



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

DECEMBER 21, 2025 - 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PASTOR CALVIN KONOP, PRESIDING

JESS CHRISTENSON, CYF DIRECTOR

KARINA ROTH, MUSICAL DIRECTOR

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Belonging to Christ, Sharing Christ on the North Shore and Beyond!

INTRODUCTION

Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

PRELUDE

KARINA ROTH

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, whose home is heaven and earth, whose salvation is sure. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Long-expected God, **we confess that we look to ourselves for the peace and security only you can provide. We reach for swords and spears, reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war. We become impatient while waiting and weary of keeping awake. Free us from self-reliance, and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors. Increase our trust in God's timing, and awaken us to your advent among us, that we may abound in the hope you have promised. Amen.**

God judges us not as we deserve, but according to God's own righteousness.

You are freed and forgiven, ✚ saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN

ELW 261


PREPARE THE ROYAL HIGHWAY

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.**


KYRIE

Presider or Cantor, then All




(Invocation) Kyr-i - e, e - le - i - son.

Presider or Cantor, then All



(Invocation) Chris - te, e - le - i - son.

Presider or Cantor, then All



(Invocation) Kyr-i - e, e - le - i - son.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.


Cantor then All




A - men.

GLORIA

Refrain



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and on earth



peace to peo - ple of good will.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. **With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

CHILDREN'S TIME

On the way up the aisles, the children will be collecting coins for the "Holy Cow" fund, which will support ELCA World Hunger. *Find that loose change and hand it to a kiddo!*

FIRST READING

ISAIAH 7:10-16

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." ¹³ Then Isaiah said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also?" ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted."

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM:

PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19

- ¹ Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
- ² **In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**
- ³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
- ⁴ **O LORD God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**
- ⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
- ⁶ **You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**
- ⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
- ¹⁷ **Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**
- ¹⁸ And so will we never turn away from you;
give us life, that we may call upon your name.
- ¹⁹ **Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

SECOND READING

ROMANS 1:1-7

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring

about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name,
⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,
⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL:

MATTHEW 1:18-25

The holy gospel according to St. Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹⁸ Now 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 pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But 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. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

PASTOR CALVIN KONOP

HYMN OF THE DAY

ELW 257

O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

APOSTLES' CREED

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.

PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

In the anticipation of these days, prepare our hearts for your arrival. Stir our spirits through the gifts of artists, musicians, poets, and preachers, as together we proclaim your advent among us. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

The earth breaks forth in singing as it heralds the Messiah's coming. Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in announcing this holy birth. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You send your saving grace and peace to the nations. Lead us in work for justice and care for the common good. We remember and pray for those shot at Bondi Beach and at Brown University; and for the Reiner family. May we meet the Christ-child we seek in the faces of our neighbors. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When tears of grief, exhaustion, or loneliness come, or physical or emotional hurt overwhelms us, come to our aid. Uphold all who are anxious, who know the challenges of depression, or who are ill *especially Karen, Lois, Linda, Luke, Butch, Sarah, Cam, Bruce, Lynn, and Katrina*. We pray now for those we name aloud, or in the silence of our hearts. (*A time of silence*) God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Surround expectant parents and those suffering from infant loss with communities of support. Bless young children and new parents. Guide us in ways that provide safety for all children and those who care for them. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for all who have treasured the gospel and lived in faithful service. Strengthen our earthly journeys until, at the last, your face shines

upon us and we are held in your in love. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. **Amen.**

SHARING THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

OFFERING

BETHLEHEM CHOIR

O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

OFFERING PRAYER

Nourishing God, **you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come. Amen.**

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

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised. All are welcome!

Bethlehem Lutheran Church believes in the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion, and we practice eucharistic hospitality. All persons, whether visiting or a member, are welcomed to Communion.

COMMUNION MUSIC

Lamb of God

ELW page 112

Canticle of the Turning

ELW 723

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in grace unto everlasting life. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

BLESSING

May God who comes among us, Creator, ✝ Redeemer, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

ELW 267

JOY TO THE WORLD

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Keep awake. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

KARINA ROTH



**Join us Christmas Eve (this
Wednesday) as we celebrate our
Savior's birth! December 24th
3:00 & 5:00 pm.**

**A candlelight service of Lessons & Carols
with Holy Communion.**

This week we lift up these members: Karen Shannon, Lois Johnson, Linda Zenk, Luke Gulstrand, Sarah, Cam, Barb and Paul Coe; Lynn & Craig Schulte, Harry Peterson, Phyllis Olson, Joan Bieber, Gene & Barbara Erickson, Bruce & Stacey Johnson, Butch & Rhonda Schulte, Christy Buetow; Clayton Koss; Patty Nelson; Annalisa Winje, Paulina Backstrom; Shae Lindholm; Char Anderson; Stacey Schulte; Hank Ferland; Ramiro Acero; Margaret Dahl; Katrina Crouse; Tom Christiansen.

This week we lift up these members living in the Care Center and Assisted Living: Joan Bieber, Char Anderson, Linda Johnson, Emily Ulhorn, Janet Elmquist, Sally Arntsen, Joyce Hagen, Joyce Drouillard, Anita Gavic. May God walk with these faithful friends as they live their Advent and Christmas journey.

First & Second is once again requesting clothing for displaced people in **Ukraine**, both adults and children. They need **warm outdoor clothing**. Drop items off at First & Second any day--10am to 4pm.

Our Mission of the Month for December will support the **Damiano Center** in Duluth. The Damiano Center "welcomes people in need and serves them without judgment" as the largest emergency meal provider in our region and a source for comprehensive services including clothing, health realization, hygiene access, and more. **Member Challenge:** In addition to financial support, please contribute winter wear to the hat and mitten tree in the narthex. Donations will be delivered to the Damiano Center!



Free Bibles: We have bibles for all ages. Talk to Jess to get one that's right for you.

Choir rehearsals: Sundays at 8:40 am. The choir generally sings on the 1st and 3rd Sundays.

Devotionals: Christ In Our Home Devotions are in the narthex and entryway by the offices. Take a copy. Share a copy.

This Week at Bethlehem:

Sun Dec 21	8:40AM Choir practice
	10:00AM Worship Service & Sunday School
	2:00 PM Care Center
	Worship Service
Mon Dec 22	3:30 PM Girl Scouts
Tues Dec 23	9:30 AM Staff meeting
Wed Dec 24	3:00 PM Christmas Eve
	5:00 PM Christmas Eve
Thurs Dec 25	Christmas Day
	Office is closed
Fri Dec 26	ELCA Holiday
	Office is closed
Sun Dec 28	8:40 AM Choir practice
	10:00 AM Worship Service

Traveler Cards and Local Grocery Cards are available from BLC to members of the community that need help. Please contact the office.

Church Directory Did you get your copy? More are in the Narthex. (Contact Denise in the office with changes or if more are needed Thanks!)

Devotionals are available in the narthex and office entryway.

Annual Reports from all council members, groups, and committee chairs are due to the office **NO LATER THAN JANUARY 5, 2026**

Sign up to help with Worship Services:
Please fill in the sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

No regularly scheduled events will take place at Bethlehem this Wednesday—Saturday. Have a Blessed Christmas!

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CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS
FROM
PASTOR CALVIN, JESS & DENISE



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