

 WORSHIP

 GROW

 LIVE

 CARE

 SERVE

DECEMBER 20, 2020

4th Sunday in Advent



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

WEEKLY

star

 **Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.

Here at BLC our Advent theme this year is “Watch For The Light.” I spent my 30-year career as a special education teacher, teaching the skills of woodworking to school-aged students with multiple handicaps. These kids were in the Creekside School because they had more than one handicapping condition (Mental Retardation and Deaf, etc.). Most students had problems that would have excluded them from being in a high school wood shop. I started out by teaching hand-tool woodworking because (I thought) power tools were too dangerous. I soon found that the skills needed for the use of hand tools (saws, screw drivers, etc.) were not successful because of the student’s physical handicaps. Therefore, I started experimenting using power tools to do the basic jobs of woodworking. Using a Radial arm saw to cut boards, a drill press to drill holes, and a power screwdriver to attach boards with screws soon became very successful. Throughout this process I would maximize safety by building jigs that easily completed the jobs while keeping fingers away from blades. The “Light” that was presented to me was to see the sparkle in the eyes of each student with a successful project. Also, I tried to teach a feeling of letting everyone have the freedom of decorating their own project (not so everything was exactly the same as everyone else’s but that had their own personality displayed). This “Light” that I saw was the feeling of learning something that each person never expected to learn.

After retiring, I started volunteering at Lifespan of Rochester. I became the teacher of the mountain dulcimer to a group of seniors at the downtown Cafe. The light I see in this group is almost the same as explained from the previous group. Learning a musical instrument that most had never seen or heard of brought a brilliant light to their life. My friends in the group would sparkle when they learned something new, as well as, when we put on a concert for another senior center.

I think of this light almost like if I were asked to state my “HIGHS” for the day. Seeing God’s work through the companionship and learning of new skills brings out a “HIGH” in anyone. This light can be seen in anyone who is helping their fellow men or women to make their lives better with less distress. You can also see this light in everyone that has been helped by someone else.

During this time of pandemic and social distancing it is harder to be close enough to see this light in many. This is where the belief and faith in God is helpful. These words of Jesus are presented in the folk hymn: **“I Am The Light Of The World”**

I am the light of the world

You people come and follow me

If you – follow and Love, You’ll learn the mystery Of what you were meant to do and be.

Thanks, Rich Towsley

**WORSHIP TIME: SUNDAYS ~ 8:30 AM WORSHIP
(FACEBOOK LIVE)**

Are you Ready for Worship? There are now three ways to participate in our Livestream of Sunday worship.

1. [Facebook Live](#) - We encourage you to start your own watch party!
2. [Watch On YouTube](#) – Subscribe to our channel
3. [Livestream on the website](#)

★ Don't forget to look for this **Star Icon (★)** to easily identify the newest information each week

Worship the Living God

Lessons for Sunday: 12/20: Romans 16:25-27; Luke 26-38

Nothing will be impossible with God! Watching for the light means living with hopeful expectation for God's promise to be fulfilled.

Lessons for Sunday: 12/24: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20

We celebrate the birth of Christ, the light of the world!

Lessons for Sunday: 12/27: Isaiah 52:7-10, Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:14

The celebration of Christ's birth continues.

Watch for the Light this Advent. We invite you to participate in our weekly livestream from your home and light Advent candles, sing carols, and listen to familiar stories that help us prepare for the birth of Christ, who brings hope and promise, even when we are separated (details about our livestream worship are listed below). Visit our website <https://blcfairport.org/advent-2020/> to follow a daily pattern of readings and prayer to mark each day of this Advent Season as we prepare for the birth for Christ.

You can always find links to participate in Livestream worship on our website at [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!

★ **Advent Coffee Conversations with the BLC Community! (a.k.a. Coffee with a Pastor) ... 11 am on 12/20 (note the later start time!)...** During the Sundays of Advent, share a (virtual) cup of coffee via Zoom at 11 am with our pastors! Join through our [Calendar of Events](#) (or [Join](#) via Zoom - ID 823 7018 2058) Listen in as Pastor Hoffman interviews a member of the BLC community each week about where and how they are watching for the light in their professional and personal lives – as healthcare workers, teachers, caregivers and followers of Jesus. This week features Pam Heiple, a long-time participant in the BLC community. Pam recently retired after a long career as a psychiatric nurse practitioner with Highland Hospital and now works part-time at URMC. These Zoom conversations will leave opportunity for additional conversation with all who attend.

