



Sunday, December 13 ~ 3rd Sunday of Advent

Advent coincides with the longest stretches of darkness we experience in the entire year (at least for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere!) The days grow shorter and shorter during the month of December, lengthening again only three days before we celebrate the birth of Christ, the Light of the world. For many, this shrinking window of daylight can feel like a shrinking window of the Light – especially this year, so full of anxiety and uncertainty brought on by the pandemic, political upheaval, and more. Advent this year gives us all the more reason to Watch for the Light – keeping vigilant in

seeking out and ushering in the glimpses of the Light of Christ that is coming into the world. Share with the whole community of faith in listening to God's Word, sharing stories and testifying to the Light, and bringing the Light of Christ into our homes and our lives this season.

Prelude: *Variations on "Freu dich sehr" (ELW #256) Alfred Fedak*
I. Chorale
II. Duo
III. Canon
IV. Fughetta

Gathering Words and Welcome

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER

If possible, prepare your worship space with your Advent log or wreath with four candles (one for each week of the season) and a bowl of water. The presence of water reminds us of God's forgiveness that comes to us through the Sacrament of Baptism. During this time of continued physical distancing, we cling with confident hope to the promise that by God's love and grace, we are made one with Christ in baptism.

Confession and Forgiveness:

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who comes to wake us from sleep, who leads us into the light of grace.

Amen.

Let us prepare the way of the Lord by confessing our sin against God and neighbor.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God of all time,
we confess that we have not prepared for your merciful reign among us. We ignore our neighbors in need and fail in the labor of justice and peace. In your mercy forgive us.

Grant us wisdom to welcome your light and to seek the things that will endure until Christ comes again in glory. Amen.

Children of God, in † Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven and all things are made new. Rejoice in this good news!

Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Candles: Melissa & Brian Allen and family

God of all creation, your prophets spoke of a day when the desert would blossom and waters would break forth in the wilderness. Make us watchful as we light three candles on this wreath. Strengthen our hearts as we prepare for the coming of the Lord. May he give water to all who thirst, for he is our light and our salvation.

Amen.

Light three of your Advent candles today to mark the third week of Advent.

Giving thanks that we become brothers and sisters in Christ through the gift of baptism, we share God's peace with one another. May the peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Greet those with whom you worship physically with a sign of peace, extend the peace of Christ through the comments section or text to those who are at a distance.

Gathering Hymn:	<i>Hark, the Glad Sound</i>	#248
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1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come

prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
soul to cure, and with the trea - sures
shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal

pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702-1751
Music: CHESTERFIELD, Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820

Greeting:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was, who is, and who is to come, be with you all.
And also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Children's Moment

Offering of Music:
Carillon-Sortie

Henri Mulet

Susan DePasquale, organ

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

¹The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,

and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

⁸For I the Lord love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

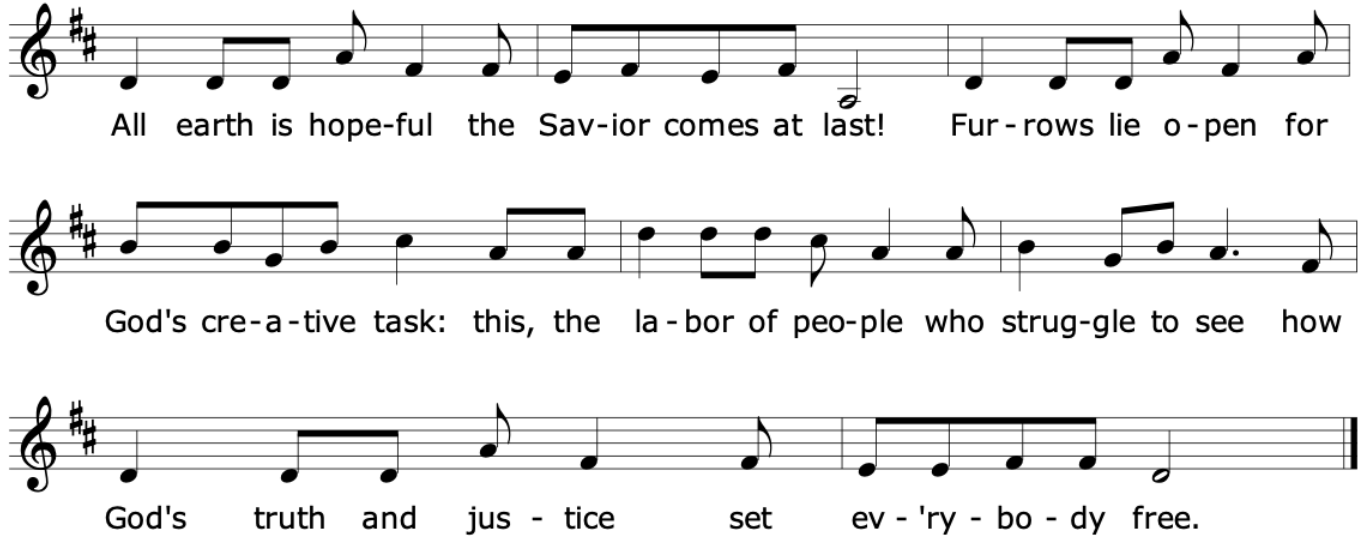
¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation:



All earth is hope-ful the Sav-ior comes at last! Fur-rows lie o-pen for
God's cre-a-tive task: this, the la-bor of peo-ple who strug-gle to see how
God's truth and jus-tice set ev-'ry-bo-dy free.

