



Hope Is Worth the Risk
Sunday, December 22, 2024



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

PRELUDE

Noël Suisse

Swiss French carol
Louis-Claude Daquin

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

In this weary world,

we sing of joy.

In this fragile world,

we lift each other up.

In this beautiful world,

we look for God.

In this tender world,

we hold onto hope.

This is the invitation of faith.

So in this time of worship,

may we sing, lift up, look for, and hold onto our with-us God.

With hope in our hearts, amen!

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.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE – LOVE

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

Let us begin with tenderness.

Let us begin with our hearts on our sleeve.

Let us begin from a place of vulnerability and hope.

Let us begin with love.

Yes, let us start with love.

Today we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.

May the warmth of these lights be our cornerstone.

May the truth in these lights help us begin again.

The Advent candles 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.

SPECIAL MUSIC

What Child Is This?

English ballad, 16th cent.
arr. Sylvia Woods

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Today we receive the witness of children and youth as they tell the story of the risky hope that Mary and Joseph placed in God's call to bring Jesus into this world! Through them we hear the story and are reminded that placing our hoping in God's love is always worth the risk! Their story today centers on texts from Luke 1:26-38 and Luke 2:1-20 and Matthew 1:18-25

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.

AN ANGEL VISITS MARY

THE MAGNIFICAT

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness

English folk tune
harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams

AN ANGEL VISITS JOSEPH

ANTHEM

Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine

German carol, 14th cent.
arr. Craig Petrie

BLC Children's Choir

MARY AND JOSEPH TRAVEL TO BETHLEHEM

CAROL

Away in a Manger

North American, 19th cent.

ANGELS ANNOUNCE JESUS' BIRTH

CAROL

Angels We Have Heard on High

ELW 289

Stanza 1 – Youth; Stanzas 2-3 - Congregation

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

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song?
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.
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo

SHEPHERDS VISIT JESUS

CAROL

Go Tell It On the Mountain

ELW 290

Stanza 1 – Youth; Stanzas 2-3 - Congregation

Refrain

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!*

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. *Refrain*

The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*

Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

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 who reforms, fill your church with courage to do your will. Empower your people in taking risks that bear fruit. Raise up leaders who will proclaim the good news. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

#2 God who creates, you hold in balance diverse ecosystems. Encourage efforts to protect wild lands from devastation. Care for animals and people in the path of destructive fires, storms, and other disasters. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

#3 God who leads, this world cries out for true justice. Guide legislatures, judges, and lawyers in actions steeped in love and restoration. Increase the desire to advocate for all who are confronted with discrimination and oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, class, or age. 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: Noah, Olivia, Otto, Olivia, Paige, and Owen. 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:

- Amanda, friend of Chris M, who died 12/11
- Gary W, former member of BLC, who died on 11/23
- Stephen H. III, the son of family friends of Roger and Rosemarie, who died tragically on 12/5

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Wayne W, who is at home but has had numerous falls and is continuing to recover from his recent surgery
- Penny L, sister of Kathy F, who is recovering from bypass surgery on 12/13
- Lori N, former BLC member and Pastor at St. Paul's, Penn Yan, who has received a cancer diagnosis and is preparing to begin treatment
- Connie S, who is hospitalized following a broken leg
- Lisa R, who has moved to Ashley Woods
- Jess, friend of Kim K, who is undergoing cancer treatment

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

The Promise of Advent
(incorp. ES IST EIN ROS)

words, Don Besig and Nancy Price
music, Don Besig

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.