★ **Christmas Eve Daytime Meditation** - The BLC sanctuary will be open on Thursday, **December 24** from 11 am - 1 pm for those who wish to spend time in the sanctuary in silent meditation or prayer as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ child! Park in the church lot and use the front parking lot entrance into the office wing to access the church. Participants are required to wear a mask in the building at all times and are asked to practice physical distancing. There will be a sign-in sheet in the Narthex so that we can conduct contact tracing, if needed.

★ **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.

★ **Thank you!** We give special thanks for music staff and all the talented musicians who offer their gifts to the congregation week after week: Susan DePasquale, Organist; Jim Jefferis, Director, Chancel Choir; Annette Finkbeiner, Director, youth choirs and Chancel Bells; and Rich Towsley, Director, BLC Folk Group & Dulcimers. We are especially grateful for their creative offerings in the seasons of Advent and Christmas at BLC. Music is a fair and glorious gift of God and our worship and community life is enriched by all those who share their musical gifts all year long! We also give special thanks to Andy Gates for sharing his technical gifts and for the integral role he plays in producing the Livestream services to share with the community.

★ **YouTube Viewing of BLC Services:** Donna and I have been tuning in to the BLC Sunday morning services since we started the virtual viewing in March. We started out with the Facebook LIVE option. I have to say, it was a bit frustrating each Sunday morning as we were searching for the LIVE broadcast. This was mostly due to our lack of familiarity with the FaceBook environment outside of the daily news feed, etc. I will also admit, we were a bit impatient with the service scheduled to begin at 8:30 and at that exact time we did not see any action. We are so grateful with all that our Pastoral leadership and others do to bring us the best community that can be had at this awful time.

About 6 weeks ago, we learned that the services were going to be broadcast on a YouTube channel that the church has secured. I want to say that this process is so much easier than the Facebook option for us and because it is being broadcast on our big screen TV instead of Donna's iPad, the experience is more enjoyable for us. So, here is the BERNER YouTube lesson by dummies. (notice not for dummies, but by dummies!)

First, it will be best to have a YouTube account. I believe YouTube is owned by Google, so if you have a gmail account, it will be the same sign in and password.

Sign in to your YouTube account. This can be done on your computer or on whatever device you use to view YouTube. Then, you want to search for [BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH FAIRPORT](#), channel. It is best then to SUBSCRIBE, for two reasons; one, it will be easier to find the next time you are looking to view service and two, the more subscribes that BLC has on their channel, the more benefits and features that open up to us. I am told by Andy Gates that the beak point is 100 subscriptions for more features. (we are almost to 60)

Ok, now to the TV. I believe you will need a smart TV that has the options of streaming services such as HULU, AMAZON, HBO and others, but it should have YouTube there as well. (if not, you will need to explore the instructions with your specific TV and brand to acquire it.

So, on Sunday morning, tune into YouTube, on the left side there is a navigation bar that lists, SEARCH and others, but SUBSCRIPTIONS is also listed and if you have subscribed, [BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH FAIRPORT](#) is listed there. Click on it and look for the video that will be labeled with the date for the day.

LAST INSTRUCTION, PLEASE BE PATIENT AND FLEXIBLE. Click on the LIVE video and wait for the service to start. All of our support for bringing the services to you on any media are volunteers who are doing their best to be on time, without any glitches. But, we know that this is not always the case with any electronic equipment. Be prepared to seek another media if this does not work. We have only had to do that one Sunday in all the weeks it has been available to us. We find that viewing on YouTube is flexible and easier than on Facebook LIVE. Feel free to text me on a Sunday morning if you are struggling and waiting and I will share if we are doing the same. 585-314-9432. ~ Jim Berner

Grow in Faith and Discipleship

Share in BLC's upcoming Crucial Conversation on Sunday mornings beginning January 10 at 9:45 am on Zoom

- **Who:** Co-Lead by Pastor Amy and Pastor Hoffman
- **When:** Sunday mornings, January 10, 17, 24 and 31 at 9:45 am
- **Where:** Zoom event
- **What:** We'll study the ELCA's Social Statement *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*

Adopted in 1993 by the Churchwide Assembly, this social statement is available to read and download at <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Race-Ethnicity-and-Culture>. Paper copies are available by contacting the church office.

Living our faith in daily life means that we spend time wrestling with big issues in an environment of fellow disciples who hold a diversity of viewpoints, opinions, perspectives and experiences. In this environment we'll learn and study together grounded in the unity that comes from faith in Christ. *Share in this important, faith-centered conversation. Come for all four sessions or whenever you're available.*

Faith Formation for Pre-school through High School! All ages: Weekly - we will post the children's moment (the same one that is shared in worship on Sunday), and additional ways to engage <https://blcfairport.org/faith5-at-home/>

As always, please contact the church office, Marcy Adams, Bethany Trippi or Pastor Amy if you are looking for additional support around your faith formation in the home. You can use the 'Join event now' button in the listing on our [Calendar of Events](#) or find login details on the calendar at the end of the STAR!

