



Sunday, December 20 ~ 4th 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: *Prelude on "Divinum Mysterium" (ELW #295)*
 Prelude on "Forest Green" (ELW #250)

Craig Phillips

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: The Pilcher Family

God of all creation, in your Son, Emmanuel, you have shown us your light and saved us from the power of sin. Make us watchful as we light four candles on this wreath. Increase our longing for your presence, that at the celebration of your Son's birth his Spirit might dwell anew in our midst, for he is our light and our salvation.

Amen.

Light four of your Advent candles today to mark the fourth 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.

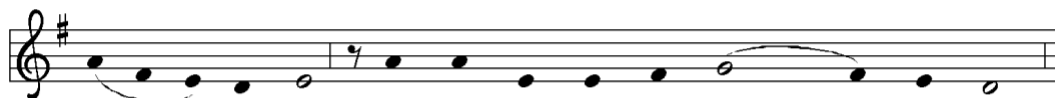
Gathering Hymn:

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (vs 1-4)

#257



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things
3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on
4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here
far and nigh: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;
Si - nai's height in an - cient times you gave the law
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
teach us your will and guide our way. Re-joice! Re-joice!
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

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 your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Children's Moment

Offering of Music:

A Tiny Child will Come

written by Don Besig

(Arranged & recorded by the BLC Folk Group, Director Rich Towsley)

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

Reading: Romans 16:25-27

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation:



The Holy Gospel according to Luke.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He 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. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The 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. ³⁶And 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. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Hymn of the Day:

The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

#265



1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,
2 "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,
3 Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly bowed her head;
4 Of her, Em - man - u - el, the Christ, was born



with wings as drift - ed snow, with eyes as flame:
all gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or thee;
"To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said.
in Beth - le - hem all on a Christ - mas morn,



"All hail to thee, O low - ly maid - en Mar - y,
thy son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,
"My soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy God's ho - ly name."
and Chris - tian folk through - out the world will ev - er say:



most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."
most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."
Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy,
"Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!

Text: Basque carol; para. Sabine Baring-Gould, 1834–1924

Music: GABRIEL'S MESSAGE, Basque carol

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:

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

text: Edmund H. Sears, music: Richard s. Willis

(Choral Ensemble: Jim & Donna Berner; Andy & Ruth Gates)

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.

God of Life, Creator of all things, how can we ever thank you enough for all of the gifts you have given us? This beautiful world, full of wonders and mysteries, our homes, food, lives of meaning, and relationships that bring us joy and hope. All of these are gifts from you. Even in this time of pandemic, we thank you Lord! And, chiefly, we thank you for the coming birth of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us, and gives us the strength to follow His example. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for uniting us as one in holy baptism. We give thanks for this community of people at Bethlehem who gather for worship, even virtually, and commit to growing together in you. This week we pray especially for Tom and Joan; Ron and Carolyn; Tom and Peggy, Ben, Kyle; Laura, Thomas, Bethan; Jeffrey; Alyssa, and Connor. We also remember our companion synod twin parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our Prayer

Source of all comfort, we are aware that many are in pain this day. There are those who suffer from physical and mental illness, emotional turmoil, and broken relationships. There are also those who mourn the death of loved ones. Today,

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

- Ken Strecker (stepfather of John Perry) who died on 12/9. Prayers are especially with Mary Strecker (John's mother).
- Verlyn Strenge (father-in-law of Mike Higgins' cousin Brandon) who died on 12/6 following a car accident.
- Sue Murphy (friend of Hans & Pr. Amy Walter-Peterson) who died on 12/4. Our prayers are especially with her husband, Jeff, and their three teenage boys, Ronan, Sam, and Jude.

