



Beyond Human Time

Sunday, December 24, 2023
Extended Advent 7



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

PRELUDE

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen, op. 122, no. 11
(Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming)

German carol
Johannes Brahms

Of the Father's Love Begotten

DIVINUM MYSTERIUM
setting, Christopher Uehlein

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Throughout our extended Advent season, hope and expectation have been building. We hear the words of the prophets. We sing of God's promises. We place our hope in God. The whole world awaits the celebration of the coming of the Savior, who we know as Emmanuel, God-with-us.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather today.

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!

As we wait for Jesus' arrival, Emmanuel, God-with-us, is already here in this time and place.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

With God, there is always time for forgiveness. We trust God, and we confess our sins together.

Brief pause

Holy One,

We have not stayed awake. We have missed you when you appeared in our neighbors, in strangers half a world away, in the suffering planet. We have wasted the time and the skills that you gave us and assumed we were powerless to mend the breaches in our world. Sometimes, we have given up on your mercy, justice, and love. Speak tenderly to our anxious hearts. Tear open the heavens and heal what we have done. Amen.

People of God, hear this good news: In the name of † Jesus Christ, all your sins are forgiven. Forgiveness gives us the courage we need. Wherever we wait for God's time to come, we will witness wonders.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN

Signs and Wonders

ELW 672

GREETING

The grace of God, who was, who is, and who is to come, be with you all.

And also with you.

KYRIE



Lord, have mer - cy__ on your peo - ple. Christ have mer - cy__ on__ us.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.__ Chri - ste e - le - i - son.



Shine your light in__ to our dark - ness. Fill__ us__ with your ho - ly love.
Heal all__ con - flicts be - tween na - tions. Teach us__ how to__ live as one.



Be our strength in times of__ trou - ble. Set us free from chains that__ bind.
Show us how to love our__ neigh - bor. Run to those who__ cry for__ help.



Breathe new_ life in - to our__ spir - its. Pu - ri - fy our__ hearts and minds.
Word made flesh who lives a - mong us; Christ our__ Lord, Em - man - u - el.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

“Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is [God’s] name.” (Luke 1:48-49)

Let us pray.

God of mighty deeds and newborn sighs, you are nearly here.

As we wait the final moments for your arrival,

as we light the final Advent candle,

open our hearts to recognize the great things you have done:

acts of liberation, mountains moved,

hearts changed, and quiet moments of tender love.

Reveal how you have paved a path to the hopeful future that is in store for us,

and is now so near.

Amen.

The Advent candle will be lit as we sing:

(Sung 3 times: st. 1/ All st. 2/ Cantors st. 1/ All)



1. We light the Ad - vent can - dles a - gainst the win - ter night,

2. Four can - dles burn - ing bright - ly an - nounce that Christ has come,



to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world's True Light,

pre - pare, my heart, be - lieve it, and give the Christ child room,



to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world's True Light.

pre - pare, my heart, be - lieve it, and give the Christ child room.

assisted by cantors: Isabel Hoffman, Madeleine Hoffman

Readings - Lessons and Carols

READING: Isaiah 40:1-11

¹Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;

his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hark, the Glad Sound!

ELW 239, sts. 1, 3, 4

READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

² The 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.

Love Has Come

ELW 292

READING: Micah 5:2-5a

² But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;

⁵ and he shall be the one of peace.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

ELW 279, sts. 1, 3

READING: Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He 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. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The 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 word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

ELW 265, sts. 1, 2

READING: Luke 1:39-55

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness

ELW 251

READING: Matthew 1:18-23

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

ELW 257, sts. 1, 6, 7

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

People of God, we are each other's kin, and we are family with all creation. As we wait and yearn for God, we pray together for our community, for the church around the world, and for every need.

A brief silence.

#1 You promise mercy to Abraham and Sarah and their descendants forever. Bring your church into thoughtful, caring, and collaborative relationship with those of other faiths. Strengthen our shared values, that we work together in caring for our world. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

#2 As fields and crops lie dormant, bless them with holy rest. Prepare them to thrive, that they provide abundant food in due season. Protect animals who hibernate and provide for all who scavenge for food in the lean season. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

#3 You raise up the lowly and cast down the arrogant. Teach humility to all in positions of authority. Break down systems of oppression, especially systems that perpetuate inequity and exclusion. Do not allow wealth, power, or pride to become idols that obscure your call to justice. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Come, Lord Jesus to neighbors far and near. Deepen our kinship with these members and friends of Bethlehem and their families: Dale & Ginny, Lori, Howard & Janet, Jim & Marcia, and Larry & Ros. Strengthen the ministries we share with others, especially our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Come, Lord Jesus to all who are hungry, thirsty, ill, or experiencing any struggles.

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Steve F, neighbor of Kathy M, who is recovering from hip replacement surgery
- Frank W, friend of Kathy M
- Emily R, friend of Pastor Amy, as she continues treatment for cancer

Hear also these concerns we raise to you in our hearts or on our voice.

Silence for individual prayer.

Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God, you are always with us. We gather these prayers together, and we entrust them to your endless love in the name of Jesus.

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.

