

Sunday December 31, 2023
First Sunday of Christmas-Hymn Sing



BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH OF MALMO

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Church Secretary: Mary Braun

Ministers: All Members of the Congregation

MISSION STATEMENT

We will LIVE and SERVE through FAITH

we will ACT with LOVE and KINDNESS

we will GIVE hope and SUPPORT to all.

Hearing Assistance is available during the service.

Please notify usher if you would like assistance

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER & CARE LIST: Barry & Donna Ansell. Jack Fayo who passed away this week.

TREE TAKE DOWN We will be taking down Christmas decorations on Thursday, January 4th, at 10:00am. Help is needed.

MONTHLY TITHING For your convenience we have direct deposit forms in the Narthex. You can sign up indefinitely or sign up for a few months if you're going south for the winter.

OFFERING ENVELOPES for 2024 are here! Please pick up your envelopes in the Fellowship Hall.

POINSETTIAS Please take your poinsettia home after service today if you ordered one.

THIS WEEK AT Bethesda **January 1, 2024 thru January 7, 2024**

Monday	1/1	11:30 am	Cards
		7:00 pm	AA/Alanon
Tuesday	1/2	9:00 am	Chair Yoga
Wednesday	1/3	9:00 am	Women's Bible Study
Thursday	1/4	8:00 am	ROMEOs
		9:15 am	Chair Yoga
		10:00 am	Decoration Take Down
Sunday	1/7	9:00am	Worship in Person or Live Stream

GATHERING SONG:

"The First Noel"

ELW 300



1 The first No - el the an - gel did say was to
2 They look - ed up and saw . . a star shin - ing
3 And by the light of that . . same star three . .



cer - tain poor shep - herds in fields as they lay; in fields where
in . . . the east . . be - yond . . them far; and to the
wise . . men came . . from coun - try far; to seek for a

they lay, keep - ing their sheep, on a cold win - ter's
 earth it gave . . . great light, and . . so it con -
 king was their . . . in - tent, and to fol - low the

Refrain

night that was so deep.
 tin-ued both day and night.
 star wher - ev - er it went. No - el, No - el, No -

el, No - el! Born is the King of Is - ra - el.

Dialogue

L: Jesus, the bright Morning Star, shines light in the world.

C: By day and night he shines for all to see.

L: Jesus was born in the midst of injustice and poverty

C: that the world may see the justice and richness of God.

L: God so loved the world that God sent Jesus,

C: so that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life.

L: Jesus is the light of the world.

C: Jesus is the light of our lives.

L: Sing to God a new song!

C: A song of hope, joy, and peace around the world.

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God,

you have filled us with the new light of the Word who became flesh and lived among us. Let the light of our faith shine in all we do; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING: Genesis 1:1-5, 14-18

*Creation of light and
darkness, sun, moon, and stars*

^{1:1} In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

^{1:2} Now the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water. ^{1:3} God said, "Let there be light." And there was light!

^{1:4} God saw that the light was good, so God separated the light from the darkness. ^{1:5} God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." There was evening, and there was morning, marking the first day.

^{1:14} God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be signs to indicate seasons and days and years, ^{1:15} and let them serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." It was so.

^{1:16} God made two great lights—the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night. He made the stars also. ^{1:17} God placed the lights in the expanse of the sky to shine on the earth, ^{1:18} to preside over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good.

Word of God. Word of Life ~ **Thanks be to God**

HYMN:

"Love Has Come"

ELW 292



1 Love has come— a light in the dark - ness! Love shines forth in the
2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der. Love is God now a -
3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us! Love is life ev - er -



Beth - le - hem skies. See, all heav - en has come to pro - claim it;
sleep in the hay. See the glow in the eyes of his moth - er;
last - ing and free. Love is Je - sus with - in and a - mong us.



hear how their song of joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to
what is the name her heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the
Love is the peace our hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the



you, a Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
name she whis - pers; Love! Love! Je - sus, Im - man - u - el.
gift of Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

SECOND READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

God promises a King

- ² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.
On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.
- ³ You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy.
They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,
as those who divide plunder rejoice.
- ⁴ As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke
that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders,
and the rod of their oppressor.
- ⁵ Because every boot of the thundering warriors,
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned, fuel for the fire.
- ⁶ A child is born to us, a son is given to us,
and authority will be on his shoulders.
He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
- ⁷ There will be vast authority and endless peace
for David's throne and for his kingdom,
establishing and sustaining it with justice and righteousness
now and forever. The zeal of the LORD of heavenly forces will do this.

