

BETHLEHEM EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

SUNDAY SCHOOL AND BIBLE CLASSES.....9:00 A.M.
 SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES.....10:15 A.M.

CHURCH: 1515 SOUTH LOOP 256, PALESTINE, TEXAS 75801
PHONE: (903) 729-6362 **FAX:** (903) 723-7725
WEB: www.belctx.org **EMAIL:** info@belctx.org

“TO GIVE LIGHT TO THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS”

A Warm Welcome to

BETHLEHEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

WELCOME TO CHRISTMAS WORSHIP at Bethlehem Lutheran Church as we gather around the Gospel Word. What a joy and blessing it is to join together with God’s people in this place to worship on Christmas Eve. As we gather for worship this sacred night, we recall with gratitude our Savior’s coming as one of us to save us.

We invite you to visit our website www.belctx.org where you can find out more about Bethlehem Ev. Lutheran Church: an explanation of our worship style, what membership at Bethlehem involves, and how to become a member.

OUR THOUGHTS ON CHRISTMAS EVE most often turn to the message of the Gospel shared in Scripture and Song. The service for this evening is designed around three parts. The first part is the Service of Preparation which includes a time of Corporate Confession and Absolution. The second part is the Service of the Word which includes the Christmas Gospel and Carols. The service tonight reminds us that God came not only to give us a baby in a manger, but a Savior who rescues us from sin and death in His very own sacrifice. The final part is the Service of Light, wherein we are reminded to take the Light of the Gospel of the Grace of Christ and let it shine in others as an attractive witness in the darkness!

Information for WORSHIPERS

- **Candles** - Please make sure you received your candle for this evening’s service. Remember, NEVER tip a lighted candle.
- Everyone is asked to register their **Church Attendance** in the books distributed by the Ushers before the Offering. For our Guests: if you would like to receive information about activities at Bethlehem, please give us your complete address and/or email address.
- A “**Cry Room**” is located at the rear of the south side of the Sanctuary for parents whose children become “restless” during worship. It is important for parents to be sensitive to those in worship around them. The room is accessible from both the Sanctuary and the Narthex. It is equipped with a crib, changing table, rocking chair, viewing window and speaker so mom and dad can attend to their child’s needs and still participate in the service.
- **Holy Communion** will be celebrated tomorrow morning and not this evening. **Information** can be obtained on page 8 and brochures explaining our practice are available in the Narthex.
- **More information** may be found on the back cover of this worship folder.



i = Please stand as you are able **h** = Please be seated

P=Pastor; **C**=Congregation; **All**=Everyone in unison; **LSB** = Lutheran Service Book

The Eve of the Nativity of our Lord
A Festival of Lessons, Carols, and Candlelight
December 24, 2017 ✝ 7:00 p.m.

*“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ...
Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass,
which the Lord hath made known to us.” (St. Luke 2:11, 15b, KJV)*

In The Name of Jesus
✝ The Service of Preparation ✝

PRESERVICE MUSIC

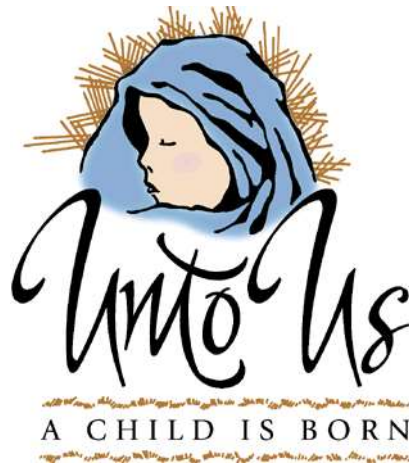
AS WE GATHER

Thoughts for Meditation: Like the shepherds who received a divine invitation to worship the newborn Savior of the world, we come together tonight by divine invitation to worship Him. We will then return to the “field” to which God has called us, glorifying and praising Him for all we have heard and seen.

“To you this day is born in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.” We rejoice in this announcement, and ask again, “Who is this Child born in a manger in Bethlehem? Who is this Child, and why does the entire world stand still this night to hear again the story of His birth? What Child is this whom angels greet with anthems sweet? The Babe, the Son of Mary.”

There are two Christmases — the cultural Christmas and the Christmas of faith. It is important to remember which Christmas is being celebrated in the Church. This is not a celebration of a birthday but of a birth. Into our world of darkness and sin the most unlikely character was born. God came wearing our own human flesh and blood. In Jesus Christ the God of gods and Lord of lords came to be our servant Savior. The One through whom all things were made has now been born of a virgin to manifest the fullness of His life and light to all who will receive Him. This night rings out with the invitation of God to behold His glory and be transformed by the forgiveness, life, hope, and peace which are His glory, revealed in Jesus Christ.