- Zoom* 3rd to 5th Grade Monthly Meet-up: Join Marcy Adams & Sue Cardinal on the 3rd Sunday of the month (the next one is Sunday, **December 20 – this week!**) as we offer a time of connection through stories, music and conversation to kids and families (grades 3-5)
- LYO (grades 9-12): Weekly - Sundays at 7:30 pm via Zoom. If you have any questions, please contact [Bethany Trippi](#)

★ **Midweek Bible Study:** Midweek Bible Study: December 23, we will continue our study of the lessons for Advent and Christmas. We will not meet Wednesday, December 30. Please consider joining us on January 6 as we study Epiphany. The following week, (January 13) we will begin a study of 1st and 2nd Peter. Please join our conversation. Check the calendar for our Zoom codes! Questions - contact [Kathy Moragne](#).

Live Our Faith in Daily Life

Knitters and Crocheters: We are going to continue to collect and distribute knitted and crocheted hats to donate to Rochester area organizations in need such as Open Door Mission and Cameron Ministries. Feel free to leave them in the bins

in the narthex or contact Cathy Gottermeier at 429-0782 (call or text) or cgotterm@rochester.rr.com and I will be happy to pick them up from you. I also have yarn available if needed. Thank you in advance for supporting this mission!

Our theme, **Watch for the Light**, struck me when I read an article about the Star of Bethlehem. Did you know that the Star of Bethlehem will be visible in the sky this year around Christmastime? Yes, you heard me right. The Star of Bethlehem ... the same one that the Magi followed to see Jesus. Mark your calendar. The Christmas Star will appear shortly after dusk on December 21st. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. In fact the last time this occurred was back in the Middle Ages, in the year 1228, nearly 800 years ago. The Star of Bethlehem is actually two planets, Jupiter and Saturn, whose orbits will be lined up so they look like a huge bright star in the sky. It's interesting in the bible story, the Magi followed the star. But how could they "follow" a star? We know that stars are bright but they don't move... Astronomers say that the Star of Bethlehem was not a star at all, but planets. From our vantage point here on earth they looked like a single bright star in the sky when their orbits line up as they did when Jesus was born. Check it out. **Watch for the Light** on December 21st.

Look in the southwestern sky, just above the horizon and you might see the Star of Bethlehem that led the Wise Men to Jesus.

~ Paulette Costanza



Care for One Another

★ NOTES OF THANKS:

★ **To Our Bethlehem Family:** *Thank you for the beautiful basket that Victoria brought us on behalf of BLC. The basket was filled with goodies that fed our hearts and souls. Thanks also for the cards with kind thoughts sent our way. We miss seeing you all. God's Peace – Sue & Rich Towsley*

Thank you for your thoughtful kindness at a time when it was greatly appreciated! To the BLC community and the Barnabas Group - Thank you for your prayers during this difficult time. The gift of goodies was very helpful and appreciated. Thank you, Christin, Tom, Zoe & Jenna Greenwood

To BLC, Thanks for the many prayers, cards and good wishes. Erich and I hope everyone is well and coping with this abnormal situation. Affectionately, Connie Helbig



Serve Our Neighbor

M&SC stands for the Mission and Social Concerns Committee. The next M&SC meeting is **January 13, 2021**, 6pm via Zoom. If you would like to attend but are not part of the committee, please contact Beth Walker at rbowsend@rochester.rr.com for the zoom link.

The mission focus for December is Building Capacity – The work of calling out and dismantling unfair systems in our midst is not the work of the disenfranchised, it is the personal and collective work of the dominant culture and those who have power.

I want to share with you the words of Richard Rohr (Center for Action and Contemplation, 12/7/2020). This reading gives meaning to why we strive for equality for all. In short, Love. ~ Beth Walker

Giving Birth to Christ: Christ Is Born in Creation

Humanity too is God's creation. But humanity alone is called to co-operate with God in the creation. —Hildegard of Bingen

For of his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. —John 1:16

The Greek word for "fullness" in this gospel passage is *pleroma*, which Paul also uses in his writings to describe a historical unfolding (see Ephesians 1:23, 3:19; Colossians 2:9–10). It is an early hint of what we now call evolutionary development, the idea that history, humanity and, yes, even God are somehow growing and coming to a divine fullness. What hope and meaning this gives to all life!