Word of God. Word of Life ~ **Thanks be to God**

HYMN:

“What Child Is This”

#296 ELW



- 1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar - y's lap is sleep - ing?
2 Why lies he in such mean es - tate where ox and ass are feed - ing?
3 So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas - ant, king, to own him.



Whom an - gels greet with an-thems sweet while shep-herds watch are keep - ing?
Good Chris-tian, fear; for sin-ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing.
The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; let lov - ing hearts en-throne him.



This, this is Christ the king, whom shep-herds guard and an - gels sing;
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
Raise, raise the song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la - by;



haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mar - y!
joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y!

THIRD READING: Luke 1:5-25 *An angel visits Elizabeth and Zechariah*

⁵⁻⁷ During the rule of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest assigned service in the regiment of Abijah. His name was Zachariah. His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth.

Together they lived honorably before God, careful in keeping to the ways of the commandments and enjoying a clear conscience before God. But they were childless because Elizabeth could never conceive, and now they were quite old.

⁸⁻¹² It so happened that as Zachariah was carrying out his priestly duties before God, working the shift assigned to his regiment, it came his one turn in life to enter the sanctuary of God and burn incense. The congregation was gathered and praying outside the Temple at the hour of the incense offering. Unannounced, an angel of God appeared just to the right of the altar of incense. Zachariah was paralyzed in fear.

¹³⁻¹⁵ But the angel reassured him, “Don’t fear, Zachariah. Your prayer has been heard. Elizabeth, your wife, will bear a son by you. You are to name

him John. You're going to leap like a gazelle for joy, and not only you—many will delight in his birth. He'll achieve great stature with God.

15-17 “He'll drink neither wine nor beer. He'll be filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment he leaves his mother's womb. He will turn many sons and daughters of Israel back to their God. He will herald God's arrival in the style and strength of Elijah, soften the hearts of parents to children, and kindle devout understanding among hardened skeptics—he'll get the people ready for God.”

Word of God. Word of Life ~ **Thanks be to God**

HYMN: “Once in Royal David's City” ELW 269



1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,
2 He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and Lord of all,
3 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re - deem - ing love;
4 Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the ox - en stand - ing by,



where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for his bed:
and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his cra - dle was a stall;
for that child so dear and gen - tle is our Lord in heav'n a - bove;
we shall see him; but in heav - en, set at God's right hand on high;



Mar - y was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.
with the poor and meek and low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.
and he leads his chil - dren on to the place where he is gone.
there his chil - dren gath - er round, bright like stars, with glo - ry crowned.

FOURTH READING: Luke 1:26-35, 38 *Annunciation to Mary*

²⁶In 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.

28 And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”
 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He 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, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”
 34 And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”
 35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.”
 38 And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Word of God. Word of Life ~ **Thanks be to God**

HYMN: “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” #282 ELW



1 It came up - on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
 2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come with peace - ful wings un - furled,
 3 And you, be - neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing low,
 4 For lo! The days are has - t'ning on, by proph - ets seen of old,



from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
 and still their heav'n - ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world.
 who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow:
 when with the ev - er - cir - cling years shall come the time fore - told,



“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all - gra - cious king.”
 A - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov - 'ring wing,
 look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing;
 when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors fling,



The world in sol - emn still-ness lay to hear the an - gels sing.
 and ev - er o'er its ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.
 oh, rest be - side the wea - ry road and hear the an - gels sing!
 and all the world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