The Holy Gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

'Make straight the way of the Lord,' "

as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon



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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The Nicene Creed:

As we wait for Christ's coming, we confess our faith.

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Offering

Though we meet virtually, the ministry of God's people at BLC continues. Our worship is complete when we bring all of our resources to receive God's blessing and fulfill God's purpose. This time of uncertainty and reduced physical contact gives us ever more opportunities to share our abundance – of compassion, of time, and of material resources. If you are able, please continue your financial commitment to BLC.

If you would like to make a one-time gift electronically, scan the QR (quick response) code on the right and you'll be brought to BLC's mobile giving page. For recurring



gifts, download the *Tithe.ly* app. Checks may also be mailed to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY 14450.

Whatever form your offering takes, we give thanks to God for you and your generosity.

Offering of Music:

Joy to the World

arr. Patricia Sanders Cota

Chancel Bells (Director, Annette Finkbeiner)

Offertory:	<i>Accept O Lord the Gifts We Bring</i>	#691
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Ac - cept, O Lord, the gifts we bring to place up - on your ta - ble. We
Our hopes and dreams, our toils and cares we lift in prayer be - fore you. Lord,
do not wor - ship as we ought but on - ly as we're ab - le
by your grace now come to us, as hum - bly we a - dore you.

Offertory Prayer:

Let us pray. Savior of the nations come,

make your home here in us. Feed us with your love, that our faith shine ever new and our lives witness to your light. Amen.

The Prayers of the People:

In the silences of our prayer you are encouraged to remember those whose needs are known to us listed below. You may also lift up the name of someone in need of prayer in the comments of our worship livestream.

As God's people called to love one another, let us pray for the needs of the Church, the human family, and all the world.

Pause

God of Advent, in the midst of a holiday season full of distraction and difficulty, help us to feel your Spirit within us, so that like Isaiah, we might comfort all who mourn, bind up the brokenhearted, and bring the good news of the coming of your Son Jesus to the oppressed and all who need to hear it. Hear us O God,

Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, in so many ways it feels like our human brokenness is on full display right now. Help us to find ways to heal division, to speak and to listen to one another with compassion and grace, and to see each other for what we all are – your children, created in your image. Hear us O God,

Your mercy is great.

We pray for the church throughout the world, and here at home. Be present with all of the people of God, and especially our community of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. We pray especially today for our brothers and sisters Cheryl (Seth & Vanessa), Mike, Cameron & Brook (Quinn & Luke), Bob & Chrissy, Jim & Shannon (Sydney & Grady). We also pray that you bless and sustain the members of our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great.**

God of grace, you see those places in our lives where we need your healing presence and touch, whether in our bodies, our minds or our hearts. We ask that you hear the prayers of your people who are in need of your tender care, especially...

We pray for those who are grieving, especially the family and friends of:

- Verlyn (father-in-law of Mike's cousin Brandon) who died on 12/6 following a car accident
- Sue (friend of Hans & Pr. Amy) who died on 12/4. Our prayers are especially with her husband, Jeff, and their three teenage boys, Ronan, Sam and Jude.
- Alva (mother of Dale) who died on 12/1 after 105 years of life

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Danielle as she prepares for surgery on 12/18
- Mary (mother-in-law of Mike's cousin Brandon) recovering from injuries sustained in a car accident that she was in with her husband, Verlyn, on 11/10
- Maria (friend of Neil) who is experiencing a recurrence of cancer
- Dick (brother of Sherry) undergoing treatment for stage 4 melanoma
- Matthew (son of Mary's friend Helen) who has suffered multiple health challenges, and also Matthew's sons, who are currently being cared for by Helen
- Jerry (brother of Bob) who was hospitalized and released and awaits gall bladder surgery
- Lisa (friend of Pr. Amy) who has been diagnosed with breast cancer and began treatment
- Jack (brother-in-law of Bill), hospitalized with a severe leg infection.
- Jim (father of Hans), who resumes chemotherapy following a re-assessment of recent test results
- Those impacted by fires, hurricanes and other disasters
- Those who are involved with the ongoing work of caregiving for loved ones
- Those who are infected with or recovering from Coronavirus, and their caregivers
 - Bob, father of Sherry & Jim's son-in-law
 - Jean, mother of Rick
 - Noel, brother of Rick

...and for those whose names we speak on our lips or in our hearts.

Hear us O God

Your mercy is great.

