



Beyond Human Time

*Christmas Eve
7:30 pm Family Worship*

Sunday, December 24, 2023 ~ 7:30 Family Worship
Extended Prelude

Il est né le divin Enfant French carol
(He Is Born, the Holy Child) Marcel Dupré

Raelynn Clare, organ

People, Look East French carol
What Child Is This 16th-cent. English ballad
arr. Jane Morale and Glen Zagorski

Jane Morale, violin Glen Zagorski, guitar

Sleeping Adonai words and music, Heather Sorenson
Nancy Price, mezzo-soprano Chrisanne Gates, piano

'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime French Canadian folk tune
arr. Dave Howland

The Chancel Bells

Prelude on “Lo Desembre Congelat” Catalonian carol
(Cold December Flies Away) setting, David Schack

Raelynn Clare, organ

I Wonder as I Wander Appalachian carol
arr. John Jacob Niles and Lewis Henry Horton

Katherine Jefferis, mezzo-soprano Dr. Jim Jefferis, piano

He Come from the Glory words, Jean Anne Shafferman / traditional
music, arr. Lloyd Larson
inc. THE VIRGIN MARY HAD A BABY BOY
West Indian spiritual

Quintet:

Nancy Price, alto Dr. Jim Jefferis, baritone
Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, soprano Hans Walter-Peterson, tenor
Chrisanne Gates, percussion



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 24, 2023 ~ 7:30 Family Worship

The church year begins in Advent with waiting. We prepare, repent, make a way. But by this night, the way has been made . . . or not! No matter how long the wait may have felt for us, the time is now! God has spent millennia liberating, planning, befriending humanity, working through the lost and unlikely, preparing for the incarnation – God made flesh! O come, let us adore him!

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in the shadows.

It is time to worship!

We listen for God.

It is time to hear!

We receive God's grace.

It is time to be loved!

We leave in peace.

It is time to serve others!

Emmanuel, God-with-us, is here in this time and place!

Glory to God in the highest!

GATHERING HYMN	O Come, All Ye Faithful	ELW 283
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Stanzas 1, 2: All

3: Choir

4: All

All

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!

O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem;

come and behold him, born the king of angels:

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

All

The highest, most holy, light of light eternal,
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father now in flesh appearing!
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Choir

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

All

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Emmanuel, God-with-us, the time is now. You are here! Your presence glows among us. However this night finds us—filled with joy or touched by grief, alone or in the company of our loved ones—you are with us, and you will never leave. And so we sing with the angels:

Alleluia and Amen!

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

HEARING GOD'S WORD

READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

²The people who walked in darkness

have seen a great light;

those who lived in a land of deep darkness—

on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

assisted by The Chancel Bells

Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see
him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn king.

Refrain

The holy gospel according to Luke.
Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of

cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

CHRISTMAS CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem

ELW 279

assisted by Jane Morale, violin

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming; but, in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

A brief silence.

Glory to you, God, for the song of the angels, proclaiming to the world Christ's holy birth. Give your church a joyful song to sing, that we bring the good news of peace and salvation to all people. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the stars that shine in the depth of the night. Provoke awe in our hearts at the expansive mystery of the cosmos. Open us to find beauty in the clear darkness of night and in the first glimmers of dawn. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the child born to us who establishes a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Break bonds of oppression, bring reconciliation to warring lands, and establish peace from this time onward and forevermore.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the faithfulness of the shepherds in their vocation. Grant rest to any who feel exhausted from their work during this season: parents and all who bring Christmas to life for others, retail and restaurant workers, church musicians and staff, organizers of charitable-giving events, and service workers doing essential tasks. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for Mary's loving care. Lead us to tend to one another in time of need. Share the comfort of your presence with all people tonight who are alone or separated from loved ones due to estrangement, incarceration, or illness, especially those we name before you silently or out loud.

Silence for individual prayer.

Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

Amen.