FIFTH READING: Luke 1:46-56

The Magnificat

- ⁴⁶Then Mary said, “My soul praises the greatness of the Lord!
⁴⁷My spirit exults in God, my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked favorably on his humble servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹because the Almighty has done great things for me. His name is holy.
⁵⁰His mercy lasts from generation to generation for those who fear him.
⁵¹He displayed his mighty power with his arm. He scattered people who were proud in mind and heart.
⁵²He pulled powerful rulers from their thrones and lifted up humble people.
⁵³He filled hungry people with good things and sent rich people away with nothing.
⁵⁴He helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful,
⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors—to Abraham and his descendants forever.”
⁵⁶Now Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

Word of God. Word of Life ~ **Thanks be to God**

HYMN: “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

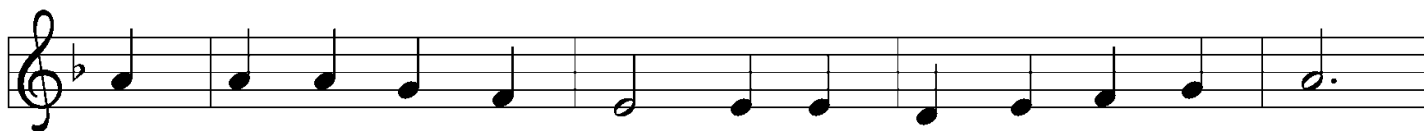
ELW 279



O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
 For Christ is born of Mar - y, and, gath - ered all a - bove
 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is giv'n!
 O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
 while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won-d'ring love.
 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heav'n.
 cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.



yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light.
O morn-ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
No ear may hear his com - ing; but, in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ-mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;



The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
and prais - es sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!
where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
oh, come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Im - man - u - el!

SIXTH READING: Luke 2:22-40

The Prophecies of Simeon & Anna

²² When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

³³ The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign

that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Word of God. Word of Life ~ **Thanks be to God**

HYMN: “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” #276 ELW



1 In - fant ho - ly, in - fant low - ly, for his bed a cat - tle stall;
2 Flocks were sleep - ing, shep - herds keep - ing vig - il till the morn - ing new



ox - en low - ing, lit - tle know - ing Christ the child is Lord of all.
saw the glo - ry, heard the sto - ry, tid - ings of a gos - pel true.



Swift - ly wing - ing, an - gels sing - ing, bells are ring - ing, tid - ings bring - ing:
Thus re - joic - ing, free from sor - row, prais - es voic - ing, greet the mor - row:



Christ the child is Lord of all! Christ the child is Lord of all!
Christ the child was born for you! Christ the child was born for you!

BISHOP’S CHRISTMAS GREETING

I told the synod staff last week that I'm having a hard time finding the "Merry" in Christmas or the "Joy" in Joy to the World this season. The emotional weight of the war in Palestine, especially Gaza, is difficult. The January trip planned by the ELCA with four synods traveling together to visit our companions in India has been postponed because of safety concerns for Christians in an unstable political environment. There seems to be more anger and lashing out between people and in public forums. From hurting bodies and souls to hurting relationships and communities, it's clear that things are not as they should be. Some of us live with varying degrees of physical pain or a new diagnosis, and others of us harbor the emotional pain of loneliness, shame, and guilt. Looking at our culture more broadly, we see the harm of our social divisions and the unyielding reality and impact of injustice and inequity. For me, this Christmas, plain and simple, seems **hard**. And yet, I know that it is exactly into this same difficult, divisive, uncertain, unfriendly, and politically unstable world that God became incarnate in human form as a baby – the Christ child. A friend reminded me of a poem that was written by the French writer, Madeleine L'Engle.

“Into the Darkest Hour”

It was a time like this,
war & tumult of war,
a horror in the air.
Hungry yawned the abyss –
and yet there came the star
and the child most wonderfully there.
It was a time like this
of fear & lust for power,
license & greed and blight –
and yet the Prince of bliss came into the darkest hour
in quiet & silent light.
And in a time like this

how celebrate his birth
when all things fall apart?
Ah! Wonderful it is
with no room on the earth
the stable is our heart.

