



Sunday, February 12, 2023
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany



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, February 12, 2023 ~ *Sixth Sunday after Epiphany*

Prelude

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

FAITHFULNESS
setting, Dan Miller

Announcements

In today's reading from Deuteronomy we are called to choose life by loving and obeying God. Much of today's gospel reading echoes portions of the Ten Commandments. Jesus' instructions to the crowd reveal a pattern of behavior that honors both God and the neighbor, resulting in life and health for the whole community. We too are invited to embrace these commandments, not out of fear of retribution, but because God has promised that to do so means life for us.

GATHERING

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 makes all things new, whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy One, source of our renewal,

we confess that we are wrapped up in sin, and cannot free ourselves. We have not practiced your righteousness. Our hearts have turned away from you. For the sake of the world you so love, forgive us, that we may be reconciled to one another for the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Thus says our God: “The former things have come to pass and new things I now declare.” God’s mercy makes us new. We are forgiven in the name of † Christ our Savior.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN	O God, My Faithful God	ELW 806
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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.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. O God, the strength of all who hope in you, because we are weak mortals we accomplish nothing good without you. Help us to see and understand the things we ought to do, and give us grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

I’m So Glad Jesus Lifted Me

African American spiritual
arr. Aaron David Miller

BLC Children’s Choir

assisted by Phyllis Stock, piano

HEARING GOD’S WORD

DISMISSAL TO WORSHIP FOR KIDS

All kids ages 3 through elementary are welcome to a special time of hearing the Word, conversation and activity! Parents can remain in the sanctuary while the kids gather in the room across the hall from the side entrance to the sanctuary. Kids will return during the offering so they can participate in Communion.

READING: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

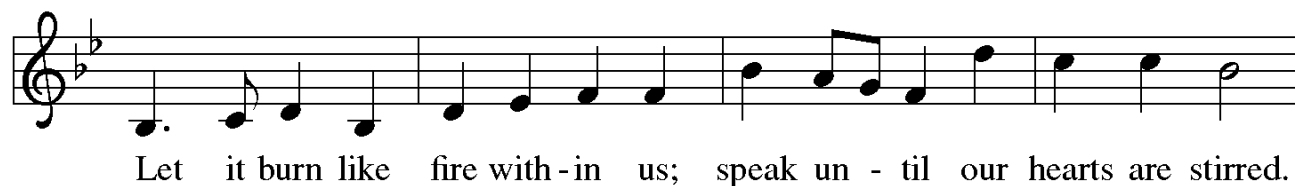
The Lord sets before the people of God a clear choice. Life and prosperity will come to the faithful; loss of the land will be the consequence of disobedience. Choosing life entails loving and holding fast to the Lord. Life in God’s presence presupposes the promise made to the ancestors.

[Moses said to the people:] ¹⁵See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:21-37

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorts his followers to embrace standards of righteousness that exceed legal requirements and traditional expectations.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will

be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³²But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³"Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' ³⁴But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

Healer of Our Every Ill

ELW 612

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

#1 Inspire your church that it may be a sign of life throughout the world. From the exploration of faith with children and new believers to missionaries and bishops, shape lives of faithfulness, so that all find abundant life in your ways.

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

#2 Nourish your creation. Accompany all who plant and water. Bless the work of farmers; provide for subsistence farmers facing drought and climate change. Guide the work of agricultural scientists toward sustainable ways to feed the world.

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

#3 Give growth where there seems to be no hope for life. In nations and regions where reconciliation seems impossible, empower peacemakers with your Spirit. Where death holds sway through violence, disease, hunger, and disaster, equip relief workers to bring hope, especially in Turkey, Syria, and Ukraine. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

We follow you in sharing love and care in our world. We pray for these members and friends of Bethlehem and their families: Amy & David (Ethan & Stella), Chris & Meg, Addie, George, Mike (Lily & Olivia), and Shiellee. Be with our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe as they follow where you lead. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Seek out those who are struggling in body, mind or spirit. Provide for those in any need.