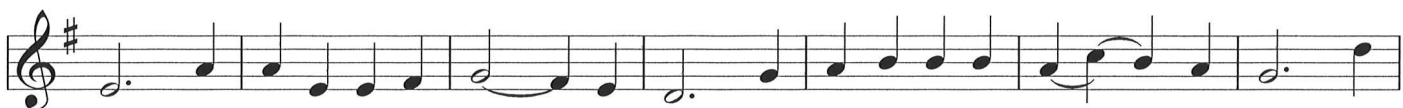
DISTRIBUTION

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 HYMN

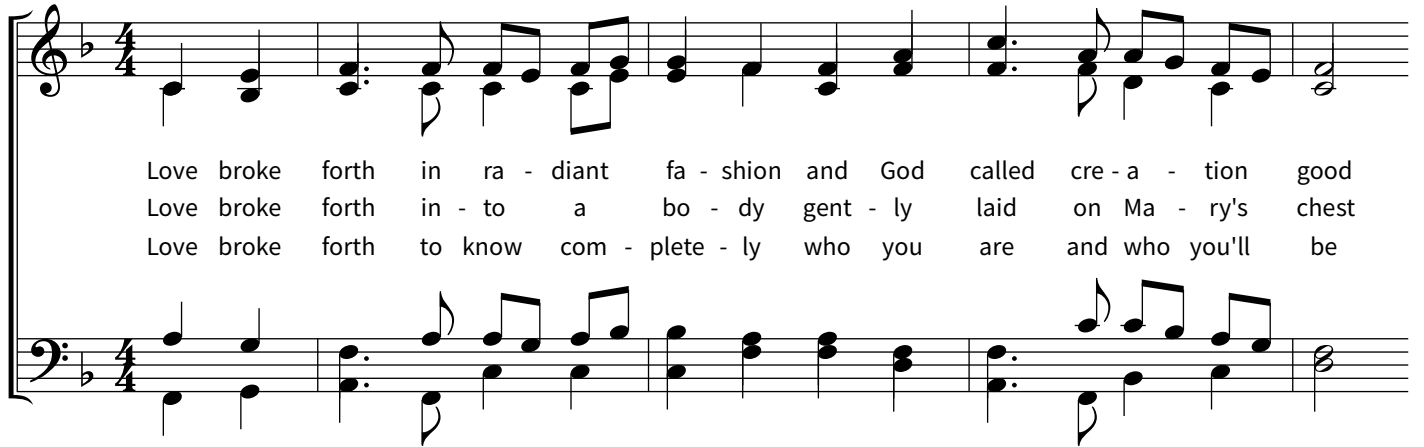
Love Broke Forth

LOVE BROKE FORTH

IRBY 8.7.8.7.7.7

Words by Anna Strickland, 2024

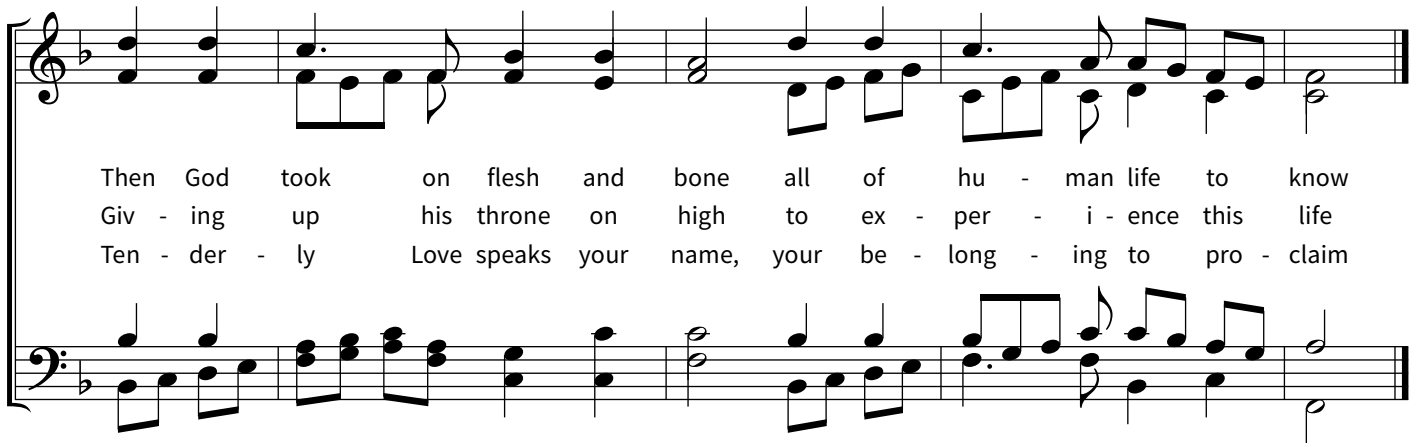
Music by Henry J. Gauntlett, 1849



Love broke forth in ra - diant fa - shion and God called cre - a - tion good
Love broke forth in - to a bo - dy gent - ly laid on Ma - ry's chest
Love broke forth to know com - plete - ly who you are and who you'll be