The stable is our heart. What a good reminder of Immanuel – God with us. Not just coming close, but *with us, in us, in our very hearts.* Ah – just what I need to hear over and over again, especially this year. In the midst of what can sometimes feel like a heavy and challenging world, it is reassuring to be reminded of the promise of hope and renewal that God gifts the world in Christ Jesus.



During this season, I have also thought about the Japanese artform of kintsugi – meaning “to join with gold”. Taking pieces of shattered pottery and adorning the broken ceramics with a lacquer mixed with powdered gold is part of a more than 500-year-old Japanese tradition. Broken pottery is melded back together with gold to symbolize the beauty in brokenness. When things fall apart – they can be made new as the flaws and missteps are reshaped – not erased. This not only teaches calm when a cherished piece of pottery breaks; it is a reminder of the beauty of human fragility as well. Learning to accept and celebrate scars and flaws is a powerful lesson in humanity and sustainability. A good lesson when the world around us seems so broken.

This year, more than ever, I am grateful for the light that Christ brings into our lives, which is like the golden glue of shattered pottery – offering the promise of being made new despite all the turmoil and tumult around us. As you gather with loved ones this Christmas and cherish the warmth of togetherness, I pray that you also embrace the hope, the promise, and the renewal of God coming to us in the person of Jesus – where the stable is the heart. This action is to let us know that

we are loved and cared for and healed and saved and invited to participate in all the goodness and beauty and grace and joy and love and peace of who God is. Forever.

Wishing you and your loved ones a Christmas filled with love, the light of hope, and the joy that comes from knowing that we are surrounded by the grace of God.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Bishop Amy Odgren and the staff of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod

Responsive Prayer

L: Glory to God in the highest,

C: and peace to God's people on earth.

L: Blessed are you, Wonderful Counselor, for your presence with us.

C: Lead us with your wisdom as we live faithfully in this world.

L: Blessed are you, Mighty God, for the creation you have made.

C: Connect us to all you have made as caretakers of your glory.

L: Blessed are you, Prince of Peace. You rule the earth with truth and justice.

C: Send your gift of peace to all nations of the world.

L: Blessed are you, Son of Mary. You share our humanity.

C: Have mercy on the sick, the dying, and all who suffer this day.

L: Blessed are you, Everlasting Father, for your never-failing embrace.

C: Help us look to our future with hope in your eternal promises, and the feast that has no end.

L: Blessed are you, Son of God. You dwell among us as the Word made flesh.

C: Reveal yourself to us in word and sacrament that we may bear your light to all the world.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING - *Please be seated as the Ushers pass the offering plate.
Please stand as the ushers bring the offering to the altar.*

OFFERING PRAYER

Good and loving God,
we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace. As you have blessed us with your gifts, let them be blessing for others. With the trees of the field, with all earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

COMMUNION

HYMN: "Let All Together Praise Our God" ELW 287



1 Let all to - geth - er praise our God be - fore the
2 From God's right hand the Son de - scends, is born an
3 O ten - der Child, you veil in flesh the splen - dor
4 Your moth - er feeds you ten - der - ly, sings you a



high - est throne; to - day God o - pens heav'n a - gain and
in - fant small, and lies in pov - er - ty, his bed a
of your might; a ser - vant's garb now wraps the one who
lul - la - by, while an - gels, hail - ing Da - vid's heir, your



sends the on - ly Son, and sends the on - ly Son.
man - ger in a stall, a man - ger in a stall.
clothed the sky with light, who clothed the sky with light.
glo - ry mag - ni - fy, your glo - ry mag - ni - fy.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God our redeemer,

you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

BLESSING

L: Let us bless the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

L: May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ child. Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN: "Jesus, What a Wonderful Child"

ELW 297

Je - sus, Je - sus, oh, what a won - der - ful child.

Je - sus, Je - sus, so ho - ly, meek, and

mild; new life, new hope the child will bring.

Lis - ten to the an - gels sing: "Glo - ry, glo - ry,

glo - ry," let the heav - ens ring!

DISMISSAL

L: Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.

C: Thanks be to God!