We lift up prayers of thanksgiving for:

- those welcomed to Christ's table: Brielle B., Josie H., Marilyn H., Roxanne J., Vivian J., Olivia K., and Aaron R.
- the safe delivery and birth of Caden John R. on 2/3, grandchild of Bob & Wendy R.
- the safe delivery and birth of McKinley Alysce P. on 1/30, the granddaughter of Terri & Jeff P.

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

- Steve H., father of Kevin H., father-in-law of Pastor H., and Papa to Maddie, Izzy, Nate and Micah, who died on 1/27

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Joanne S., as she prepares for knee replacement surgery
- Michele, friend of Donna and Jim B., who is living with multiple health challenges
- Mark F., recovering from recent surgery
- Tim M., husband of Linda M., who was admitted to the ICU on 1/31
- Those who are caregivers for loved ones
- Those who are ill from Coronavirus and all who care for them

We pray for those we name before you.

Silence for individual prayer.

God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.

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.

OFFERING OF MUSIC

God Is My Strong Salvation.

text, James Montgomery
Southern folk hymn
arr. Austin C. Lovelace

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY HYMN	Lord of Light	ELW 688
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Lord of light, your name outshining
All the stars and suns of space,
Use our talents in your kingdom
As the servants of your grace;
Use us to fulfill your purpose
In the gift of Christ your Son.
Father, as in highest heaven,
So on earth your will be done.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Liberating God,
you break the bonds of injustice and let the oppressed go free. Receive these offerings in thanksgiving for all your works of merciful power, and shape us as people of your justice and freedom. You we magnify and adore, through Jesus our Savior, Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Friends, we come to the table

Where God intends us to be nourished.

So come, you who hunger and thirst

For a deeper faith, a better life, a fairer world.

Jesus Christ, who is present at our tables,

Now invites us to be guests at his.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Now we do as Jesus did.

We take this bread and wine, the produce of earth and fruit of human labor.

In these, Jesus has promised to be present;

through these, Christ feeds us.

Lord Jesus,

open our hearts to believe that you come in this meal of grace. Amen.

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
Come and taste the joy of God!
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.

THE COMMUNION



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

COMMUNION HYMNS

As the Grains of Wheat

ELW 465

Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive

ELW 605

Spirit of Gentleness

ELW 396

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



1 O Lord, now let your ser - vant de - part in heav'n-ly peace,
for I have seen the glo - ry of your re - deem - ing grace:
a light to lead the na - tions un - to your ho - ly hill,
the glo - ry of your peo - ple, your cho - sen Is - ra - el.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

The God who faithfully brings forth justice † bless, strengthen, and uphold you,
today and always.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN

O Christ, Our Hope

ELW 604

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Follow the way of Jesus.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Doxology Postlude

OLD HUNDREDTH - [ELW 883]

Peter Pindar Stearns

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 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.

Welcome to the Table: Today we join to welcome to Christ's table those who have recently completed communion instruction. Please join in extending Christ's welcome!

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: Our co-Pastors are available Sunday-Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling (585)223-0634 or emailing pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org or pastor.amy@blcfairport.org.

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Risky Business

Time after time we are called through the scriptures to leave behind familiar and predictable ways of life, risking a journey into the unknown and unknowable. Risks often have a very big and exciting “upside” which is matched by an equally steep and daunting “downside.” Many good and faithful people have a healthy fear of risk, but taking a risk with God is a very different venture. If God’s call to follow is risky, and we succeed, we can experience God’s presence and promise in profound new ways. However, if we follow God’s call to risk and it seems to fail, then we are still following in the footsteps of the one who formed us, loves us, and calls us by name.

In Deuteronomy, Moses had taken a risk and led Israel out of slavery and toward the Promised Land. He encourages the people to continue to risk by choosing life in God as opposed to the lures of life without him. Paul risked his life time and time again in order share the gospel, and he is encouraging the people of the Corinth to risk walking a different route in Christ. In today’s gospel we hear Jesus offer tough teachings which may seem risky to preachers everywhere! These readings all seem to be filled with tough, risky teachings, but dig a little deeper and we can experience the grace-filled message of hope and new life rooted in God’s love. We can clearly hear a call to risk, but also the promise of God’s steadfast presence to be with all who faithfully follow, no matter the outcome. So take a deep breath, dare to risk, crack open the “tough exterior” and experience the love and grace of these texts