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# BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH OF MALMO

21590 State Highway 47, Isle, MN 56342

December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025

9:00 a.m.

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## Fourth Sunday of Advent



We are a community that is passionate about sharing the love of Jesus Christ, and we provide as many opportunities as we can to help everyone grow spiritually, and in loving service to the community and the world.

Whether you are joining us in-person or online, we're glad you're here. We are a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and celebrate the work we're able to do together as a denomination (to learn more about the ELCA visit [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)).

Those joining worship online, whether live or later in the week, households are invited to prepare their worship space by creating a home altar. You might include meaningful linens, candles, a cross, enough bread or crackers and wine or juice for everyone at your table, and anything that helps you engage more fully in worship. This altar becomes a gathering place for prayers, songs, communion, and a shared sense of God's presence in your home.

✚ **GATHERING IN GOD'S PRESENCE** ✚

~ ***The assembly responds together with texts in bold print*** ~

### **WELCOME**

*The presiding minister leads the welcome to worship.*

### **LIFE TOGETHER ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Find the full list of Life Together announcements near the end of the bulletin.*

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Here in worship—

**we pray together, we stand together, we sing together, we listen together.**

Here in worship— we are not alone. So when life gives you reason to grieve, to fear, or to worry, remember this moment.

**We are not alone. Let us worship our with-us God.**

## ADVENT WREATH CANDLE LIGHTING

In a world full of fear, where do you see the presence of love?

**We see love all around us. We see love when people hold open the door. We see love in a warm embrace, a homemade casserole, a phone call after a long day. We see love in random acts of kindness and intentional acts of empathy. We see love all around us.**

You are right. Even in a fearful world, love is all around us. Today we light the candle of love as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, love is here. Love is world-changing.

Love is shining bright. We only have to look for it.

**Thanks be to God for a love like that! Amen.**

**“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”**

**ELW 257 Verses 1,5,6,7**

<sup>1</sup>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 you, O Israel.

<sup>5</sup>O come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery. *Refrain*

<sup>6</sup>O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer; O Sun of justice, now draw near.  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*

<sup>7</sup>O come, O King of nations, come, O Cornerstone that binds in one:  
refresh the hearts that long for you; restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*

Text: *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. composite  
Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

*The presiding minister leads the call to confession*

*The gathering responds:* So join me in this transformative moment.

Join me receiving grace. Let us pray. When you were afraid, did I stay by your side?  
Did I offer my hand, or did I leave you alone? When you were afraid,  
did I choose solidarity? Did I see your fear, or did I only see mine?

**Friend, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and we do too. So take a deep breath, and let's start again.**

Thank you. Your mercy is a gift.

**Now we must ask— when you were afraid, did we stay by your side?**

**Did we offer our hands, or did we leave you alone? When you were afraid, did we choose solidarity? Did we see your fear? Or did we only see ours?**

Friends, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and I do too. So take a deep breath, and let's start again.

**Thank you. Your mercy is a gift. We accept your grace and would love to start again. May it be so, with God's help. Alleluia, amen.**

## GREETING

The immeasurable grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the rich mercy and love of God, and the unity of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

## **PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

Immanuel, **we turned off alarm clocks. We poured cups of coffee. We slipped shoes onto our feet and combed back fly-away hairs. We traveled to this room and settled into this space, all in hopes of drawing closer to you. So as we hear your Word read aloud, help us to feel your presence in our midst. For we are reaching out our hands. We are reaching out our hearts. Speak to us now. With hope we pray, amen.**

## **✠ HEARING GOD'S WORD ✠**

### **POETRY READING**

**"Tethered"**

*by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org*

When we were children, we fell asleep  
with walkie talkies tucked under our pillows.  
All that separated us was a bathroom,  
a hallway, a few feet of empty space,  
but as children, even small distances can feel like miles.

So after the parents whispered prayers over our skinned knees  
and spelling tests, after they kissed our sweaty foreheads  
and tucked us into bed,  
we'd pull the walkie talkies out from under our pillows.  
We'd roll the dial on the top of the transceiver.  
We'd sputter that invisible tether to life.

And with a few crackles in the quiet of the night,  
you'd whisper my name.  
I'd press down the button.  
I'd promise I was close.

As an adult, I don't know what ever happened  
to those blue-grey walkie talkies.  
But I know,  
that even today,  
if the monsters in the closet feel too real,  
and you whisper my name,  
I promise I'll be close.

### **SCRIPTURE READING**

**Isaiah 41:5-10**

Fear gathers at the edges of the world nations tremble, hearts grow anxious,  
strength begins to fade. Into that fear, God speaks a steady word of promise:  
"Do not be afraid, for I am with you." In every uncertain season, God's presence  
becomes our strength, and hope takes root once more.