God made hu - mans in her i - mage to be loved and un - der - stood
See him swad - dled in a man - ger, Migh - ty God now pow - er - less
Ga - ther - ing in - to one bo - dy all of our hu - man - i - ty



Then God took on flesh and bone all of hu - man life to know
Giv - ing up his throne on high to ex - per - i - ence this life
Ten - der - ly Love speaks your name, your be - long - ing to pro - claim

COMMUNION INSTRUMENTAL

'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime

French folk tune, c. 16th cent.
arr. Anne Crosby Gaudet**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**

Prepare the Royal Highway

ELW 264

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

Thanks be to God.**POSTLUDE**

Passacaglia

from *Suite No. 7* in G Minor, HWV 432

George Frideric Handel

transcr. Tiny Béon

*Today's altar flowers are given by Patricia Olson
in memory of Lyona VanHassent.*

Celebrate Christmas at Bethlehem

December 24 – Christmas Eve

Message • Carols • Candles

5:30 pm – Worship with communion (in-person only)

6:45-7:00 pm – Outdoors – Corner of Church + Perrin Streets

7:30 pm – Worship with communion (in-person and livestream)

6:30 – 7:30 – Hot Cocoa and Cookies on Perrin Street!

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:

Cantor: Madeleine Hoffman

Flutist: Jane Morale

Phyllis Stock, piano

Thank you to Catherine Caton, guest harpist, for assisting us with today's worship.

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 Alli O'Malley or one of the pastors following worship or contact Alli 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: 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.

From *Sundays and Seasons.com*. Copyright 2024 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #43732.

Permission to stream and print the music in this service obtained from One License under Annual License #A-724002

New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education

Of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Bulletin Cover Art used by permission | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Introduction to the season, Call to Worship, Prayer of the Day, Lighting Advent Candle, Offertory Prayer, Communion Liturgy and Benediction Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.

"We Light the Advent Candles" Words: Gracia Grindal; Music: German folk tune; Words © 1999 Hope Publishing Company

"What Child Is This" Tune: English ballad, 16th cent.; Arranger: Sylvia Woods © 1984 (1992) Sylvia Woods, Woods Music and Books Publishing

"The Promise of Advent" Words: Don Besig and Nancy Price; Music: Don Besig © 2006 Harold Flammer Music (adm. Shawnee Press, Inc.)

"Love Broke Forth" Words: Anna Strickland, 2024; Music: Henry J. Gauntlett, 1849 © Anna Strickland, 2024 (Commissioned by A Sanctified Art, LLC

"Passacaglia" from *Suite No. 7* in G Minor, HWV 432; Composer: George Frideric Handel; Transcriber: Tiny Béon © Lyra Music Company

"Noël Suisse" – Swiss French carol; Music: Louis-Claude Daquin © Oxford University Press 1995

"'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime" Tune: French folk tune, c. 16th cent.; Arranger: Anne Crosby Gaudet

© 2018 Anne Crosby Gaudet, Music Discoveries

Hope Is Worth the Risk

Hope is vulnerable and can feel like a tremendous risk, especially if you've experienced loss or trauma. But Mary shows us a resilient hope that takes risks—she risks her body to bear a son who will become the hope of her people. Similarly, Joseph makes a risky choice to stay with Mary; dismissing her quietly would have kept him safe. But instead, he chooses hope. He chooses to trust the angel, and it makes all the difference. It can feel safer and easier to be a cynic, but the world doesn't need more cynics. It needs people who say, "It can be better," and make it so.

It's easy to give hope a bad rap. Have you ever found yourself resisting hope because you fear that if you get emotionally invested, then you might "jinx" the situation and be disappointed? Have you ever endured a deep loss or trauma that made you cynical or hopeless? What if hope is not a flimsy emotion dependent on outcomes, but a robust spiritual practice? Could we instead think of it like a muscle we can flex and strengthen? We recognize that the practice of hope is not easy, especially if you are enduring unthinkable suffering like war, oppression, or famine. Can we practice hope on behalf of those who are weary and worn down? Can our expressions of hope become a life raft for others? This week's texts (Matthew 1:18–25 and Luke 1:46b–55) give us examples of hope in action. Both Mary and Joseph each have a lot they could lose, respectively. Yet, they choose radical acts of hope—and the world is better for it.