Color of the Day: White - the festival color of the Church. It is reserved for celebrations that reflect themes of purity, light, innocence, holiness, and redemption; including significant aspects of Jesus’ life ... His Birth, Baptism, Transfiguration, and Resurrection.



PRAYER TO AID YOUR WORSHIP PREPARATION

Blessed Christ Child, we kneel reverently at Your manger bed as we celebrate Your birth. How great is Your love for us in becoming a child in order to redeem us from sin and eternal death! We thank You and give You praise for Your grace and mercy. We pray that You would live in our hearts, cleanse us from sin, and help us to serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. Help us to take you, as the Greatest Gift, to all people. For Your name’s sake we ask it. Amen.

PASTORAL GREETING and WELCOME

- P** The Lord be with you!
- C** And also with you!

ENTRANCE HYMN..... “O Come, All Ye Faithful” [LSB #379:1-3]

- 1** 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:

Refrain:

- O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

- 2** Highest, most holy, Light of light eternal,
Born of a virgin, a mortal He comes;
Son of the Father Now in flesh appearing! (*refrain*)

- 3** Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God . . in . . the . . highest: (*refrain*)

Text & Tune: John F. Wade • Text & Tune: Public domain

INVOCATION and CALL TO WORSHIP

The sign of the cross ✝ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

- P** “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
- C** “on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:2)

- P** “For the grace of God that brings salvation
- C** has appeared to all people.” (Titus 2:11)

P Jesus Christ is born!

C Alleluia! Amen!

P On this holy night, we come to adore You, O Christ.

C With devotion in our hearts, with praise on our lips, with joy in our souls, we worship You, Lord Jesus Christ.

P Praise be to You, Father, for sending Your Son.

C Praise be to You, Jesus, for becoming one of us.

P Praise be to You, Holy Spirit, for creating faith in us.

C Amen.

CORPORATE CONFESSION OF SINS

P On this most holy night, we gather in silent awe, preparing to worship the Christ child. As we consider the birth of our Savior, we recognize our great need for Him. We confess before God and to one another that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We examine our lives according to the perfect Law of God and recognize our many sins against God and one another. In humble adoration, we bow before Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, who was sent to be our substitute, sacrifice, and the atonement for the sins of the whole world.

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

P Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Wherefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All O most merciful God, who has given Your only-begotten Son to die for us, have mercy upon us and for His sake grant us remission of all our sins; and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

CONFESSIOAL CANTICLE.....“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” [LSB #357:1,4]

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!



4 O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's tree, Free them from Satan's tyranny
That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save, And give them vic'try o'er the grave.
(refrain)

DECLARATION OF GRACE^①

P The name ‘Jesus’ is a Greek (ἰησοῦς-) rendering of the Hebrew [יֵשׁוּעַ] (Yeshua) and means ‘The LORD (Yahweh) is Salvation.’ He was given this name because He comes to save His people from their sins. His Word and work have been completed perfectly for you and me. Almighty God has had mercy upon us, and has given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe on His name He gives the power to become the children of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

Sts. Luke 1:21; Mark 16:16; John 1:12

Grant this, Lord, unto us all.

C Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE.....“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” [LSB #380]

1 Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic hosts proclaim, “Christ is born of Bethlehem!”

Refrain:

Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

2 Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel! *(refrain)*

3 Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by, Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth. *(refrain)*

^①The Scripture Teaches (St. John 20:23): We should receive the Pastor's declaration of grace as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven. "It is not the voice or word of the man who speaks it, but it is the Word of God, who forgives sin, for it is spoken in God's stead and by God's command" (Augsburg Confession XXV 3).

COLLECT OF THE DAY^①

P Let us pray.

O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

✝ The Service of the Word ✝

The Light Revealed

📖 PROPHECY and FULFILLMENT Isaiah 9:6-7; St. Luke 1:26-33 (ESV)

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name 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 father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."



^①The "Collect" is a short prayer which 'collects' or summarizes the thoughts of the day. The Collects come to us from the rich treasury of the church's heritage.

