

Third Sunday of Advent

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

December 14, 2025

Sunday 10:00 a.m.



Welcome to All! We are glad that you are able to worship with us today. **Please fill out a connection card in the pews if you like.** During the service, we will sit or stand in reverence to our Lord. Please do what is physically comfortable and reverent for you. For those who are unable to receive Communion near the altar and wish to have the Pastor administer it at your seat, please obtain a red and white card from one of the ushers and hold it up at Communion time to alert the Pastor. If you or a little one would like to receive a blessing instead of Holy Communion, we invite you to come forward and cross your arms at the time of Communion. Please feel free to introduce yourself to our Pastor and fill in your name, address, etc in the guest book near the entrance to the sanctuary.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship – Setting 3, page 138

Pre-Worship Music/Announcements

Prelude

Lighting of the Advent Candle - Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah (3rd verse only, below) ELW 240

Light three candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway for the King of glory.

GATHERING

Confession and Forgiveness

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose home is heaven and earth, whose salvation is sure.

C: Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Long-expected God,

C: ... 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.

(continued on next page)

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.

P: 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.
C: **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn *Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding! ELW 246*

Greeting

A: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **C: And also with you.**

Kyrie (lead by Pastor Paul)

S 138

In peace, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

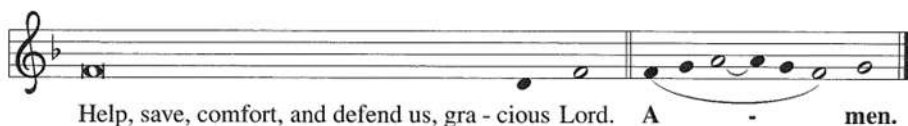
Lord, have mer - cy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,

and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



Hymn of Praise

Glory to God

S 139

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

All
Lord God, heav - en - ly King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther,

we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.

Lord Je-sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take a-way the sin of the world: have mer - cy on us;

you are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.

For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,



Prayer of the Day

A: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

A: Let us pray together... **C: Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD

First Lesson

Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus 2 it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.
3 Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. 4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."
5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; 6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; 7 the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes. 8 A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. 9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.
10 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

5 Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help, whose hope is in the Lord their God;

6 who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them; who keeps promises forever;

7 who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger. The Lord sets the captive free.

8 The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.

9 The Lord cares for the stranger; the Lord sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.

10 The Lord shall reign forever, your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!

Second Lesson

James 5:7-10

In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! 10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the

words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

C: ...Glory to you, O Lord...

2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" 4 Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. 6 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." 7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. 9 What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' 11 "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Pastor Paul Busekist

Hymn of the Day

Prepare the Royal Highway

ELW 264

Apostle's 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 Intercession: response after each petition: **“Hear our prayer.”** (*Before prayer*) A: 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. (*Conclusion*) P: Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. C: **Amen.**

Sharing of the Peace

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

MEAL

Offering (*Please be seated.*)

Offering Song:

Zeke Clemons

Offertory (*Please stand*) ***Come Now, O Prince of Peace*** **ELW 247**

Offering Prayer

A: Let us pray together.

C: **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

S 144a

The Lord be with you. And al - so 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.

Great Thanksgiving (*continued*)

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy...we praise your name and join their unending hymn...

Holy, Holy, Holy

S 144b

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

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.

P: The gifts of God for the people of God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

***Please note: Gluten-free wafers and white grape juice are available.*

Communion

Lamb of God

S 146

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the



Communion Hymns

*Now We Join in Celebration
For the Bread Which You Have Broken*

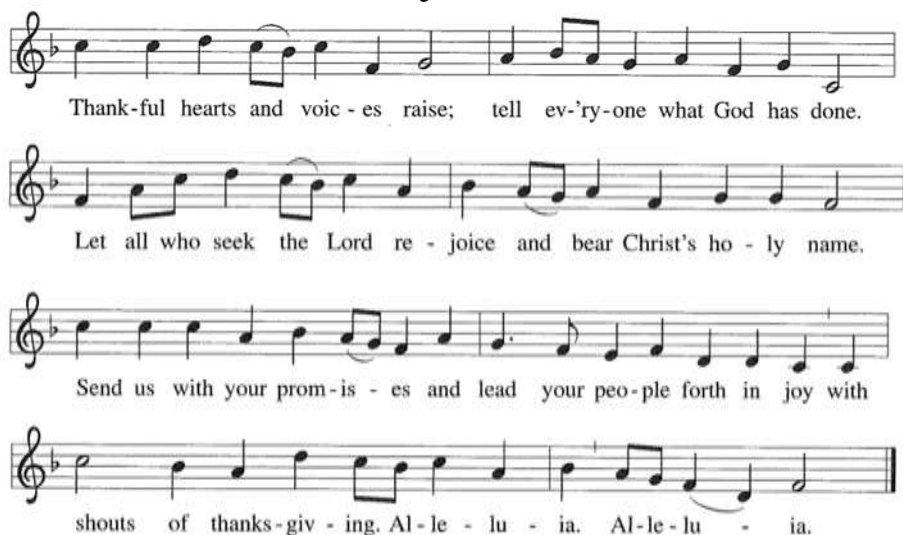
ELW 462
ELW 494

Post-Communion Blessing

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **C: Amen.**

Post-Communion Canticle

Thankful Hearts



Prayer after Communion

A: Let us pray. 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.

C: Amen.

SENDING

Blessing

P: May God who comes among us, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always. **C: Amen.**

Dismissal

A: Go in peace. Stay Awake.

C: Thanks be to God.

