

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025 – 10am

Modern Worship, ELW Setting 3



Prelude Music

Announcements

Lighting of the Advent Candle—Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah (4th verse only, below) ELW 240

Light four candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.
He is coming, tell the glad tidings. Let your lights be shining!

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.

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 Song:

Advent Hymn

Heaven sent a child to save us, light for all to see; helpless baby, mighty Savior, holy mystery.
Unto us a son is given, born in Bethlehem; Lamb of God, the Light of nations, God in flesh became.

Watching, waiting, longing for the day when His people would glorify the Name above all names.

For the joy that lay before Him, chose our agony; Jesus bore the wrath of Calv'ry, washing sinners clean.
Our Messiah, Christ our brother, word of God in flesh, loosed the chains that held us captive, broke the bonds of death.

Watching, waiting, longing for the day when His people would glorify the Name above all names.

(continued on next page)

So we wait with expectation for His Advent here. Bride of Christ, His word proclaimed for all the world to hear. He will come in clouds descending at the trumpet sound; In the light of Christ our Savior, ev'ry knee will bow.

Born in a manger, dying on a tree. Rising Easter morning to set his people free.
We're watching, waiting, longing for the day when all nations will glorify the Name above all names.

Greeting

P: 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

A: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

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

C: Lord, have mercy.

A: 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.

C: Lord, have mercy.

A: For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

A: Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. C: Amen.

Prayer of the Day

A: Let us pray together,

C: 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 Message

Pr. Paul

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-16

An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!

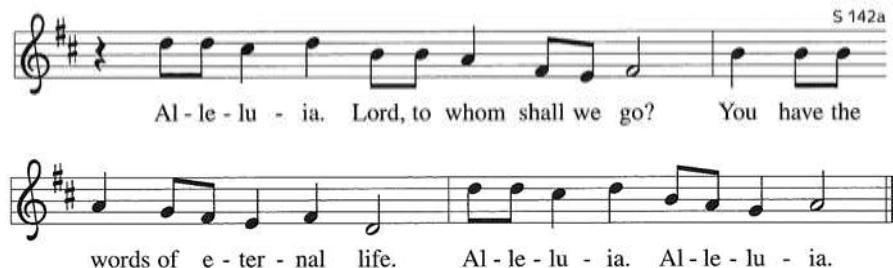
10 The Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, 11 “Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” 12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.” 13 Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary 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.”

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.

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

P: A reading from... C: 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.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Pastor Paul Busekist

Song of the Day:

Savior of the Nations, Come

ELW 263

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 the Church / Sign of the Peace

Offering / Offering Song:

Zeke Clemons

Offertory:

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.

Words of Institution

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.

Communion (Please note: gluten-free wafers and white grape juice cups are available)

Communion Songs:

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness
Blessed Be the God of Israel

ELW 251

ELW 250

Final 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.

Sending Song:

Joy to the World (Unspeakable Joy)

Joy to the world! the Lord is come; Let earth receive her King. Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and heaven and nature sing

Joy to the world! the Savior reigns; Let all their songs employ. While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy

Joy, unspeakable joy! An overflowing well; no tongue can tell! Joy, unspeakable joy! It rises in my soul, never lets me go!

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!

Joy, unspeakable joy! An overflowing well; no tongue can tell! Joy, unspeakable joy! It rises in my soul, never lets me go!

Dismissal

A: Go in peace. Keep awake.

C: Thanks be to God.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

12/22—Inga Nyquist
12/28—Renae Wells

12/28—Jane Fred
12/28—Kathryn Thiel

Worship Servants for December 21

Preaching & Presiding—Pastor Paul Busekist

Assisting Minister—Barbara Wright

Lector—Tim Goebel

Musicians: David Husser, Zeke Clemons, Phil & Denice Bossardet, Pr. Paul

Today's altar flowers are donated: *By Bonnie Gamble in Memory of the Baesch & Halachukas Families*

Hospitality: Susie Burton

A/V—Jim Monroe / Barbara Oster

Cookies/Coffee—Diane Cunningham / Mary Ann Tanis

Welcome Table—Volunteer

Bell Ringer—Tim Goebel

Front Door Monitor—Tina Dohm

Altar Guild—Kate Holtfreter / Barbara Oster

Christmas Services

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

December 24: 7:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

We are going caroling this afternoon. 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! Even if you did not sign up, all (kiddos and adult) are welcome to go, the more the merrier!

2026 Giving Envelopes are Ready for Pick Up I am happy to report that the 2026 giving envelopes are ready! They are available for pick up at your convenience. The boxes are in the narthex in alphabetical order by last name. Please pick yours up as soon as possible so you will have them ready for January giving. If you have any questions or need help, please contact me during regular business hours. Your Bookkeeper, Phil Anderson

Dear Members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church,

It's that time of year when the Finance Committee and the Church Council is preparing a budget for the next year. To help forecast income for 2026, please return your 2026 pledge card, if you have not already done so.

We are all grateful to have such abundant blessings with our location and our faithful members. It's important to remain dedicated to our Christian faith and do our best to follow through on our commitments. With love & kindness, if you have not fulfilled your 2025 pledge, we ask also that you do so before the end of the year. Thank you for prayerfully considering this appeal.

We appreciate your support and are grateful for all you do to make Bethlehem Lutheran Church a thriving community of believers.