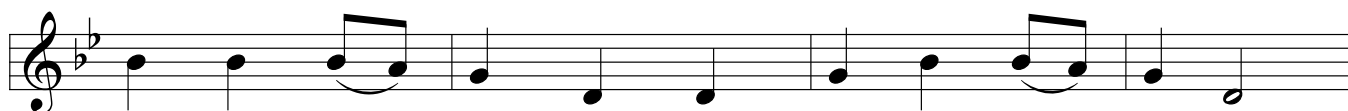
OFFERING OF MUSIC

Prelude on "Lo Desembre Congelat"

(Cold December Flies Away)

Catalonian carol
setting, David Schack

OFFERTORY



1. Come now, O Prince of peace, make us one bod - y.

2. Come now, O God of love, make us one bod - y.



Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.

Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Loving God, for the time we have, and for the gifts we offer, we say:

Thank you.

For the chance to help others, and 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.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

God, our Creator

the abundance of your goodness overflows into creation.

Through the generations

your goodness continues to flow in friendship with humanity.

From beyond time into this moment

your goodness comes in this meal.

When the time was right, you entered our human existence in Jesus, who was born humbly, who spent his life with the unlikely and unloved, who healed and taught and preached the good news of your way.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Whenever we share this bread and cup,

Jesus is here with us, in this moment, in this time and place.

Whenever we share this bread and cup,

God takes us out of time and joins us with God's people in every time and place.

Whenever we share this bread and cup, we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Send the Spirit of your presence on us now, O God, so that we too will overflow with goodness.

Strengthen us by this meal, so that through us, your presence will flow out in mercy, justice, and love. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We prepare for you, praying as you taught us,

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


The time is now! Taste and see God's goodness!

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



O Lamb of God you take a-way our sin; have mer-cy on us, give_ us your
peace. Pre -pare us to re - ceive_ your grace and teach us how to fol - low your ways. Re-
jice! Re - jice! E - man - u - el has come to you, O Is - ra - el.

COMMUNION HYMNS

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

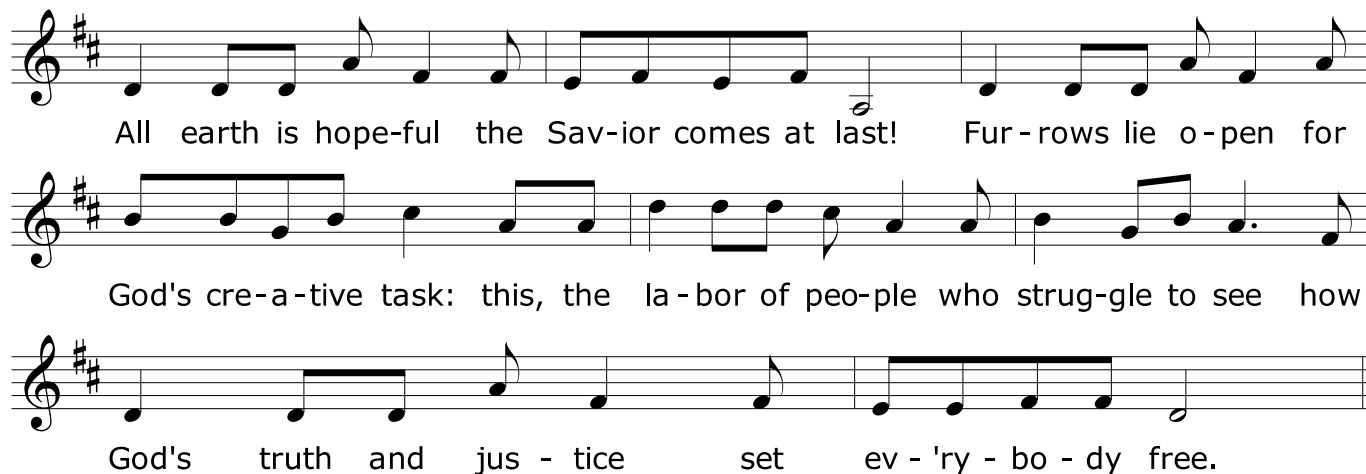
ELW 276

Let Our Gladness Have No End

ELW 291

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



All earth is hope-ful the Sav-ior comes at last! Fur-rows lie o-pen for
God's cre-a-tive task: this, the la-bor of peo-ple who strug-gle to see how
God's truth and jus - tice set ev - 'ry - bo - dy free.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

God our Creator, present before time; † Jesus our Redeemer, arriving at the right time; The Holy Spirit our Enlivener, acting in our time; Bless you now and always.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN	Joy to the World	ELW 267
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DISMISSAL

Keep alert: trust God; go in peace.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Toccata on ANTIOCH

(Joy to the World)

Lowell Mason
setting, Craig Phillips

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? Talk with Mark Finke or one of the pastors following worship or contact Mark directly at volunteersupport@blcfairport.org.

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 Monday, December 25 and Tuesday, December 26 for the Christmas holiday, as well as Monday, January 1. Pastor Amy, Pastor Hoffman, and Sarah will be away from 12/25-1/1. Please reach out to Mark Finke (volunteersupport@blcfairport.org or 585-354-3747) for any assistance needed during the week between Christmas and New Years. While our pastors are away, Pastor David Gerhardt is also available to handle pastoral emergencies. He can be reached by phone at 585-429-5675.

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Everlasting Light Musical Liturgy © 2011 by Pastor David Eck.

We Light the Advent Candles: WORDS: Gracia Grindal (1943 -); WORDS: German folk tune; Words © 1999 Hope Publishing Company

Now the Heavens Start to Whisper: Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953

Music: SUO GÂN, Welsh melody; arr. hymnal version Text © 2006 GIA Publications, Inc., giamusic.com. All rights reserved.

Arr. © 2020 Augsburg

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.