SHARING GOD'S MEAL

OFFERING

Offering plates are placed at each entrance to the sanctuary. 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

Nativity Carol

words and music, John Rutter

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Loving God, for the time we have, we say:

Thank you.

For the gifts we offer, we say:

Thank you.

For the chance to help others, we say:

Thank you.

For the people whose lives will be better because of these gifts, we say:

Thank you.

For the ways you are changing the world, we say:

Thank you.

We pray in the name of Jesus, who appears wherever people need our help.

Amen.

THE 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

With this bread and wine

Build us into a lasting community of hope, peace, joy and love.

Be among us in this meal.

And form us to be your presence in the world today.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

One in body, one in 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

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Rejoice! Emmanuel comes to you.

Thanks be to God.

Distribution of Communion:

Please come forward at the direction of the ushers. All are welcome to share in Christ's meal of forgiveness and grace. Children who do not yet commune are welcome to come forward for a blessing. Gluten-free wafers and grape juice are available; please indicate your need to the pastor or communion assistant.

THE COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN	On Christmas Night	ELW 274
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On Christmas night all Christians sing to hear the news the angels bring.
On Christmas night all Christians sing to hear the news the angels bring:
news of great joy, news of great mirth, news of our merciful king's birth.

Then why should we on earth be sad, since our redeemer made us glad?
Then why should we on earth be sad, since our redeemer made us glad,
when from our sin he set us free, all for to gain our liberty?

When sin departs before his face, then life and health come in its place.
When sin departs before his face, then life and health come in its place.
Angels rejoice with us and sing, all for to see the newborn king.

All out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night.
All out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night:
"Glory to God in highest heav'n; peace on earth, and goodwill. Amen."

COMMUNION HYMN	Infant Holy, Infant Lowly	ELW 276
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Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging, angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all! Christ the child is Lord of all!

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you! Christ the child was born for you!

Love has come—a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;
what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers;
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. God for whom we wait, you come to us in the broken bread and the cup we share. Make us ready always to make a home for Christ into our hearts, and send us forth to be your people in the world, witnessing to your coming among us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE LIGHT

The pastor will light a candle from the Christ Candle and share the flame with ushers who will then move down the aisle lighting the candles of the congregation in this manner: the worshiper nearest the center aisle will receive the light and in turn give the light to the one by their side. The lighted candle is never tilted, but is always held upright when passing the light to another so that the hot wax will not be spilled.

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

(Hum fourth stanza)

THE PRAYER

Gracious God, bathe us always in the light of your Word made flesh, Jesus Christ
our Lord.

Amen

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the
angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the
peace of the Christ child. Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you
now and forever.

Amen.

(Candles may be extinguished.

Please return your to an usher as you leave the sanctuary.)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sin and sorrow grow nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

DISMISSAL

Christ is born! Go in joy and peace!

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Toccata on ANTIOCH
(Joy to the World)

Lowell Mason
setting, Craig Phillips

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Director of Music and Organist

Dr. Jim Jefferis, Director of The Chancel Choir

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

Merry Christmas!

We wish you and yours a blessed Christmas!

A Gift for You!

Beginning Christmas Day and continuing throughout the 12 Days of Christmas, listen in to short conversations with co-Pastors Abigail Zang Hoffman and Amy Walter-Peterson. Look for the ***Between Sundays podcast*** wherever you listen.

Worship: We worship each Sunday at 8:55 am (both in-person and livestream). Visit our website – blcfairport.org – for information on how to share in worship with Bethlehem!