In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul writes: "From the beginning until now, the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth" (Romans 8:22). Creation did not happen at once by a flick of the divine hand, and it is not slowly winding down toward Armageddon or tragic Apocalypse. Creation is in fact a life-generating process that's still happening and winding up! We now know the universe is still expanding—and at an ever-faster rate, which means that we are a part of creating God's future.

As Sister Ilia Delio says so well,

We can read the history of our 13.7-billion-year-old universe as the rising up of Divine Love incarnate, which bursts forth in the person of Jesus, who reveals love's urge toward wholeness through reconciliation, mercy, peace, and forgiveness. Jesus is the love of God incarnate, the wholemaker who shows the way of evolution toward unity in love. In Jesus, God breaks through and points us in a new direction; not one of

chance or blindness but one of ever-deepening wholeness in love. In Jesus, God comes to us from the future to be our future. Those who follow Jesus are to become wholemakers, uniting what is scattered, creating a deeper unity in love. Christian life is a commitment to love, to give birth to God in one's own life and to become midwives of divinity in this evolving cosmos. We are to be wholemakers of love in a world of change. [1]

The common Christian understanding that Jesus came to save us by a cosmic evacuation plan is really very individualistic, petty, and even egocentric. It demands no solidarity with anything except oneself. We whittled the great Good News down into what Jesus could do for us personally and privately, rather than celebrating God's invitation to participate in God's universal creative work.

Instead of believing that Jesus came to fulfill us separately, how about trusting that we are here to fulfill Christ? We take our small but wonderful part in what Thomas Merton calls "The General Dance." [2] We are a part of this movement of an ever-growing Universal Christ that is coming to be in this "one great act of giving birth" (Romans 8:22).

[1] Iliia Delio, "Love at the Heart of the Universe," "The Perennial Tradition," *Oneing*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2013), 22. Note: This edition of *Oneing* is out of print.

[2] Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Shambhala: 2003), chapter 39.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Christ, Cosmology, & Consciousness: A Reframing of How We See* (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2010), MP3 download.

Epigraph: *Vita Sanctae Hildegardis* (The Life of the Holy Hildegard), II, 35. See Hildegard of Bingen: *Mystical Writings*, ed. Fiona Bowie and Oliver Davies (The Crossroad Publishing Company: 1990), 28.

Alternate giving opportunity! In lieu of poinsettias in 2020, we encourage people who wish to memorialize, or honor loved ones to do so through a gift to our alternative giving opportunity this Christmas season, which will support Heritage Christian Services. HCS works to make sure everyone - including children, older adults and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities - feels valued and honored. To make a gift write: HCS in the memo line of a check or select Other Designated Giving on Tithe.ly and write HCS in the Note/Memo section. To share your gift dedication please [fill out this form](#) or contact the church office directly. *Dedications must be received by Sunday, December 20, 2020 to be included in order to be included in the Christmas Eve order for worship.*

★ **BLC Angel Tree:** All Angel Tree gifts and food items should be returned to church this Saturday (12/19). Thank you for sharing with others during this Christmas Season.

★ **The 30-hour famine** has been a powerful experience our LYO has participated in for years. This year much like everything else in our world, it is going to look much different. In this time of solitude, we have found unexpected ways to come together. The LYO would like to invite the rest of the congregation to join them in a 30 Hour Famine Experience. It will take place the weekend of January 15th and will include a variety of virtual and outdoor activities, with the option to fast or not. Commitment can be customized to your family's comfort level. Simply pledge what you and your family would like to participate in by signing up here <https://blcfairport.org/30-hour-famine-sign-up/>. Stay tuned for more information! Please contact Bethany Trippi with any questions.

We Ask Your Prayers:

We pray for those whose thanks or needs are known to us.

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 fulfill our commitment to pray for one another by remembering these members & friends of Bethlehem and their families Tom & Joan Olschewske, Ron & Carolyn Olsen, Tom & Peggy Osenbach, Ben Osenbach, Kyle Osenbach, Laura Ouimette (Thomas), Bethan Ouimette, Jeffery Ouimette, Alyssa Owen, Connor Owen and our brothers and sisters in our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Additional ongoing prayer concerns can be found in the monthly prayer listing.

[Click here to view and print the December long-term prayer listing](#) – or contact the church office for a copy!

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)
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.**

Announcements for the STAR should be submitted through the office by Wednesday morning at 9am. Visit www.blcfairport.org and to sign up for reminders and special announcements (including the STAR!)



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