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Bob Paoni, father of Sherry & Jim Cook's son-in-law
- Danielle Betts as she recovers from surgery anticipated on 12/18
- Mary Strenge (mother-in-law of Mike Higgins' cousin Brandon) recovering from injuries sustained in a car accident that she was in with her husband, Verlyn Strenge, on 11/10
- Maria Turco (friend of Neil Vokes) who is experiencing a recurrence of cancer
- Jerry Stock (brother of Bob Stock) who is recovering from 12/16 gall bladder surgery
- 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
 - Jean, mother of Rick
 - Noel, brother of Rick

We also remember those we lift before you, silently and aloud.

May Your healing presence touch their lives, and the lives of all those in need of your comfort and care. Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our Prayer

Loving God,

We pray for the leadership of our church, Bishop Eaton, Bishop Macholz, and our Church Council. We ask that you continue your Spirit's presence in their lives. We ask your blessings on Pastor Amy and Pastor Hoffman this morning, that they may feel your presence with them, know you are always with them, and clearly see the ministry you are calling them to. Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our Prayer

God, in your deep compassion, receive these prayers we offer to you 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:

Offering of Music:

O Come, All Ye Faithful
(*Madeleine Hoffman, piano*)

Traditional Carol

Benediction:

May Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path. Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Sending Hymn:

Savior of the Nations, Come

#263

(music on the following page)

Go in peace. Watch for the Light!

Thanks be to God.

Narthex Chats with Pastor Hoffman & Pam Heiple

Announcements – watch for slides during the Postlude

Postlude: *Postlude on “Veni Emmanuel” (ELW #257)*

Robert J. Powell

Christmas Eve – December 24

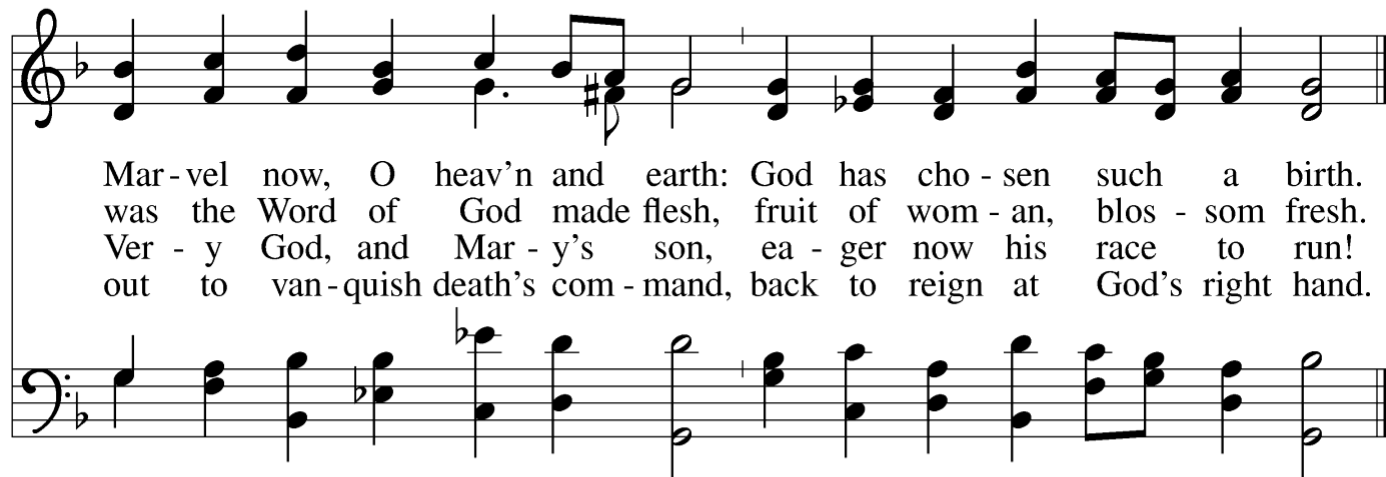
Celebrate Christ's birth in your home this year! Set up your nativity scene; gather around the Christmas tree; light the candles on your Advent log or wreath and share in worship with the Bethlehem community.

