



*Words for the Beginning
You Are a Blessing
Sunday, December 1, 2024*



BETHLEHEM
LUTHERAN CHURCH

48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ www.blcfairport.org

PRELUDE

Pastorale on Advent Themes

Randolph Currie

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year rushes in. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving—and yet, we feel the weight of many things coming to an end. The world as we know it spins madly on. As we move through new chapters, may these words for the beginning renew us and remind us of the ways we are called to live out our faith. No matter what you are facing, no matter what this new day brings, let love be your beginning.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

He Came Down

tune, Cameroon traditional
arr. John L. Bell

The Chancel Choir

Inspired by Isaiah 43:1-4 and Luke 1:26-29

God says,

“Do not be afraid.”

God says,

“I have called you by name.”

God says,

“I will be with you.”

God says,

“You are precious and honored in my sight.”

At the beginning of this season,

at the start of this week,

at the top of this hour,

may we wrap ourselves in these words. May we begin again.

Let us worship our Holy God!

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.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Turn! Turn! Turn!

(To Everything There Is a Season)

text, Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8, adapt.

music, Pete Seeger

The Folk Group

Chorus:

*To ev'rything, turn, turn, turn,
There is a season, turn, turn, turn,
And a time to ev'ry purpose under Heaven.*

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE - HOPE

In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start?

Let us begin with the good news!

Let us begin by trusting that we are a blessing, loved by a gracious God.

Let us begin with music and singing! Let us begin with warmth and welcome. Let us begin with hope.

Yes, let us begin with hope.

Today we light the candle of hope to shine a light in a worn and weary world. May this be our foundation.

May this be our fresh start.

May this be our new beginning.

May hope flow forth from here. 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. The first one will re - mind us that Christ will soon re - turn.



to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world s True Light,
We light it in the dark - ness and watch it gleam and burn,



to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world s True Light.
we light it in the dark - ness and watch it gleam and burn.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

DISMISSAL TO WORSHIP FOR KIDS

During this Advent season kids are invited to bring forward an offering to support Ambulances for Zimbabwe before leaving for 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: Isaiah 43:1-7

¹But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.

²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.

³For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

⁴Because you are precious in my sight,
and honored, and I love you,
I give people in return for you,
nations in exchange for your life.

⁵Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;

⁶I will say to the north, "Give them up,"
and to the south, "Do not withhold;
bring my sons from far away
and my daughters from the end of the earth —

⁷everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



We are called to pon-der mys - t'ry and a-wait the com - ing Christ,



to em-bod-y God's com-pas - sion for each frag - ile hu - man life.



God is with us in our long-ing to bring heal-ing to the earth, while we



watch with joy and won - der for the prom-ised Sav - ior's birth.

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

GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38

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

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY**This Is a Day of New Beginnings**

Choir: st. 1

All: sts. 2, 3, 4, 5

This Is a Day of New Beginnings

Brian Wren, 1978, alt. 1987

Carlton Raymond Young, 1984

♩=130

Unison

1. This is a day of new be - gin - nings, Time to re - mem - ber
 2. For by the life and death of Je - sus, God's might-y Spir - it,
 3. Then let us, with the Spir - it's dar - ing, Step from the past and
 4. Christ is a - live, and goes be - fore us, To show and share what
 5. In faith we'll ga - ther round the ta - ble, To taste and share what

and move on, Time to be - lieve what love is bring - ing, Lay - ing to
 now as then, Can make for us a world of dif - ference, As faith and
 leave be - hind Our dis - ap - point - ment, guilt and griev - ing, Seek - ing new
 love can do. This is a day of new be - gin - nings; Our God is
 love can do. This is a day of new be - gin - nings; Our God is

1.2.3.

4.

rest the pain that's gone.
 hope are born a - gain.
 paths, and sure to find.
 mak - ing all things new.
 mak - ing all things new.

