

Sunday, December 21, 2025
Fourth Sunday of Advent



BETHLEHEM
LUTHERAN CHURCH

48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ www.blcfairport.org

PRELUDE

Vom Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her, P.52
(From Heaven Above to Earth I Come – ELW 268)

Johann Pachelbel
tune, attr. Martin Luther

“Veni, Emmanuel”
(Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel)

Robert J. Powell
tune, French processional, 15th cent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Advent marks the ending and beginning of the church year and during this time, we return to our foundation – GOD MATTERS. God's love and faithfulness endure through all our endings and beginnings. Our weekly scripture readings ground us in the stories of God whose was, who is, and who is to come. As we encounter the familiar characters of the story of Christ's birth – Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, the shepherds, the magi – we see the facets of God that can help us see and understand God's living presence in each of us and deepen our connection to our source of life.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come Now, O Prince of Peace

text, Geonyong Lee / tr. Marion Pope
music, Geonyong Lee

The Chancel Choir

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose home is heaven and earth, whose salvation is sure.

Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

Long-expected God,
**to you all hearts are open, to you all desires are known. We come to you,
confessing our sins. Forgive us in your mercy, and remember us in your love.
Show us your ways; teach us your paths; and lead us in justice and truth, for
the sake of your goodness in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

God judges us not as we deserve, but according to God's own righteousness.
✠ You are freed and forgiven, saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior.
Amen.

GATHERING HYMN	Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn	ELW 242
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GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

The Advent wreath is a circle with no beginning and no end. It is a symbol of God's unending love and faithfulness.

Jesus is the brightest revelation of God's love. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." (Colossians 1:15)

"Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped." (Philippians 2:6)

"But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." (Philippians 2:7)

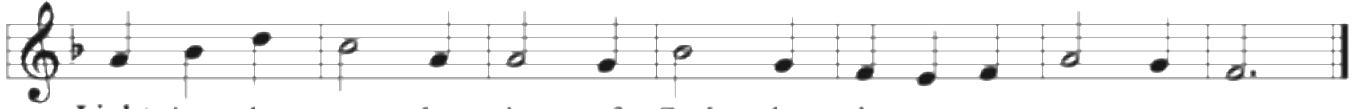
"The Word become flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory." (John 1:14)

The glory of the One and Only, who from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)



1. Kin - dle this flame of Christ. May it burn bright and true.

2. God's realm is our de - sire, where peace and jus - tice reign.



Light-ing the way that is of God, the jour - ney we pur - sue.

Hea-ven and earth com-bined as one, when Christ shall come a - gain.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Interlude

Benjamin Britten

from *A Ceremony of Carols*, op. 28

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Today we receive the witness of children and youth of all ages as they tell the story of Christ's birth. We focus especially on the shepherds who are filled with great joy at news of the birth and hurry to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus and then are compelled to tell others what they have seen and heard! The Shepherds remind us that joy and witness are key ingredients of a well-rounded Christian life! The story today centers on texts from Luke 1:26-38 and Luke 2:1-20.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Word of God, come down on earth, liv - ing rain from
heav'n de - scend - ing; touch our hearts and bring to birth
faith and hope and love un - end - ing. Word al-might - y,
we re - vere you; Word made flesh, we long to hear you.

AN ANGEL VISITS MARY

THE MAGNIFICAT

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness

Ralph Vaughan Williams
tune, English folk

MARY AND JOSEPH TRAVEL TO BETHLEHEM

CAROL

Away in a Manger

ELW 277

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.

SHEPHERDS REST IN THE HILLS OUTSIDE BETHLEHEM

CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem

ELW 279

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.

ANGELS ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF JESUS

CAROL

Angels We Have Heard on High

ELW 289

- ¹ Angels we have on heard high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains
Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.
- ² Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be, which inspire your heav'nly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.
- ³ Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.

SHEPHERDS VISIT JESUS AND SHARE THE NEWS OF HIS BIRTH

CAROL

Go Tell It On the Mountain

ELW 290

Refrain

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

- ¹ While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. *Refrain*
- ² The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*
- ³ Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

APOSTLES' CREED

Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Our prayers are always offered on behalf of the whole community.

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

#1 In the anticipation of these days, prepare our hearts for your arrival. Stir our spirits through the gifts of artists, musicians, poets, and preachers, as together we proclaim your advent among us. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

#2 The earth breaks forth in singing as it heralds the Messiah's coming. Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in announcing this holy birth. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

#3 You send your saving grace and peace to the nations. Lead us in work for justice and care for the common good. May we meet the Christ-child we seek in the faces of our neighbors. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for Young Adults in Global Mission and all those who will celebrate Christmas away from their homes. We pray also for our siblings in faith in our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. May our partnerships remind us of your abundance. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We know that all people matter in your eyes and you know their cares and concerns, their hopes and joys. We pray for those whose needs are known to us.

We pray for those who grieve, especially the family and friends of

- Tristan A, estranged brother of Bill A, who died in December
- Noel K, friend of Mike J., who died on 12/5

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Nancy S, recovering from anticipated heart surgery
- Sandy G, who is recovering from recent hospitalization
- Bob B, brother of Jim B, recovering at home from a brain bleed

Hear the names of those we raise to you in our hearts or on our voice.