The Light Received

THE CHRISTMAS ✝ GOSPEL - *In Word and Carols*..... St. Luke 2:1-20 (KJV)

All sing:

**¹ Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
A tender stem hath sprung
Of Jesse's lineage coming
As prophets long have sung,
It came a flow'ret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When halfspent was the night.**

**⁴ O Savior, child of Mary, Who felt our human woe;
O Savior, King of Glory, Who dost our weakness know:
Bring us at length we pray
To the bright courts of heaven, And to the endless day.**

Text: German, 16th Cent. st. 1; Friedrich C Layriz, st 3 • Tune: *Alte Cahtolische Geistliche Kirchengesang*, Köln • Text & Tune: Public domain • LSB #359:1,4

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. ²(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) ³And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) ⁵To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

All sing:

**¹ 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.**

**² 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!**

Text: Phillips Brooks • Tune: Lewis H. Redner • Text & Tune: Public domain • LSB #361:1,2

⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

All sing:

**³ 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.**

**4 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!**

Text: Phillips Brooks • Tune: Lewis H. Redner • Text & Tune: Public domain • LSB #361:3,4

⁸And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

All sing:

**1 Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains,**

Refrain:

Glo . . . ri . . . a in excelsis Deo; Glo . . . ri . . . a in excelsis Deo.

**2 Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be Which inspire your hea'v'nly song? (refrain)**

Text: French Carol; tr. H. F. Hemy • Tune: French Carol • Text & Tune: Public domain • LSB #368:1,2

¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. ¹⁵And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.

All sing:

**3 Come to Bethlehem and see Him Whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King. (Refrain)**

Refrain:

Glo . . . ri . . . a in excelsis Deo; Glo . . . ri . . . a in excelsis Deo.

Text: French Carol; tr. H. F. Hemy • Tune: French Carol • Text & Tune: Public domain • LSB #368:3

¹⁶And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹But Mary kept all these things, and pondered

them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

P This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C **Praise to You, O Christ.**

THE CHRIST CANDLE

[After the reading of the Christmas Gospel, the Christ candle on the Advent wreath^① is lighted.]

CREED - Explanation of the Apostles' Creed: Second Article Luther's Small Catechism

P What is the Second article?

AI **And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

P What does this mean?

AI **I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.**

^①The Advent wreath contains a number of symbols. The evergreen wreath symbolizes eternal life in Christ. The candles are symbolic of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. The act of lighting more candles each week anticipates the imminent coming of Christ. The **Prophecy Candle** announces a period of waiting for our Lord. The **Bethlehem Candle** symbolizes preparing to receive the Christ Child. The **Shepherds' Candle** symbolizes sharing of the news of Christ's birth. The **Angels' Candle** symbolizes Christ's final coming on Judgment Day when He will appear in glory with all His angels. The **Christ Candle** is lighted on Christmas Eve. This central candle signifies that the Light of the World, Jesus, has come.

HYMN OF THE DAY“On Christmas Night All Christians Sing” [LSB #377]



1 On Christ-mas night all Chris - tians sing To hear the news the
 2 Then why should men on earth be so sad, Since our Re - deem - er
 3 When sin de - parts be - fore His grace, Then life and health come
 4 All out of dark-ness we have light, Which made the an - gels



an - gels bring, On Christ - mas night all Chris - tians sing To
 made us glad, Then why should men on earth be so sad, Since
 in its place, When sin de - parts be - fore His grace, Then
 sing this night, All out of dark - ness we have light, Which



hear the news the an - gels bring, News of great joy, news of great
 our Re - deem - er made us glad, When from our sin He set us
 life and health come in its place; An - gels and men with joy may
 made the an - gels sing this night: “Glo - ry to God and peace to



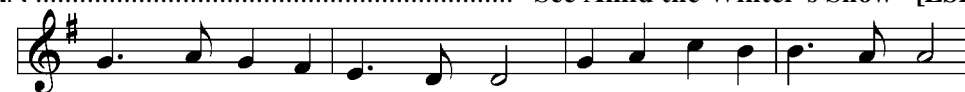
mirth, News of our mer - ci - ful King’s birth.
 free, All for to gain our lib - er - ty?
 sing, All for to see the new - born King.
 men Now and for - ev - er - more. A - men.”