APOSTLES' CREED

Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

#1 God of righteousness, your people live in hopeful expectation of your coming. Fill your church with renewed passion for our shared mission, and deepen our relationships with other Christians and other faith traditions in our local community and across the world. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

#2 God of the cosmos, all creation shows that your presence is near. Help us sense your goodness and love in the sun and moon, in sprouting leaves and bare branches, in the roaring sea and quiet breeze. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

#3 God of the nations, your reign extends over all principalities and powers. Give leaders and all in authority hearts for justice and peace. Encourage efforts to enact policies that benefit the common good. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Gracious God, in this season when we remember that you came to earth as a child, help us to better know and care for these children, youth and young adults: Logan, Lucas, Logan, Luke, and Madeleine. Strengthen the connections we share with the ministries we serve, especially the ministry of our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Gracious God, you are near to all who call upon you.

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

- Paul T, son of Anita T, who died on 11/13
- Gary P, brother of Donna K, who died on 11/15

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Jesse R, son of Kay S, who is recovering from a broken leg on 11/21
- Joe, brother-in-law of Pat E
- Graham, 3-year-old grandson of Pat's friend, who is experiencing complications from pneumonia
- Jim C, hospitalized at Highland with a suspected TIA

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

Silence for individual prayer.

Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts,
in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SHARING GOD'S MEAL

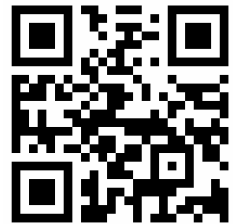
THE PEACE

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

*Thank you for your offerings that support the ongoing ministry that we share.
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 or scan the QR (quick
response) code on the right and you'll be brought to BLC's mobile
giving page.*