A reading from Isaiah

<sup>5</sup>The coastlands have seen and are afraid;  
the ends of the earth tremble;  
they have drawn near and come.

<sup>6</sup>Each one helps the other,  
saying to one another, "Take courage!"

<sup>7</sup>The artisan encourages the goldsmith,  
and the one who smooths with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the  
anvil,  
saying of the soldering, "It is good,"  
and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved.

<sup>8</sup>But you, Israel, my servant,  
Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;  
<sup>9</sup>you whom I took from the ends of the earth  
and called from its farthest corners,  
saying to you, "You are my servant;  
I have chosen you and not cast you off";

<sup>10</sup>do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be afraid, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you; I will help you;  
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

*Following the reading the gathering responds:*  
Word of God. Word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL READING**

**Matthew 1:18-25**

Joseph's world has come undone.

Dreams are interrupted, plans unravel, and uncertainty lingers in the air. Yet in the midst of confusion, an angel whispers a different word "*Do not be afraid.*" For God is at work in what seems impossible, and love is being born among us.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew

This is the story of God's unconditional love flowing down.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup>"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"  
which means, "God is with us." <sup>24</sup>When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the  
angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife <sup>25</sup>but had no marital  
relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

*The gospel is proclaimed, concluding:*

This is the story of grace upon grace that covers us.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON**

**Reverend Christina Kadelbach**

# We're Not Alone

ADESTE FIDELES Irr. with refrain

Words by Anna Strickland. 2025

Music by John Francis Wade, 1751

*Sung to the tune of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" ELW 283*



Fear all a - round you tells you you're a - lone \_\_\_\_  
Give me your hand to hold when you feel frigh-tened  
When peo - ple live in fear \_\_\_\_ for their safe - ty  
For - ward we march to - geth - er toward God's kin - dom



Urg - ing you to build walls and i - so - late  
We can up - hold each o - ther in \_\_\_\_ our fear  
Let us put priv - ilege on the line \_\_\_\_ for them  
Build - ing a big - ger ta - ble, not tall - er walls



I know your fear be - cause I feel it, too \_\_\_\_  
Per - son by per - son, we'll find strength to - geth - er  
Stand with our sib - lings in \_\_\_\_ sol - i - dar - i - ty  
Work - ing to - geth - er, no - thing is im - poss - i - ble



When fear grows deep in - side us, re - mem - ber what u - nites us



No, no - thing can di - vide us; we're not a - lone

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## AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

In a world where fear can feel louder than hope, we return to what we believe. These are words to remind our hearts that even in the longest night, God is with us. Let us join together in the Words of Affirmation.

**We have seen the valley. We have seen a sky without stars.**

**We have seen the longest night, and still we believe.**

**We believe in a with-us God. We believe in the hope of tomorrow.**

**We believe that good news is louder than fear.**

**We believe this good news is for all people.**

**So even when our knees shake, even when our voice trembles, even when fear is all around us, we will hold onto that good news.**

**We will reach for each other. We will look for God in our midst.**

**We will sing songs of joy. We will proclaim: Unto us, love is born.**

**We have seen the longest night, and we have seen unimaginable love.**

**So still, we believe. Amen**

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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.

*Silence is held as we prepare for prayer.*

*Each petition ends with, "God of grace."*

*The gathering responds, "Hear our prayer."*

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. **Amen.**

## PEACE

May Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, fill you with love, mend you with mercy and grant you peace. **And also with you.**

*Christ's peace is a gift that renews and connects us. Having received that peace, we now share it with one another as a sign of God's love among us.*

## OFFERING

*Giving is an act of worship our response to God's goodness and grace. Your gifts support the ministry of Bethesda Lutheran Church and extend God's love into the world. During this time the table is set. For the healing of this world, let us give our tithes and offerings.*

Ways to Give:

Place your offering in the plate as it is passed by the ushers.

Give electronically through Vanco Services. Forms available in the Narthex.

Use the giving app by scanning the QR code.

Recurring or one-time online options <https://app.autobooks.co/pay/bethesda-lutheran-church-of-malmo>



*Thank you for your faithful and generous support.*

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of love, **bless these gifts and make them signs of Your presence in the world. May they bring comfort to the hurting, strength to the weary, and light to those who walk in fear. Teach us to love as You love—freely, fully, and forever. Amen.**

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

*The presiding minister leads the communion liturgy. The gathering responds: **Amen.***

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

As beloved children of God, hope, peace, joy, and love in our hearts, we unite our voices to pray the prayer Jesus taught us, saying:

**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.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

*Holy Communion is a gift of grace, where we receive the presence of Jesus in bread and wine and are reminded that we are deeply loved. All who hunger for mercy and hope are welcome at this feast. Jesus is the host, and the invitation is wide. Even across time and space, God is present in these gifts, and we, the community, are present to one another.*

Communion Notes:

- Gluten-free wafers are available; please let your server know.
- Alcohol-free juice is located in the center of each tray (lighter in color).
- If you prefer to receive communion at your seat, please inform an usher.
- If you choose not to commune, you are warmly invited to come forward to receive a blessing.

