

## BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Vibrantly open to the spirit, Bethel Lutheran Church seeks to serve God  
and its neighbors by joyfully living into the good news of Jesus Christ.*

Sunday, December 17, 2023  
Fourth Sunday of Advent

Rev. Susan Engholm, Interim Pastor  
Jan Smith, Accompanist

### GATHERING

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

Prelude

Gathering Songs     "Isn't He?" GB #94  
                              "I Wonder If He Knew" GB #95

Welcome and Announcements

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who opens the heavens and draws near to us with salvation. **Amen.**

God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance.

Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.

Everlasting God,

**You love justice and you hate wrongdoing. We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness that make us reluctant to work against oppression. We are complicit in systems of exploitations. We choose comfort over courage. We are careless with creation's bounty. Look upon us with mercy. Turn our hearts again to you. Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways for the sake of our waiting world. Amen.**

Hear these words of assurance: God clothes you with garments of salvation and covers you with robes of righteousness. In the tender compassion of ☩ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. God's covenant is eternal, and God's blessing rests upon us all. **Amen.**

Song of Praise     "Joy To the World!" GB #97

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Pete and Jean Hallberg

Readings for Lighting of the Advent Wreath written by Pastor Natalia Terfa

Our verse for this fourth week of Advent is from John's Gospel, chapter 13, verse 34: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another." Today we light the fourth candle of Advent, the candle of love...Let us pray: **Gracious God, as we wait for you to arrive, we pray that we may love as you love. Help us to remember how much you love us, and give us the courage to share that love with those around us. Amen.**

Bethel Choir     "Prepare Ye!" arr. by Anna Laura Page and Jean Anne Shafferman  
Children's Sermon

## WORD

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

First Reading      2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16    The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**  
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26    (read responsively)  
Second Reading      Romans 16:25-27    The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**  
Gospel Song      "Open Our Eyes" GB #5  
Gospel Reading      Luke 1:26-38    The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**  
Sunday School Program      "The Amazing Story of Christmas"  
Prayers      Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**  
Peace      The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

Offering  
Offering Song      "It Is Well With My Soul" GB #40  
Offertory Prayer

**God our provider, by your merciful hand abundance springs up from the earth. Receive and bless these gifts of our own bounty. Let them be a sign of your steadfast love and faithfulness for all people, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Words of Institution  
Lord's Prayer (ELW p. 112)  
Communion  
Communion Song      "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" ELW #257  
Prayer after Communion  
Blessing

The God of peace bless you, the love of Christ sustain you in hope, and the anointing of the Spirit + remain upon you now and forever.

**Amen.**

## SENDING

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

Benediction Song      "The Lord Bless Thee" GB #25  
Sending Song      "Go Tell It on the Mountain" GB #96  
Sending Words      Go in peace. Keep awake.  
**Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

# WELCOME

Bethel Lutheran Church—December 17, 2023—Fourth Sunday of Advent

**OUR MISSION STATEMENT**—Vibrantly open to the Spirit, Bethel Lutheran Church seeks to serve God and its neighbors by joyfully living into the good news of Jesus Christ.

**QUESTIONS OR REQUESTS?** Please contact the church office at 320-395-2125 at [bethellutheranlp@gmail.com](mailto:bethellutheranlp@gmail.com). For emergency pastoral care needs, please contact the church office first, and if nobody answers, call Interim Pastor Susan Engholm at 320-293-1811. Bulletin submissions due: Wednesdays at noon. Newsletter deadline: 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. **GivePlus Text 866-298-7547**

SIMPLY GIVING offers convenience for you and much needed consistency for Bethel! Try it this summer! If you have questions contact Stacy Meyer, Financial Secretary, at [finsec@lpbethel.org](mailto:finsec@lpbethel.org).

## TODAY

- **Hearing assist devices are available**: speak to an usher for assistance
- **Birthday Party for Jesus!** Everyone is welcome! Meet in the fellowship hall immediately following worship!

## MONDAY (12/18)

- **Bible Study**: 9:00 am—This will be the last Monday Bible study with Pastor Susan.

## WEDNESDAY (12/20)

- **Choir practice**: 5:45 pm during Advent
- **Light of the World Evening Prayer**: 6:30 pm

## SUNDAY (12/24) Christmas Eve

- **Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship (w/communion)**: 5:00 pm (NO 9:00 am worship service)

**DECEMBER 31**: Pastor Susan's last day—a reception will follow the worship service.

**NOTE**: Please contact the office if your contact information changes.

**DUE NOW**: Annual Reports (Financial Reports are due no later than January 10, 2024.)

**SAVE THE DATE**: January 28, 2024—Installation service for Pastor Molly Wills with Synod Minister Heather Culuris. Bethel's Annual Congregational meeting immediately following the worship service. A catered dinner will follow the meeting at 11:00 am.

**A reminder to continue remembering your Holiday Secret Pal** between now and Christmas in small, fun, and meaningful ways! Enjoy this season of giving!

**Everyone is invited to the Birthday Party for Jesus Today!** Head downstairs immediately following worship to the fellowship hall! Come for coffee, birthday cake, games, crafts, cookie decorating, kid's treat bags and gift wrapping for local families we are gifting this Christmas season.

**Thank you** to those who donated toward the kid's treat bags! **Thank you** Sunday school kids, teachers, Sunday school parents, guardians, and helpers, song leaders, and musicians for your contributions to our worship service today!

**Ordination of Molly Wills:** Sunday, January 7, 2024, noon, Atonement Lutheran Church, 1144 29th AVE N, St. Cloud, MN 56303. There will be a get together with refreshments following the service. Pastor Molly will begin at Bethel on 1/24/24.

**Bethel to host the Youth Task Force Social** on Wednesday, January 10, 2024. This is an opportunity for area youth to get to know supportive adults in the community. Students will arrive at 12:45 pm to enjoy a Hot Chocolate Bar and activities. If you are willing to help with this event contact Mary Lou Teubert. All are welcome!

**Bethel Choir will attend the National Lutheran Choir Tuneup** on January 20, 2024, from 9:00 am to noon at Roseville Lutheran Church. Anyone who enjoys singing is welcome to join us! Please RSVP to Emily Koehler or Jan Smith.

**Year-end giving:** The Church Endowment Fund is an excellent place to give your year-end gift, the gift that keeps on giving, expanding Bethel's outreach abilities. The yellow Endowment Fund envelope assures your gift goes to the intended fund. Please make checks out to Bethel Endowment Fund and place your envelope in the Endowment Committee's mailbox. Thank you in advance!

**November food shelf collection report:** Thank you! Thank you! Our congregation gave \$855 plus 21 lbs. of food to the McLeod Emergency Food Shelf. In addition, we purchased 4 lbs. bags of sugar, small salt and pepper sets (extras that are very much appreciated) and lots of personal care products (items the food shelf cannot purchase with their funds) with our \$250 Thrivent grant.