Text & Tune: English • Text & Tune: Public domain

SERMON.....“The Mystery of Christmas” Colossians 1:24-27



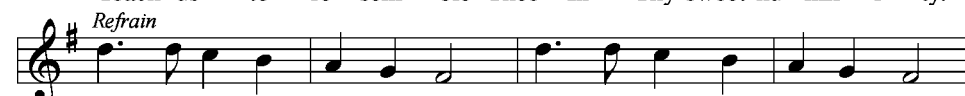
HYMN“See Amid the Winter’s Snow” [LSB #373]



1 See a - mid the win - ter’s snow, Born for us on earth be - low,
 2 Lo, with - in a sta - ble lies He who built the star - ry skies,
 3 Sa - cred In - fant, all di - vine, What a ten - der love was Thine,
 4 Teach, O teach us, ho - ly Child, By Thy face so meek and mild,



See, the gen - tle Lamb ap - pears, Prom - ised from e - ter - nal years.
 He who, throned in height sub - lime, Sits a - mid the cher - u - bim.
 Thus to come from high - est bliss Down to such a world as this!
 Teach us to re - sem - ble Thee In Thy sweet hu - mil - i - ty.



Hail, O ev - er - bless - ed morn! Hail, re - demp - tion’s hap - py dawn!



Sing through all Je - ru - sa - lem: “Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!”

Text: Edward Caswall • Tune: John Goss • Text: & Tune: Public domain

OUR CHRISTMAS OFFERING

This is an act of worship for members and friends of Bethlehem who are moved by God’s love to respond to the Gospel. Guests should not feel obligated to participate.

Before the Offerings are received, everyone is asked to register their Church Attendance. If you are visiting tonight and would like to receive information about activities at Bethlehem, please give us your complete address and/or email.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

[1 Timothy 2:1-2]

(after each petition)

- P** Lord, in Your mercy,
- C** Hear our prayer.

LORD’S PRAYER

St. Matthew 6:9-13, 1 Chronicles 29:11

- All** 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.

✠ The Service of Light ✠

The Light Reflected

CAROL "Away in a Manger" [LSB #365]



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed,
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes,
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask Thee to stay



The lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down His sweet head.
 But lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing He makes.
 Close by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray.



The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,
 I love Thee, Lord Je - sus! Look down from the sky,
 Bless all the dear chil - dren in Thy ten - der care,



The lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
 And stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.
 And take us to heav - en to live with Thee there.

Text: Little Children's Book, Philadelphia, 1885, sts. 1-2; Vineyard Songs, Louisville, 1892,
 st. 3 alt. • Music Williams Kirkpatrick • Text:& Tune: Public domain



SHARING THE LIGHT OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

The center candle of the Advent Wreath symbolizes Christ, the Light of the World.

- P** Jesus Christ is the Light of the world.
- C** **His light scatters the darkness.**
- P** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
2 Corinthians 4:6
- C** **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.**
Ephesians 5:8
- P** Come, Lord Jesus, illumine our hearts.
- C** **That we may carry Your light to a fallen world.**
- P** Let us pray.
We praise and thank You, O God, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom You have enlightened us with a light that never fades. Though night has fallen and darkness covers our part of the world, we are graced with a Dayspring from on high, an everlasting Light, to point us to heaven, to warm our spirits with love, and to lead us in paths of righteousness. O Lord, let Your light so shine in our faith and witness, that others may be led to see the truth brought to light in the birth of our Savior. In Jesus' name.
- C** **Amen.**
- P** As you have received God's gift of Christ into your life, receive now the Light of the Christ Candle and carry it forth into the world. To all you meet and with all you share life, offer the love and mercy of the Christ Child. And know that this light of love and mercy which you carry will not go out and will not be overcome,
- C** **for it is the true light which God gives to enlighten the world.**
[The Pastor lights the candles of the Ushers with specific people and needs in mind.]
- P** Come, Lord Jesus, illumine our hearts
- C** **That we may carry Your light to a fallen world.**
[The light is carried to the congregation. Please tip your unlit candle into the flame of a burning candle. NEVER tip a lighted candle.]

AFTER ALL candles have been lighted, the Sanctuary will be darkened and we will stand to sing.

CAROL “Silent Night, Holy Night” [LSB #363]

1 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.

2 Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing, Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!

³ *[without accompaniment.]*
Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love’s pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth;
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr • Tune: Franz Gruber • Text & Tune: Public domain

Hand candles are extinguished after the lights are restored.

BLESSING and DISMISSAL

Numbers 6:24-26

P Almighty God, who sent His Son to take our nature upon Him, bless you in this holy season, scatter the darkness of sin, and brighten your heart with the light of His holiness.

God, who sent His angels to proclaim the glad news of the Savior's birth, fill you with joy, and make you heralds of the Gospel.

God, who in the Word made flesh joined heaven to earth and earth to heaven, give you His peace and favor.

Go with the blessing of God, the Father, the ✝ Son, and the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

RECESSIONAL CAROL “Joy to the World” [LSB #387]

1 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.