Here is life. God is with us.  
Come, receive what God has promised.

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**Loving God, in a world racked with fear, you gather us together. You set the table. You meet us here. You nourish our bodies as you nourish our spirits. You remind us that this is a joyful feast, and that fear cannot win every time. So with renewed courage, with renewed hope, with renewed conviction, send us out into the world. Help us to feed others as you have fed us. With gratitude we pray, amen.**

## BLESSING

In a fearful world, may you look for God's spirit. May you reach for each other's hands. May you choose courage whenever you can. And in all things, may you remember that good news is louder than fear. In the name of the one who calls, the one who sends, † and the one who journeys with us. **Amen.**

### Joy to the World

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -  
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their  
3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -  
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the

ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him  
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and  
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings  
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -

room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture  
plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing  
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is  
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.  
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.  
found, far as, far as the curse is found.  
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748  
Music: ANTIOCH, English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792–1872

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace and be not afraid. **Thanks be to God.**

*We're so glad you joined us for worship today.*

*Wherever life finds you, know that this community welcomes you with open hearts.  
Come again and share in our life of service, prayer, and fellowship.*

*Join us in the Fellowship Hall after worship for coffee, tea, treats, and conversation.  
It's a wonderful time to connect, and we're grateful for all  
who help make this time of fellowship possible.*

Acknowledgements: Texts and hymns from [sundaysandseasons.com](http://sundaysandseasons.com) copyright © 2025 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License # SAS028183. New Revised Standard Version updated edition Bible Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Additional Liturgical texts © 2025 Reverend Christina Kadelbach. Words for worship by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org) Adapted for Bethesda Lutheran by Reverend Christina Kadelbach.

## **LIFE TOGETHER ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Life Together highlights the rhythms of our shared life at Bethesda- upcoming events, ways to connect, serve, and grow in faith together. Take a look at what's happening and join in where you feel called. There's a place for you here!*

**PRAYER & CARE LIST** Jim Christensen, Myra Honl, & Sherry Whipple.

*As a community of faith, we are committed to holding one another in prayer and care. We invite you to pray for those listed here and offer support as you are able.  
To request prayers for yourself or someone else (with their permission)  
Please get in touch with the church office.*

**THANK YOU!** I would like to send my many thanks to all of my BLC family for their many thoughts and prayers while I was recovering. Prayers received as I am now whole again. Love to all! Teri Carlson.

**WELCOME** If you're visiting today, we're so glad you're here! Your presence is a gift to this community. Pastor Christina would love the chance to get to know you, please say hello after worship or reach out during the week. You can also leave your name and contact information in the friendship/welcome notebook so we can connect.

**WELCOME NOTEBOOK** Please take a moment to sign the friendship notebook in the black folder at the end of your pew. Passing it along is a simple act of hospitality that helps us learn one another's names and extend the warmth of Christ's welcome to all.

**CHILDREN WELCOME** We celebrate the presence of children in worship and at Holy Communion. We believe worship is for all of God's people, no matter the age. For those who may need a quieter space, an unstaffed nursery is available through the double doors to the left as you exit the sanctuary. Caregivers are invited to assist children in extending their hands if they wish to receive the bread and wine. Children's bulletins and activity bags are available at the sanctuary entrance.

**NAME TAGS** help us connect. Wearing a name tag is a simple and meaningful way to help us learn each other's names and grow in community. Please remember to wear your reusable name tag each Sunday. Guest name tags are available near the guest book at the main entrance.

**PASTORAL CARE** We care about you! If you are hospitalized, going through a difficult time, or in need of support, please reach out. Contact Pastor Christina or one of our parish nurses, we're here for you.

**COFFEE SERVERS NEEDED** Thank you for signing up! If you're unable to serve, consider bringing treats to help stock the freezer. Every contribution helps create a warm and welcoming space for conversation and connection.

**LECTORS NEEDED** We need readers to help bring sacred stories of Christmas & Epiphany to life. The lessons for each week are available on the table in the Narthex. Thank you for sharing your voice.

**TIME AND TALENT** Please take a moment to complete the Time and Talent Survey included in the December Bethesda Life-Line Newsletter. You can return it to the survey box on the church office secretary's desk.

**CHRISTMAS GIVING 2025** Part of our local benevolence money goes to giving families in our area food cards to help with holiday expenses. Early December there will be a name suggestion box in entry way. Please think about someone in the area who could use a gift card from Petry's, Teals or Paulbeck's. Give us their name and address by December 17th so cards can be mailed to them before Christmas.