Silence for individual prayer.

God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

Amen.

SHARING GOD'S MEAL

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Share the peace in a way that cares for friend and neighbor. If you worship virtually, share the peace through the comments section or text.

OFFERING

Thank you for your offerings that support the ongoing ministry that we share. Information about supporting Bethlehem's ministry with your offerings is available in the Welcome insert in your pew rack or by visiting blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry or scan the QR (quick response) code on the right and you'll be brought to BLC's mobile giving page.



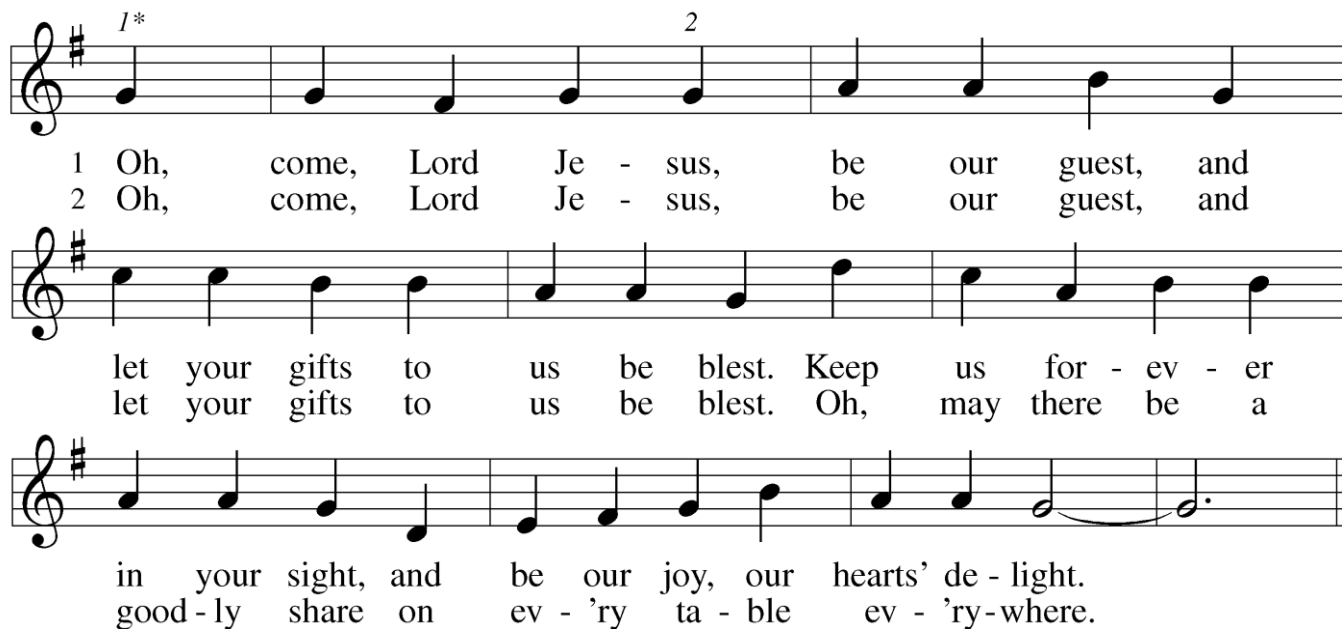
OFFERING OF MUSIC

Almost There

Michael W. Smith, Wes King, and Amy Grant
arr. Heather Sorenson

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY



1* 2

1 Oh, come, Lord Je - sus, be our guest, and
2 Oh, come, Lord Je - sus, be our guest, and

let your gifts to us be blest. Keep us for - ev - er
let your gifts to us be blest. Oh, may there be a

in your sight, and be our joy, our hearts' de - light.
good - ly share on ev - 'ry ta - ble ev - 'ry - where.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Nourishing God,

you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

As we gather at Christ's table of mercy, the Spirit and the church cry out:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

All those who await his appearance pray:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The whole creation pleads:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Long-expected Jesus, we come to your table and ask you to meet us here.
Open our hearts to believe that you come to us in this meal of grace. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

In fervent hope, we raise our voices in prayer as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who
sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised.
Thanks be to God.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant.

THE COMMUNION



O Lamb of God you take a-way our sin; have mer-cy on us, give_ us your
peace. Pre -pare us to re - ceive_ your grace and teach us how to fol - low your ways. Re-
joice! Re- joice! E - man - u - el has come to you, O Is - ra- el.