2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 No more let sins and sorrows 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.

4 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.

Text: Isaac Watts • Tune: G.F. Handel • Text & Tune: Public domain

SILENT PRAYER

POSTLUDE

DISMISSAL BY USHERS

To God Alone Be Glory

“ . . .the highest worship in the Gospel is the desire to receive the forgiveness of sins, grace and righteousness.” (Apology^① of the Augsburg Confession, Art IV)



SERVING TONIGHT

Organist: Mary Bowden

Acolyte: Kristen Harris

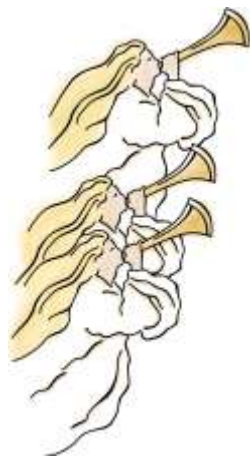
Altar Guild: Lori Fortner & Dot James

Duty Elder: Gil Daughtrey

OUR CHRISTMAS DAY DIVINE SERVICE of Scripture readings, carols, and Holy Communion is tomorrow morning at 10:15 a.m. Information about the Sacrament entitled, **HOLY COMMUNION – A CLARIFYING WORD** can be found on the next page of this worship folder. If you are visiting and have not communed with us previously, or if you are an inactive member and have not communed here in the last 3 months, our Pastor would be pleased to speak with you about this after tonight’s service.

OUR THANKS to all those who helped purchase poinsettias to decorate the chancel.

A REMINDER CONCERNING THE CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING: It is the tradition here at Bethlehem that this offering is divided by the Board of Elders as Christmas gifts to the Pastor, Organists, Pianist, and Church Secretary.



HOLY COMMUNION - A CLARIFYING WORD



Bethlehem congregation confesses and affirms what the Bible teaches, namely that in this sacred meal Jesus Christ is truly present with His body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine, given for the forgiveness of sins.

Our Church practices Closed Communion^②, the accepted practice of the Church since the Apostolic age. Participation in the Lord’s Supper at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, where Lutheran teaching and practice are the definitive marks of our identity, is a privilege ordinarily reserved for confirmed members, in good standing, of congregations in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and synods with whom we are in Altar Fellowship (in North America: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti, Lutheran Church-Canada and American Association of Lutheran Churches). Such individuals have been instructed and through faith confess the teachings of these Synods as the true and correct exposition of Holy Scripture.

The most loving and honest practice, when this instruction has not been received and/or this confession cannot be made, is for an individual not to commune. The intent of this practice is not to offend but to honor and obey the Word of Christ. If an individual would find it meaningful to come forward during the distribution to receive a spoken blessing, the officiant can be signaled to that effect by keeping your hands beneath the communion rail.

Since participation in this Sacrament is based on complete agreement and unity in all doctrine, and since Christian Churches vary widely in their teachings even about the Lord’s Supper, **first time visitors desiring to commune are asked to speak to the Pastor prior to participation in and reception of the Blessed Sacrament.**

Lutherans who are inactive (i.e., not currently members in good standing), who have not communed in the last three (3) months or more, and/or guests who are formerly “Missouri Synod” should also speak to the Pastor prior to coming to the Altar. Scripture teaches that pastors are shepherds and overseers, who have divine authority and “a terrible responsibility” being held “accountable for [the] flock” (Ezekiel 34:10), especially when it comes to distributing the Lord’s body and blood. Our thanks to you for honoring the Scriptural teaching and practice.

All communicants are asked to Register by signing the Registration sheet in the Narthex. Please note that in registering you affirm that you have examined yourself (1 Cor. 11:27-28; 2 Cor. 13:5) that you acknowledge, confess, and repent of your sins (including the sins of irregular worship and cohabitation outside of marriage), and by God’s grace, as the Catechism also teaches, intend to change such sinful behavior in thought, word, and deed and live a godly life in accord with God’s Word. If this is not your intent and you commune, you do so untruthfully and will not receive the Lord’s Supper to your spiritual benefit, but to your great harm (1 Cor. 11:29).

For those who have not espoused the doctrines of the Lutheran Church (or those Lutherans who are inactive) and wish to receive the body and blood of Jesus as He reveals Himself to us in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the essentials of teaching, learning, and confessing can be obtained from the Pastoral Ministry at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church. Inform the Pastor of your desire and he will assist you.