Jim Monroe

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Financial Secretary

Phil Anderson

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Bookkeeper

Giving Statements Available Your individual giving statements are now in your mailbox in the Narthex. The statement covers giving from January 1st through September 30th. Please pick them up at your convenience. To save on postage, I will mail out the ones not picked up by mid December. Thank you for your generous support for the programs and ministries of your church. We are all blessed by your faithful giving. Your Bookkeeper

Chair Yoga will continue meeting at 3:00pm on Mondays but not on Wednesdays. It is still \$5 per class

Choir News: The choir has resumed its practice schedule on Mondays at 2:30. Come and join in the musical fun!

Creation Care Team update: our next Creation Care core team meeting will be Monday, January 12th at 6pm in the Youth Room. Subcommittee members may be meeting before as needed. Contact Paul Wiemerslage, Tina Dohm or Pastor Paul for any updates.

Sunday School and Sunday's Adult Education hold their classes at 9:15am on Sunday. The Wednesday Zoom Book/Bible Study meets at 1:30pm. The group will take a break for Christmas and New Year's and will start back on January 14th with a study of James with the book *James: Walking in Wisdom* by Lydia Brownback. Please see either Pr Paul or Barbara for more information.

Social Ministry/Outreach update: Please step forward to volunteer when a call is put out for assistance with any of these activities:

Jan 24-28 Safe Harbor under the leadership of Tom Rockne.

Feb. 7 Northwest Michigan Action Agency Super Saturday event at the Career Tech Center on Parsons Rd (Carolyn Mann or Nancy Ammann)

Any time-If you feel the spirit calling you to volunteer at Jubilee House contact Pastor Derek Quinn at 231 947 2330 or email dquinn@gracetc.org.

Pray and consider: Could we field a group of 6 volunteers to prepare a community meal the 4th Sunday of the month at Grace Episcopal?

If questions, concerns, or ideas contact Cindy Monroe or Jim Hutchison. Next meeting for the full group will be scheduled in late Feb or early March.

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.

BOOK CLUB NEWS: The next meeting for the book club will be 5:30 on Jan 14 at The Cottage. We will be discussing *The Winemaker's Wife*, an historical novel by Kristin Harmel. If interested in attending please contact Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net.

SAVE YOUR PAPER SACKS: Please check the nooks and crannies of your home for paper sacks. The Baby Pantry fills requests from preschool teachers for their students whose parents cannot make it to the pantry. Paper sacks are the perfect size to place the needed items for each child. Just place your bags on the Care table in the coat room. Thank you!!

IMPORTANT NOTICE: We often find the front door and/or the kitchen door unlocked when there is no one in the building. Please be sure that the doors are locked when you leave.

Please Note:

Barbara Oster/Administrative Assistant works 9:00am-2:30pm on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday

Phil Anderson/Bookkeeper works 8:30am-12:30pm on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Please note that Phil will work these days until next summer

Alanna Steffunick-Boomer/Ministry Coordinator is on maternity leave. She will return in early January

Looking for a link to last month's full Council minutes? Type this address/url into your web browser to get the latest approved minutes from Council: bethlehemtc.org/Council-Minutes OR you may call the office to request a copy.

Prayer Requests:

- Prayer Chain: Please contact Jan Stretlien at jstretlien@gmail.com or 231-947-3265
- Prayers read from the altar: Please call Administrative Assistant in the church office 231-947-9880 or admin@bethlehemtc.org

Celebrate a new child in your life with a rose on the baptismal font! Cost \$10.00 per rose. Contact Barbara Oster at beo6475@yahoo.com or 231.668.7038.

Norm Fred has helped a previously homeless couple for a few years. They are proud people and do not like to be given charity but they will accept help in the form of donated cans that they can recycle for money. Please bring in your recyclables in for them. Leave them in plastic bags by the garage. These are nice people. There, but for the Grace of our God, go we.

Are you looking for the Caring Table for your donations? It is now located inside the coat room to the right. Your donations are very much appreciated.

LOST AND FOUND: If you lose something in the church building, please check our Lost and Found box located in the Coat Room. Also, if you find something, please put it in the box.

Yarn Available: There is yarn available free for the taking located in the cabinets located under the mailboxes in the Narthex. Take what you need.

Have something important going on at Bethlehem that you'd like others to know about? Maybe a Small Group? A Club Event? Feature it on the Screen Announcements, weekly emails and on our Facebook Events Page! If there is something you'd like featured or included in any of these, please reach out to admin@bethlehemtc.org until Alanna returns from maternity leave. If you are not getting the weekly emails for any reason, please contact Barbara at the admin email above.

Please consider signing up for Altar Flowers for a Sunday service. Please use the sign-up poster in the Narthex by signing on the date you request. Then fill out a pink slip with the necessary information and place it and a check for \$45 (This is a new amount.) The check should be payable to Bethlehem Lutheran Church or BLC in the offering plate on Sunday morning (Preferable) or during the week, in the Administrative Assistant's mailbox near the church office entrance. You may select either "in honor" or "in memory" or "to celebrate". If someone has already signed on the date you would like, feel free to add your name – we welcome more than one on a Sunday.

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

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 21

9:15am—Adult Education (YR)
9:15am—Sunday School
10:00am—Worship Service (S)
11:30am—Pizza/Christmas Caroling

Monday, December 22

2:30pm—Choir (S)
3:00pm—Chair Yoga (FH)

Tuesday, December 23

Bulletin articles due today

9:00am—Property Work Group

Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

Church Office closes at Noon

4:00pm—Christmas Eve Service (S)
7:00pm—Christmas Eve Service (S)



Thursday, December 25

Merry Christmas

Church Office is Closed

Friday, December 26

6:00pm—LifeRing Recovery Group (Library)

Saturday, December 27

8:00pm—AA (FH)

Sunday, December 28

9:15am—Adult Education (YR)
9:15am—Sunday School
10:00am—Taize & Carols Service (S)