Bethlehem December 14, 2025
LUTHERAN CHURCH

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

1050 Peninsula Drive
Traverse City, MI 49686
(231) 947-9880
www.bethlehemtc.org

12/15—Fran White

12/17—Marilyn Johns

12/20—Summer Grayson-Ogden

Worship Servants for December 14

Preaching & Presiding—Pastor Paul Busekist

Assisting Minister—Doug Cunningham

Lector—Nancy Ammann

Musicians: Rick Church, Zeke Clemons, Phil & Denice Bossardet, Pr. Paul

Today's altar flowers are donated: *By Sherri Helman & Family in Memory of Jim Helman*

Hospitality: Dan/Laura Hahn

A/V—Barbara Oster /Jim Hinds

Cookies/Coffee—Diane Cunningham / Mary Ann Tanis

Welcome Table— Kathi Ivany

Bell Ringer—Gail Goldsmith

Front Door Monitor—Gail Goldsmith

Altar Guild—Mary Ann Tanis / Gail Goldsmith

Staff Christmas Gifts It is that time of year to give thanks to the Bethlehem employees with a Christmas Gift. They work so hard to keep our church running smoothly. Staff include: Pastor Paul, Barbara, Phil, Alanna, Tony, David and Zeke, with added gifts of appreciation to Peggy, Kate, Phil and Denice for all of their extra volunteer services. If you would like to give a monetary donation, please place cash or check in an envelope with "Staff Gift" written on the envelope. You may:

1. Place the envelope in the offering plate/vase,
2. Give to any Council Member.

Your gift should be received by **TODAY** December 14th in time for the Staff Christmas Party. Thank you for your generosity.

Social Ministry and Outreach Group Activity Super Saturday February 7, 2026 -

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency. More information is in the narthex. We need your name if you can volunteer. The reason for this early notice is that DHS needs to run a background check, which is required for those volunteering. They need the information well in advance of the event.

Project Feed The Kids is in need of donations. .Please see our website is <https://projectfeedthekids.org> for ways to help. Thank you, we appreciate any help.

The bell choir will meet on December 15th at 3:30.

Sunday School and Sunday's Adult Education hold their classes at 9:15am on Sunday. **The Wednesday Zoom Bible Study** meets at 1:30pm with a study of the book *Life of Pi*. On December 17th, the group will watch the movie at 1:30pm in the Youth Room (will not be on Zoom). All are welcome.

Advent and Christmas Services

December 18: 7:00pm Blue Christmas Service (will be Live-streamed) with special Blue Christmas dinner at 5:45pm

December 24: 4:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with emphasis on Children (will be Live-streamed)

December 24: 7:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 18th Blue Christmas Advent Dinner Menu: Roast Turkey with Dressing and Gravy, Mashed Potatoes, Buttercup Winter Squash, Mixed Greens Salad, Corn Casserole, Roast Mixed Vegetables, Dinner Rolls, Cranberry Sauce, Spiced Dried Fruit Chutney, and A Variety of Christmas Cookies Most items have gluten/dairy free options

We are going caroling on Sunday Dec. 21! All (kiddos and adult) are welcome to go, the more the merrier! We plan on meeting shortly after service and there will be pizza. After that we will leave around 12:15-12:30. If you don't want to do pizza, just show up at church and we will leave! Please let Peggy Burns know if you can come and if you have any dietary needs. **It would be wonderful if this could be done by today December 14th.** You can text me at 231-392-6913 or email me at cobaltblues2003@yahoo.com!

Today's Prayer Recipients: Please send any changes or additions by email to admin@bethlehemtc.org

Harper Wiemerslage,
Jerry Hill,
John Block,
Roy DuMond,
Mary Woodring,
Norm Fred,
Lynn,
Steve,
Sherry,
Bob,
Carol Bowes,
Ron Hellenga,

John Stretlien,
Judy Fenton,
Cindy Hitesman,
Richard Fernholz,
Julie Lapeer,
Lee,
Chris,
Dale and Cheryl,
Leroy,
Julie Barrett,
Patti,
Sharon,

Kyle,
Ben,
Marianne,
Christine,
Janet,
Cheryl
Pat
Richard
Lauren
Carol
David

The church calendar is below. Please be sure to notify the office (admin@bethlehemtc.org or 231.947.9880) to be sure that your group is of the calendar.

Sunday, December 14

9:15am—Adult Education (YR)

9:15am—Sunday School

10:00am—Traditional Worship Service (S)

Monday, December 15

2:30pm—Choir (S)

3:00pm—Chair Yoga (FH)

3:30pm—Bell Choir (S)

3:30pm—Grief Group (YR)

Tuesday, December 16

Bulletin articles due today

9:00am—Property Work Group

9:00am—LWR Quilters (FH)

12:00pm—Sarah Circle (Library)

6:30pm—Council Meeting (FH)



Wednesday, December 17

11:30am—Music Rehearsal (S)

1:30pm—Zoom Book & Bible Study/*Life of Pi*
movie (YR)

Thursday, December 18

5:30pm—ACA (Library)

5:45pm—Blue Christmas Meal (FH)

7:00pm—Blue Christmas Service (S)

Friday, December 19

STAR Articles due

10:00am—Sew Pieceful (FH)

1:00pm—Lehto SG (Library)

6:00pm—LifeRing Recovery Group (Library)

Saturday, December 20

8:00pm—AA (FH)

Sunday, December 21

9:15am—Adult Education (YR)

9:15am—Sunday School

10:00am—Worship Service (S)

11:30am—Pizza/Christmas Caroling