**ELCA GOOD GIFTS!!** Choose a gift that feeds families and uplifts communities around the world. Visit the catalog display in the fellowship hall, or browse online through ELCA Good Gifts. Honor someone on your Christmas list by giving animal or food support to neighbors in need across many countries.

**RAFFLE ITEMS** There are two Baskets of Christmas decorations available to sign up for in the Fellowship Hall. Cost \$1/chance, enter as many times as you want. Proceeds go towards Local Benevolence & Local Food Shelves. Drawing will be today.

**LONGEST NIGHT** You are invited to a quiet service called Longest Night: Christmas in a Time of Loss: Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at 3:30 pm in the sanctuary. This gathering is especially for those who are finding it hard to navigate the holidays. There are so many reasons the season can feel heavier—grief or illness, anxiety or estrangement, financial stress, or simply the exhaustion of trying to hold it all together. Sometimes, the brightness of the season only deepens the ache. If that's where you find yourself, you are not alone. Come to Bethesda for a gentle, low-key time of worship, a quiet space held within the peace of the Christmas story and the deep hope it still offers.

**CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP** Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup> with holy communion 3:30 pm

**CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER** Join pastor Christina and her family for a festive dinner at Bethesda Lutheran at 5 pm on Christmas Eve. Come just as you are. No need to bring anything but yourselves. If you think you might join us, a quick heads-up helps us plan enough food.

**CHRISTMAS DAY DINNER CHURCH** Christmas morning worship with Holy Communion and a meal begins at 10 am on Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>. All are welcome.

### **RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD LAST WEEK**

Sunday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025: In Person: 50 Online: 20

### **THIS WEEK AT BETHESDA**

#### **Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>**

9:00 am Worship with Holy Communion

6:00 pm Longest Night: Christmas in a Time of Loss

#### **Monday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>**

11:30 am Pinochle

7:00 pm AA/Alanon

**Tuesday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>**

9:00 am Chair Yoga

**Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**

3:30 pm Christmas Eve Worship

5:00 pm Dinner in Fellowship Hall

**Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 am Christmas Day Dinner Church in Fellowship Hall

**Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup> First Sunday of Christmas**

9:00 am Worship with Holy Communion

**Bethesda Lutheran Church blcmalmo.org**

Office: 320-684-2123 (1-877-684-2123) Fax: 320-684-2836

E-mail address: blcmalmo@gmail.com

*A member congregation of the NE MN Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*

**Ministers:** All People of Bethesda Lutheran Church

**Pastoral Ministries:** Reverend Christina Kadelbach

[blc.reverend@gmail.com](mailto:blc.reverend@gmail.com) 218-213-6731

**Church Secretary:** Mary Braun

**Custodial and Maintenance:** Gary Sjerven

**Music Specialist & Sound Technician:** Jim Christensen

**Parish Nurses:** Darlene Christensen, RN, Kathy Berland RN ANP

**Prayer Chain Contacts:** Char Berg 320-684-2102 or

Darlene Christensen 320-279-0097

**December Altar Care:** Kat Carlson and Dianne Jones

**Ushers:** Barry & Donna Ansell

**Greeters:** Lee and Barb Forrester

**Lector:** LuAnn Gordon

**Hospitality:** Carlsons and Forresters

**Serving on December 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve**

**Ushers:** Darrell Kelly & Dick Stebbins

**Greeters:** Gary and Brenda Sjerven

**Hospitality:** The Kadelbach Family

**Lector:**

**Serving on December 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day**

**Ushers/Greeters:** Mark and Mary Vukelich

**Hospitality:** The Kadelbach Family

**Serving on December 28<sup>th</sup> First Sunday of Christmas**

**Ushers:** Larry & Carol Pantsari

**Greeters:** Gary & Brenda Sjerven

**Hospitality: Lector:**



## POINSETTIA Donations



Name

In Memory/Honor of

Char Berg

Roy Berg

Judie Birk

Family

Chuck & Elsa Carlson

Family

Karen & Rich Carron

Family

Barb & Lee Forrester	Family & Friends
Linda Gommer	Hamman Family
Linda Gommer	Gommer Family
Anne Hennessey	Family
Dianne & Del Jones	Jack Spetz
Merrily Jones	Husband & Parents
Pr. Christina & Jason Kadelbach - Loved Ones	
Darrell Kelly	Family & Friends
Darlene Ryan	Joe Ryan
Jenny Schuett	Dennis & Loved Ones
Penny Sjoquist	Family
Sue & Dick Stebbins	Loved Ones & others
Joanne & Dave Stueven	Family
Sylvia Tapelt	Joe Tapelt
Bev Wedig	Al, Jen, Travis
Winnie Zahradka	Randy & Family

*Thank you to those who have made donations for the  
beautiful flowers to decorate our sanctuary!*