Communicants are ushered forward by row. Please receive the host upon an open palm. The Chalice (or common cup) is available at every table. The Duty Elder will offer the individual cups and is followed by the Pastor who will offer the Chalice. Please tip the base of the chalice yourself to avoid spillage. The individual cups in the center ring contain de-alcoholized wine for those who have so requested. You may direct questions to the Pastor or Duty Elder.

That which we value highly, we administer faithfully!

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Prayers for use before and after the reception of the Sacrament may be found on the inside front cover of our Hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book*.

^① In theological treatises the word “apology” means “a defense of”.

^② **Closed Communion** is the Scriptural and historic practice of limiting participation in the Lord’s Supper to those who have been catechized (instructed), formally admitted to the Altar after being examined in the truths of the Christian faith, and who have promised to believe, teach and confess all that the church in which they will commune believes, teaches and confesses.



BETHLEHEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH



A member congregation of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

The Reverend David L. Adler, Pastor

We extend a warm welcome to our Visitors and Guests. We are happy to have you attend our worship services and Bible Classes. If you are a local resident, searching for a church home, we invite you to consider membership in our congregation. Our Pastor would be happy to discuss this with you. If you would please complete the Church Attendance Register (distributed by the Ushers before the Offering), we can keep you informed about activities and events at Bethlehem. Please remember to include your email address.

Information for WORSHIPERS

- **Large Print Bulletins** are available from the Ushers.
- **Flash Photography** is considered inappropriate in worship at all times, please stage your photos after worship.
- **Pagers, Phones & Movement** ... In consideration of others, please make certain that all pagers and cellular telephones are either turned off or are in the "silent" mode. Thank you. During the reading of Scripture, the Sermon, or any Prayers (including the Confession of Sins), we respectfully ask that movements in and out of the Sanctuary be kept to a minimum. We do understand that there are emergency situations that may arise during these times. Out of respect for God's Word, each other, and the pastoral office, if you must leave during the Sermon, before you re-enter the Sanctuary **P.L.E.A.S.E.** consider the following options: 1) sitting in the very back pews or 2) remaining in the Narthex (entryway) until the Sermon is finished ... **Parents**, please instruct your children and youth in this regard. Thank you for honoring God's Word.
- **Prayer Requests** - may be made using the forms in the Narthex. Requests made before the service begins will be included in that service. You may hand it to an Usher or the Pastor. Please keep us updated on your requests.
- **Flower Dedications** ... Using the signup sheet in the Narthex, please make your flower dedications at least a week in advance so that we may properly acknowledge them. Place your flower offering of \$25 per vase in any envelope marked FLOWERS.
- **The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion)** is normally celebrated on the first, third and fifth Sundays of the month, as well as on Ash Wednesday, Holy (Maundy) Thursday, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. We ask all Guests to introduce themselves to and speak with the Pastor about our doctrine and practice regarding Holy Communion before approaching the Altar. We encourage you to arrive early enough to allow time to speak with the Pastor. All Communicants are asked to register using the form in the Narthex.



+ + +

COPYRIGHT NOTICES & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the English Standard Version © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, and are used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version (public domain). Scripture quotations marked NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society, and are used by permission. All rights reserved. The worship service is reprinted from the Lutheran Service Book © 2006 Concordia Publishing House and is used by permission. All hymns are listed with copyrights. All other hymns, to the best of our knowledge, are Public Domain. Any hymns marked "LW" are from Lutheran Worship © 1982 by Concordia Publishing House, and are used by permission. Hymns marked "OLNet" are reprinted under OneLicense.net #A-708186. Liturgy License #12570. LSBHymnLicense.net #100012570.



POINSETTIAS

to beautify God's House were given to the Glory of God by:

- Rev & Peggy Adler (in memory of our fathers: Albert A. Adler & Joe A. Clark)
- Jeff & De Anne Atkinson
- Jody & Mary Bowden
- Jim & Neva Broad (2)
- Roy & Connie Eppeland (in memory of Alex Pitcher)
- Roland & Audrey Felder (2)
- Mike & Sheila Flynn (in memory of their parents)
- Juanita Garcia (in memory of Roberto)
- Burl & Debbie Gruetzner (in memory of Walt & Ruby Gruetzner)
- Aaron & Matthew Jackson
- Devin & Melanie Jackson
- George & Betty Nelson
- Chaplain James & Betty Ristvedt
- Lela Sands
- Paul & Pat Stephenson (in memory of their parents)
- Megan Taylor
- Paul & Jo Ann Tugwell (in memory of Lillie Bigott)
- Steve & Mary Unk