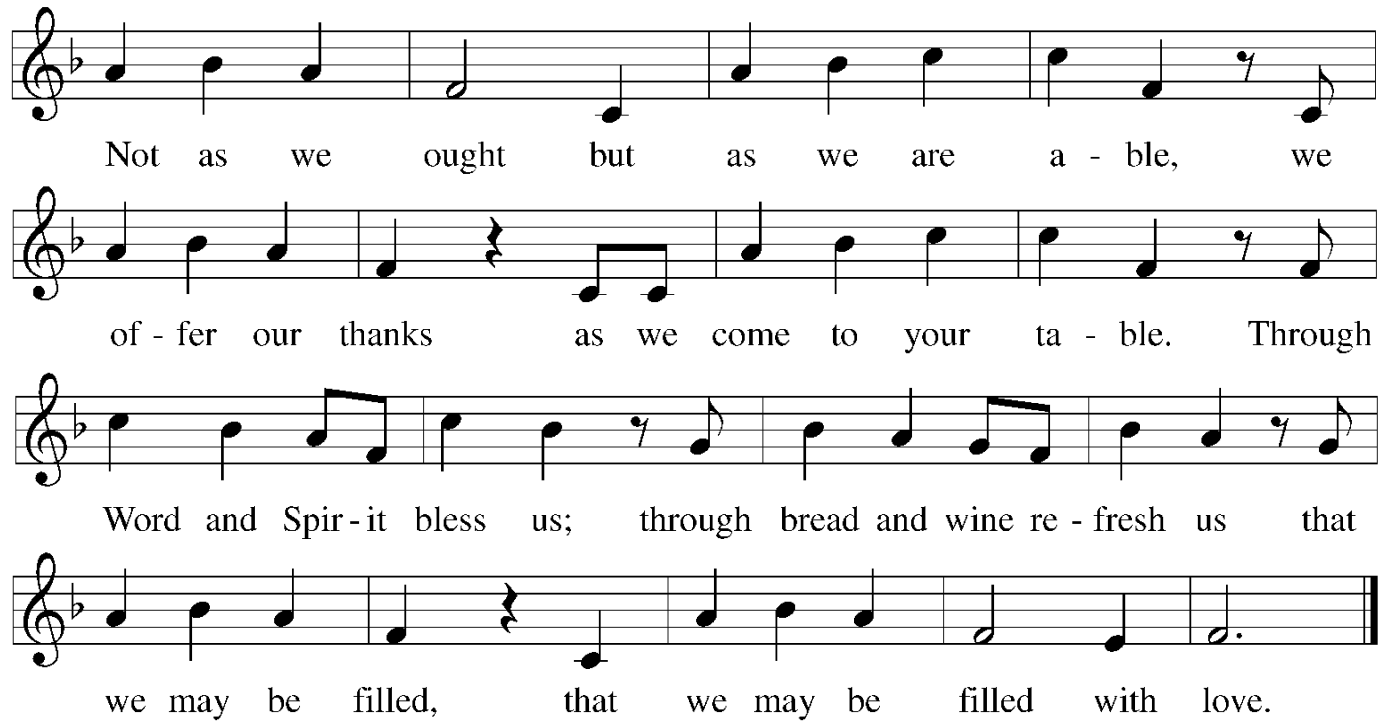
OFFERING OF MUSIC

Ave, Ave, the Angel Sang

text and music, Robert Lau
based on Luke 1: 26-38

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY



Not as we ought but as we are a - ble, we
of - fer our thanks as we come to your ta - ble. Through
Word and Spir - it bless us; through bread and wine re - fresh us that
we may be filled, that we may be filled with love.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. God of new beginnings,
as we prepare to come to this Table, pour out your spirit in this room. Bless our offerings. Make this meal a new beginning of faith, hope, and love. Allow us to experience welcome here. Allow for all to be fed here. Allow for all to sense your presence here. With hope we gather. With hope we begin again. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

Loving God, we come to this Table today with our longings.

In a world that so often feels like it's ending,

we crave the hope of a new beginning.

We long to heal from the endings of our hurting world and start again,

rooted in your good news.

Week by week, and bit by bit, we repeat the truths that we so often need to hear,

trusting that by your grace, it is never too late to start again.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

So in this spirit of beginnings,

we come to your Table and we ask that you would meet us here.

Pour out your Spirit on this ordinary meal, that in this bread and cup we may glimpse a new day.

Meet us here with a taste of your new beginning. Allow this joyful feast to be the start of something new. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With joy and hope, we weave our voices together to pray the words your son 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

Come. This good news is for you. All are welcome here.

Thanks be to God.

DISTRIBUTION

Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant.

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-
joice! Re- joice! E - man - u - el has come to you, O Is - ra- el.

COMMUNION HYMNS

The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

ELW 265

Lo, A Rose

Michael Praetorius / arr. Wilbur Held

(Rosa Mystica)

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. Generous God, we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name.

Amen.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

As you leave this place, may you have the wisdom to lean on one other. May you have the courage to hold onto hope, the compassion to do the good that is yours to do, and the confidence to trust that God sees you as a blessing. For in a world full of dead ends, Advent invites us to begin again. So start here. Start now. Start with love and begin again. In the name of † Christ, our new beginning, go in peace.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN

People, Look East

ELW 248

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

(HAF TRONES LAMPA FÄRDIG)

Swedish folk tune
setting, Paul Manz

BLC Pastors

The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Chrisanne Gates, Chancel Choir Director

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

Additional musical leadership provided by:

Cantors: Koosje Jeanotte, Roxanne Jeanotte, Vivian Jeanotte

Flutist: Sue Cardinal

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 one of the pastors following worship or send an email to volunteersupport@blcfairport.org and we'll follow up!

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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"Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers" Tune: Swedish folk tune; Arranger: Paul Manz © 1990 Birnawood Publications (ASCAP)

Joy and Celebration

You are a blessing.
If you hear nothing else,
if the wind howls,
if your brain runs amok,
if rebuttals and denials line up like little toy soldiers, then hear *this*—
you are a blessing.

I knew it the first moment I met you / heard your name / learned there are 7 billion
of us on this planet.
I knew it in my bones,
the way my feet know the way home.

You are a blessing.

For our creating God
breathed life into your being. And there is simply no way that, along with that life,
some of God's goodness
didn't slip right in.

So tell the rebuttals to rest.
Tell the toy soldiers to find another hill,
because this one is reserved for joy and celebration. You are a blessing.
Breathe it in.