HYMN AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC FOR COMMUNION

He Came Down

ELW 253

See Amid the Winter's Snow

John Goss
arr. Zuriel Patterson

The Angels and the Shepherds

Bohemian trad. carol
arr. Sylvia Woods

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

May God who comes among us, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Make your heart ready.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

“Bransles”

from “Pavane et Bransles” - *Le Trésor d’Orphée*

Anthoine Francisque
 transcr. Marcel Grandjany

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“Vom Himmel hoch, da komm’ ich her” P.52– (From Heaven Above to Earth I Come), Tune: attr. Martin Luther
 Music: Johann Pachelbel

“Veni, Emmanuel” – (Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel), Tune: French processional, 15th century
 Music: Robert J. Powell, © 1995 and 2000 Augsburg Fortress

Come Now, O Prince of Peace, Text: Geonyong Lee / tr. Marion Pope, Music: Geonyong Lee, Text and Music © Geonyong Lee

“The Nativity”, Words: Gary L. Lake Dillensnyder, Music: Robert Jackson - TRENTHAM

WORDS © 2009 Gary L. Lake Dillensnyder, (adm. The General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church, Nashville, TN)

“Interlude” – from A Ceremony of Carols, op. , Music: Benjamin Britten, © 1943 Boosey & Co. Ltd.

“Word of God, Come Down on Earth”, Text: James Quinn, Music: Johann R. Ahle, Text © James Quinn, SJ, (adm. Selah Publishing Co., Inc.)

“My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness”, Tune: English folk, Arranger: Ralph Vaughan Williams
 Text © 1989 Hope Publishing Company, Arr. © Oxford University Press

“Almost There”, Text and Music: Michael W. Smith, Wes King, and Amy Grant, Arranger: Heather Sorenson
 © 2014 and 2015 This Is Your Time Music (ASCAP – adm. capitolcmgpublishing.com), Lotterthanme Music (ASCAP – adm. The Loving Company), and
 Grant Girls Music, LLC (ASCAP – adm. The Loving Company)

“Come, Lord Jesus”, Text: traditional table prayer, adapt. Susan Briehl, Music: TALLIS’ CANON, Thomas Tallis
 Text © 1996 Augsburg Fortress

“Lamb of God” – based on VENI, EMMANUEL, Music: French processional, 15th cent., Text: adapt. David Eck, Text © 2011 David Eck

“See Amid the Winter’s Snow”, Music: John Goss, Arranger: Zuriel Patterson, © Zuriel Patterson

“The Angeles and the Shepherds”, Music: Bohemian traditional carol, Arranger: Sylvia Woods
 © 1984 and 2010, Sylvia Woods (www.harpcenter.com)

“Bransles” – from “Pavane and Bransles” - *Le Trésor d’Orphée*, Music: Anthoine Francisque
 Transcriber: Marcel Grandjany, © 1949 and 1988, Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI)

BLC Pastors

The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Chrisanne Gates, Chancel Choir Director

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

Additional musical leadership provided by:

The Chancel Bells

Madeleine Hoffman, soloist for the Magnificat

Neil Vokes, percussion

Welcome and A Special Thanks to Zuriel Patterson, guest harpist, for assisting us with today's worship.

Thank you to all those who participated in worship this Sunday! Want to learn more about what roles are needed in worship or sign-up for a pre-scheduled role? Talk with one of the pastors following worship or send an email to volunteersupport@blcfairport.org and we'll follow up!

Communicate with us: Share more about who you are, request further information, or leave a prayer request or comment through our website - <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> - scroll down the page to request or share information.

What's happening at BLC this week? Visit the Calendar of Events at www.blcfairport.org. Zoom links for virtual meetings are also found there. If you would like to schedule a meeting or event, please email the church office at office@blcfairport.org or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

Church office hours: Sandy Squires holds office hours on Wednesdays from 9-1 and is responsive to phone and email Monday through Friday during usual business hours. Please communicate your needs through the church office by phone (585) 223-0634 or by email office@blcfairport.org. Our co-Pastors are available Sunday – Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling the church office or emailing pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org or pastor.amy@blcfairport.org

Celebrate Christmas Eve



5:00 pm - Worship

6:45 - 7:00 pm
outdoors on the corner

7:30pm - Worship

blcfairport.org/advent

Baptism Celebration Splash Party

Sunday, January 11th
1pm - 3pm
at the Perinton Rec Center



**Celebrate Jesus' baptism- along with our own- with
swimming, games, and cupcakes!**

**Suggested donation \$5 per person, not to exceed \$20 per family.
RSVP to Patty Chaffee**

Prayer for the Fourth Sunday in Advent

The feast day of your birth resembles you, Lord, because it brings joy to all humanity. Old people and infants alike enjoy your day. Your day is celebrated from generation to generation. Kings and emperors may pass away, and the festivals to commemorate them soon lapse. But your festival will be remembered till the end of time. Your day is a means and a pledge of peace. At your birth, heaven and earth were reconciled; since you came from heaven to earth on that day you forgave our sins and wiped away our guilt. You gave us so many gifts on your birthday: a treasure chest of spiritual medicines for the sick; spiritual light for those that are blind; the cup of salvation for the thirsty; the bread of life for the hungry. In the winter when trees are bare, you give us the most succulent spiritual fruit. In the frost when the earth is barren, you bring new hope to our souls. In December when seeds are hidden in the soil, the staff of life springs from the virgin womb. Amen.

—from *The Complete Book of Christian Prayer*, p. 377.

This prayer was written by Ephraim the Syrian (c. 306-373), biblical exegete and poet who was the most distinguished theologian and hymn writer of the ancient Syrian Church. A deacon, he recognized the value of including music in worship services early in his ministry, and his many exegetical and theological writings were written mostly in verse.