Je - sus laid down his sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked
 Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I love you, Lord Je - sus; look
 ev - er and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear chil - dren in



down where he lay, the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
 down from the sky and stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.
 your ten - der care and fit us for heav - en, to live with you there.

Text: North American, 19th cent.

Music: AWAY IN A MANGER, James R. Murray, 1841–1905

O Come, All Ye Faithful

1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant! O
 2 The high - est, most ho - ly, light of light e - ter - nal,
 3 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,
 4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing;

come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;
 born of a vir - gin, a mor - tal he comes;
 sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heav - en a - bove!
 Je - sus, to thee be . . . glo - ry giv'n!

come and be - hold him, born the king of an - gels;
 Son of the Fa - ther now in flesh ap - pear - ing!
 Glo - ry to the God . . . in . . . the . . . high - est:
 Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing;

Refrain
 Ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus, ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus,
 O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,

ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus Do - mi - num.
 O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord!

We Three Kings of Orient Are



1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are; bear - ing
 2 Born a king on Beth - le - hem's plain, gold I
 3 Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I; in - cense
 4 Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume breathes a
 5 Glo - rious now be - hold him a - rise, King and



gifts we tra - verse a - far, field and foun - tain,
 bring to crown him a - gain; king for - ev - er,
 owns a de - i - ty nigh; prayer and prais - ing,
 life of gath - er - ing gloom; sor - rowing, sigh - ing,
 God and Sac - ri - fice; heav'n sings al - le -



moor and moun - tain, fol - low - ing yon - der star.
 ceas - ing nev - er, o - ver us all to reign.
 glad - ly rais - ing, wor - ship - ing God Most High.
 bleed - ing, dy - ing, sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
 lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia the earth re - plies.

Refrain



Oh, star of won - der, star of night, star with roy - al beau - ty bright;



west - ward lead - ing, still pro - ceed - ing, guide us to thy per - fect light!

Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church

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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 11:00 am Crossroad's Bible Study For ALL in Conference Room

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