Learn about upcoming events and activities... please sign-up to receive communication from Bethlehem, including Between Sundays (Mondays), the Weekly Star (Thursdays) and Ready for Worship (Saturdays). To subscribe, go to www.blcfairport.org and scroll down to sign up for reminders and special announcements. (*Let the office know if you prefer your information in paper copies.*)

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***Christmas Poinsettia Donations
and/or contributions to
Lutheran Disaster Response – Middle East
were made to the glory of God by the following:***

Bill and Gunnar Antell in memory of all loved ones from our church family

Donald and Susan Cardinal in memory of Cathy Bitner, Norm Cardinal, and our grandparents

Nancy Fehse in honor of Erich Helbig, and in memory of Connie Helbig and Anna & Frank Steuerwald

Ruth and Andy Gates in memory of Elmer Yeakel and Sandy Gates

Sandy Goehle in honor of loved ones

Jeff and Ruth Hedin in memory of Nels & Mary Hedin and Don & Greta Ahlgren

Roger and Rosemarie Kolker in honor of our children Kathryn & Chris and Russ & Erica and our grandchildren Blakely & Cooper

Judy Lohr in memory of Bob Lohr

Margaret Maxa in memory of William & Margaret Walsh

Rolf Maxa in memory of Erich & Anna Maxa

Gabriele and Frank Nardozi in memory of Erna & Gerhard Schlueter, Irene Cortini, and Frank Nardozi

Howard and Janet Sharp in memory of our parents: Irv & June Sharp, Gene & Grace Garvey

Joanne Swanson in honor of Peter Swanson

Pastor Amy and Hans Walter-Peterson in honor of our Godchildren: Maddie, Izzy, Nate and Micah, and in memory of James Peterson

Wayne and GerryAnn Westcott in honor of our family

Maribeth Wilke in memory of Mitch Wilke and Paula & Ed Hitchings and Ed Hitchings Jr.

Marjorie Yaeger in honor of family and friends, and in memory of family and friends

Anonymous in honor of her LYLAS Ruth Gates

Anonymous in honor of her LYLAS Lisa Rosenbauer

Our Christmas tree is given to the glory of God by **Jim and Donna Berner** in honor of their family, with extra thanks to **Dave Wideman** and to **Rich Towsley** for years of support in setting up the tree and donning it with lights!

The wreaths which decorate the sanctuary are given to the glory of God by **Brian Edwards** in memory of his parents Tom and Gert Edwards, his aunt Ann Rasbeck and his grandparents Henry and Charlotte Miller. The greens were donated by Jan and Howard Sharp.

The wreathes which decorate the doors are given to the glory of God by **Karen Bigenwald** with gratitude for all the love and blessings shared by this BLC community.

Hope Born in a World of Humbugs

Dressed up with presents, lights, TV specials, extra concerts, parties, and spending money, there is a sense that Christmas is the time to feel good, do good, and perhaps live a little better than the rest of the year. Even the most cynical get swept up in the idea that the world and their lives shine a little brighter. It is a sugar-coated holiday rush only to be met days later by an emotional crash. Yet these signs point to a deep-seated hope that is lodged in the hearts and minds of those moving into this season. There is a longing and fervent hope that God will enter in and counter the challenges and humbugs of our days and world. And to this longing and fervent hope we look to one who claims us from marginal lives and engages us in a central story of hope and promise.

Wrapped in every breath, song, and action is God's direct connection with the earth and her peoples. This night counters voices and theologies that view God as distant and unengaged with humanity and the world. From old, the promise of God drawing near has been uttered; in the gospel we witness the birth of God's yearning presence through a teenage girl; throughout we are invited to join the song of creation, hope, and salvation. Tonight we pulse with the exhilaration of Mary and the shepherds, and those who have lived at the margins, as we experience and proclaim, that "God dwells with us." While people may often talk of the "magic" of Christmas, it is our call to speak to the *incarnation* of Christmas. As people come together to hear a familiar story and sing familiar hymns, the blessing and challenge is to witness again to God's promise and promise-keeping with vitality and to join the chorus of joy in what God has done and continues to do in being made real among us.

Into the lights and presents, the music and gatherings, even the wars, poverty, little empires, and tumult of the world, God meets and claims us in that spirit of hope. God calls us to dream and live into a new reality as we encounter this babe at Bethlehem and find this Christ-child born in our lives again. Christmas speaks to our greatest longing, and turns the "humbugs" to carols of joy.