



*Christmas Day
Sunday, December 25, 2022*



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ www.blcfairport.org
The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

Sunday, December 25, 2022 ~ *Christmas Day*

Prelude:

Slumber My Darling (Lullaby for the Baby)

by Stephen Foster

Rich Towsley, guest musician

Announcements

As on the first day of creation, on this Christmas Day the Word illumines the world, shining forth to bring all things into being. Today we celebrate the incarnate Word, God becoming flesh to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ then and now. Emboldened by the good news of Christ's birth, along with the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and all witnesses to the light of Christ, we declare to the world that we have indeed seen and been transformed by the arrival of "the salvation of our God." O come, let us adore!

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, the Word made flesh, our life and our salvation.

Amen.

Trusting the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior, let us confess our sin.

Silence for reflection

God of life,

you promise good news of great joy for all people, and call us to be messengers of your peace. We confess that too often we hoard our joy, our resources, and our security. We nurture conflict and build barriers. We neglect the needs of our neighbors and ignore the groaning of creation. Have mercy on us. Where we are self-centered, open our hearts. Where we are reluctant, give us courage. Where we are cynical, restore our trust. Renew us with your grace and give us again the hope of eternal life in you. Amen.

Hear the good news: We are children of God and heirs of God's promises through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In † Jesus we are forgiven and redeemed. Sing with joy, for all the ends of the earth shall know the salvation of God.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN	Angels We Have Heard on High	ELW 289
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GREETING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Almighty God, you gave us your only Son to take on our human nature and to illumine the world with your light. By your grace adopt us as your children and enlighten us with your Spirit, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 52:7-10

Isaiah proclaims news of great joy: "Your God reigns!" Just as God saved the people from oppression in Egypt, God delivers Israel from exile. All the earth will witness the saving acts of God.

⁷How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

⁸Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the Lord to Zion.

⁹Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

¹⁰The Lord has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Hebrews 1:1-4

This letter opens with a lofty declaration of Jesus' preeminent status as the Son through whom God created the world and through whom our sins are cleansed. God speaks to us now through the Son, who is exalted even above the angels.

¹Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: John 1:1-14

The prologue to the Gospel of John describes Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, the one who reveals God to be "full of grace and truth."

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

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. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY	In the Bleak Midwinter	ELW 294
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NICENE CREED

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.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

As With wonder and thanksgiving for Christ's coming into the world, we pray for the church, the life of the earth, and the whole human family.

A brief silence.

The church in every land makes a joyful noise to herald your coming, O God. We give thanks for poets, musicians, and hymn writers who give voice to our praise, and for all who lead the church's worship. God of grace,
Hear our prayer.

This day dawns with new hope for all living things, and from ocean depths to mountain peaks the earth rejoices. Inspire in us an urgent zeal to protect the planet and renew its resources. God of grace,
Hear our prayer.

Bring heavenly peace to this world and an end to armed conflict. Raise up leaders in every nation who will honor human rights and establish equal justice for all people. Give courage to all who speak out against oppression and advocate for the powerless. God of grace,
Hear our prayer.

We celebrate that you came to live among us. We give thanks for your presence with these members and friends of Bethlehem and their families: Larry & Ros., Kay & Rick, Alan & Ruth, Andrew, and Donna & Vic. Be also with our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. God of grace,
Hear our prayer.

Come, Lord Jesus, to all in need of your hope and healing.

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

- Jeanine K., sister of Susie D., who died on 12/19
- Mike M., brother of Dave M., who died on 12/15
- John N., cousin of Toni T., who died on 12/17

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- We pray for Ed C., father of Sandy G.'s daughter-in-law, who is recovering from double-lung transplant surgery on 12/11
- George G., brother of Toni T., who is in stage 4 kidney failure and will be facing dialysis soon
- Those who are caregivers for loved ones
- Those who are ill from Coronavirus and all who care for them

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

Silence for individual prayer.

God of grace,
Hear our prayer.

Pondering the mystery of eternal love made flesh in Christ Jesus, we commend all for whom we pray to the mercy of God.

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

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.*](http://blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry)

OFFERING OF MUSIC
Simple Gifts

Joseph Brackett Jr.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

We pray. God of abundance,
receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

One in body, one in Spirit, we pray:

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

Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace.
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. If you worship through the Livestream and wish to receive communion, please reach out to one of the pastors.

COMMUNION HYMN

Away in a Manger

ELW 277

TABLE BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

God bless you and keep you, ✠ Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN

Joy to the World

ELW 267

DISMISSAL

Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Ode To Joy

Beethoven

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Dr. Jim Jefferis, Director of The Chancel Choir

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

Thank you to the Rev. Jeff Hedin for serving as our preacher and worship leader today and to Rich Towsley for serving as our worship musician. Their leadership today provides Bethlehem pastors and staff the ability to celebrate Christmas with their families, for which we are truly grateful!

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? Fill out the survey on the table in the narthex and place it in the basket or speak with a pastor.

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: The church office will be closed from 12/26-12/30. While our pastors are away, Pastor David Gerhardt is available for pastoral emergencies. He can be reach by phone at (585)429-5675.

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Traces of Light

“The light shines in the darkness.” We know the darkness—even in the merriment of Christmas we need not travel too far to see it. When the prophet Isaiah proclaimed words echoed in our reading, he did not need to go into too much detail as to what the darkness was. This was the darkness of the battlefield, of war and captivity. Our daily headlines remind us of today’s darkness, which Henri Nouwen says “is so visible and tangible . . . that it is often difficult to believe that there is much to think, speak, or write about other than our brokenness” (*Life of the Beloved*, New York: Crossroad, 1992, p. 69).

But it is into this brokenness that the life and light of the world descends, not to terrify or shame it, but to create it anew. From the beginning this Word was active in creation, speaking obliquely to every culture and era, until the particular time of incarnation. God risks vulnerability in order to reach out to the wounded, and places in creation’s trust the caretaking of a fragile grace. Will the world receive him?

The rest of the story will painfully answer this question. Events at Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha will dramatically declare our rejection of the life and light of the world. But the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it. We wrestle with the paradox that the world did not recognize its own light by which it sees, or its own life from which it has life, or the Word that gives it meaning. Yet we also treasure the wonder by which we have been granted eyes to see and ears to hear. At Christmas we perceive the light in infancy, but, grace upon grace, he is a trace of joy given for us.