Receive these prayers O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer:

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, we pray as Jesus taught:

**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**

WE LEAVE TO SERVE:

Benediction:

May the God of peace sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Amen.

Sending Hymn:	<i>Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn</i>	#242
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(music on the following page)

Go in peace. Watch for the Light!

Thanks be to God.

Narthex Chats with Pastor Hoffman & Christine Higgins

Announcements – watch for slides during the Postlude

Postlude:

Postlude on “On Jordan’s Banks the Baptist’s Cry” (ELW #249)

John Leavitt



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
 3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing, Sing out your joy, for
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
 dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
 mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -
 Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in
 Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and
 kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to
 won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and
 sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.
 shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.
 weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

Calendar for week of December 13 – December 20

(Updated on 12/9/20 at 12 noon, visit <https://blcfairport.org/event-directory/> for updates)

Sunday, December 13

Third Sunday in Advent

8:30 am Facebook
Livestream
Worship
10:00 am Zoom* Pre-K to 2nd
Grade Monthly Meet-Up
([Join](#) or use ID 853 8991 1172)
11:00 am Zoom* Coffee with a
Pastor and Jim & Shannon
Oliverio
([Join](#) or use ID 823 7018 2058)
7:30 pm Zoom* LYO
([Join](#) or use ID 818 2417 6546)

Monday, December 14

6:00 pm Virtual Youth Choir
([Join](#) or use ID 816 9461 2911)
6:30 pm BSA Troop 208
7:00 pm Zoom* GFL
Confirmation
([Join](#) or use ID 859 4816 8778)

Tuesday, December 15

4:30 pm Zoom* Education
Planning Meeting
6:30 pm BSA Troop 2019

Wednesday, December 16

9:30 am Zoom* Bible Study
([Join](#) or use ID 943 3691 2942)
1:00 pm Zoom* Men's Lunch
([Join](#) or use ID 874 8853 3240)
6:30 pm Chancel Bells
7:30 pm Zoom* Chancel Choir
Rehearsal
([Join](#) or use ID 869 2314 9200)

Thursday, December 17

6:30 pm Zoom* Church Council

Friday, December 18

Pastor's Sabbath

10:00 am Folk Group Rehearsal
3:00 pm Dulcimer Group
Rehearsal

Saturday, December 19

No Brunch Bunch this week

Sunday, December 20

Fourth Sunday in Advent

8:30 am Facebook
Livestream
Worship
10:00 am Zoom* 3rd to 5th
Grade Monthly Meet-Up
([Join](#) or use ID 890 1964 4442)
11:00 am Zoom* Coffee with a
Pastor and Pam Heiple
([Join](#) or use ID 823 7018 2058)
7:30 pm Zoom* LYO
([Join](#) or use ID 818 2417 6546)

For additional details about any of the meetings, events and activities listed above contact the church office!

Church Office Hours: We continue to hold remote office hours M-F from 9 am to 12 noon. During these times, please call (585) 223-0634 to reach us directly, otherwise you may continue to email us at office@blcfairport.org and we'll respond as we're able. For further assistance or urgent pastoral care needs outside of office hours, please call the office and leave a message on the pastoral care line. Pastor Amy remains available by phone and email at other times.

***To join any of our BLC Zoom meetings, use the ID provided or contact the church office and/or group organizer.**

***Zoom Options:** For recurring meetings, the info will remain the same each time. Participants can join with the link provided (above where applicable, or via email), or by using the Meeting ID and manually enter the password (the 10-digit BLC phone number with area code, no spaces or hyphens). **Please contact the group leader or the church office for assistance or additional details! If you have trouble accessing a Zoom meeting in real-time, you can call or text (585) 364-2129 for assistance.**

Give Witness and Rejoice

The third Sunday of Advent—also known as *Gaudete (rejoice)*—is one in which the church has rejoiced as the advent of the Messiah draws nearer. Whether or not you mark this Sunday with a pink candle on the wreath, the texts for the day echo this rejoicing, this “we’re almost there” excitement, in a multitude of ways. Isaiah couples images of a people restored with images of weddings and springtime and oak trees. The psalmist offers up images of a harvest festival, and Paul urges us to rejoice “always.”

John the Baptist, in his own way, calls for rejoicing by his acknowledgment that he is *not* what we are waiting for. John, like us, has a mission to bear witness, but when he says “I am not,” we hear a clear contrast to all the ways Jesus will identify himself with the Father: “I am the bread of life.” “I am the resurrection.” “I am the good shepherd.” All these things Jesus will be for God’s people, but John’s job is simply to bear witness to the light.

How do we bear witness, while still waiting? Or can joy in the midst of waiting be that very witness? In Advent we are not called to act as though we do not know how this story ends, as though Jesus’ birth and life, death and resurrection, are still before us. But we *do* know that sense of longing for God’s salvation to be fulfilled, and the temptation to imagine that we have to save ourselves, instead of waiting for God’s purposes to be worked out in God’s time. John reminds us that there can be joy in taking our proper place, pointing to Jesus without needing to *be* Jesus.

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