Worship will include a children's moment (with a special guest from the North Pole!), God's Word through Lessons and Carols, and a time for lighting candles and singing Silent Night. Worship will be posted on our website to watch any time after 4 pm on Christmas Eve. If you'd like to share in worship at the same time as your BLC community, our church FB page will host a "watch party" on Facebook that starts at 7:15 pm with an extended musical prelude featuring various Bethlehem musicians. Be ready for worship by providing one candle for each member of your household. There will be a time to light candles and sing Silent Night during the service.

You can always find links to participate in Livestream worship on our website at <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> along with a link to the bulletin (Order of Worship) and the Zoom logins (for Sunday morning gatherings that follow worship). We also send an email each Saturday with all the details to get you ready for worship! Please contact the church office at office@blcfairport.org if you are not receiving these emails and would like to be added to the distribution!



1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come; vir - gin's son, make here your home.
2 Not by hu - man flesh and blood, but the mys - tic Breath of God,
3 Won - drous birth—oh, won - drous child— from his throne, a vir - gin mild!
4 From God's heart the Sav - ior speeds, back to God his path - way leads;



Mar - vel now, O heav'n and earth: God has cho - sen such a birth.
was the Word of God made flesh, fruit of wom - an, blos - som fresh.
Ver - y God, and Mar - y's son, ea - ger now his race to run!
out to van - quish death's com - mand, back to reign at God's right hand.

5 Now your manger, shining bright,
hallows night with newborn light.
Night cannot this light subdue;
let our faith shine ever new.

6 Praise we sing to Christ the Lord,
virgin's son, incarnate Word!
To the holy Trinity
praise we sing eternally!

Calendar for week of December 20 – December 27

(Updated on 12/16/20 at 12 noon, visit <https://blcfairport.org/event-directory/> for updates)

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)

Monday, December 21

6:00 pm Virtual Youth Choir
([Join](#) or use ID 816 9461 2911)
No Confirmation

Tuesday, December 22

Wednesday, December 23

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)
No Chancel Bells
7:30 pm Zoom* Chancel Choir
Holiday Celebration
([Join](#) or use ID 869 2314 9200)

Thursday, December 24

Christmas Eve

11:00 am – 1:00 pm Christmas
Eve – Sanctuary open for silent
Meditation & Prayer
4:00 pm Christmas Eve worship
is available on FaceBook
7:30 pm Share in the BLC Watch
Party on FaceBook of Christmas
Eve Worship; watch party
begins at 7:15 with an extended
musical prelude

Friday, December 25

Christmas Day Church Office closed

Saturday, December 26

Sunday, December 27

First Sunday of Christmas

8:30 am Service of Lessons
and Carols with the Upstate
New York Synod
No LYO

The church office will be closed on Friday December 25 & Monday, December 28 in observance of the Christmas Holiday. In order to provide additional vacation time for BLC staff this holiday week, the church office will remain closed through January 3. In the event of a Pastoral Emergency (i.e. death, family or individual crisis) please contact Pastor Korey Finstad at 585-402-8451.

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.**

Those Who Hear and Do

Who is God's family? Where is God's home? In the church we often speak of our home parish as a family. Many of us grew up thinking of the church building as God's house. But the readings for this day call us to anticipate that Emmanuel might understand kinship and home in different ways. As we approach Christmas, which in our culture is increasingly a celebration of hearth and home more than a public festival, the inclusiveness of God's promise rings out from these readings.

The temple often stood in the imagination of Israel as the "house of God," but in 1 Samuel God expresses reservations before the temple is even built. The promise made to David is not about the building. Instead of the expected places of wealth and power, God chooses to dwell in a *people* instead of a "house of cedar" (2 Sam. 7:2, 7).

So if God is dwelling in a people, who is included in *that* promise? Although no one disputes that Jesus is born of the "house of David," Luke's gospel stresses Mary's lowliness instead of her bloodlines, reminding us that Christ became flesh in the most unlikely circumstances. Later in Luke's gospel, when someone mentions his family to Jesus, he says his family includes all "who hear the word of God and do it" (8:21). In today's gospel we see Mary acting out that definition of family.

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