



BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Sunday, December 21, 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Worship Leader: Rev. Randy Koppenhaver

Musician: Kathy Bowe

The white peace candle on the altar is lit in solidarity with all peoples of the world affected by armed conflict, civil war, oppression, tyranny, exploitation and discrimination. God, bring them peace.

***= Please rise in body or spirit**

CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: as you inhale, say the first part of the prayer to yourself, and say the second part as you exhale. Repeat 5x

Make your face shine on me :: that I may be saved

RINGING OF THE BELLS

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP #86 v. 1

"like a child"

like a child love would send to reveal and to mend,

like a child and a friend, Jesus comes

like a child we may find claiming heart soul and mind,

like a child strong and kind, Jesus comes.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHANCE FOR KIDS TO SHARE

PRIMARY CLASS

"Welcome Christmas" and "Baby Jesus"

Jayden Jeanty

Mark Voland

Shelby Aschenbach

Easton Rumpff

Stephen Deignan

CALL TO WORSHIP/ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING – LOVE

—Joyce Berger © 2025 ReformedWorship.org,

Out of darkness a light shines.
From a dead stump a shoot grows.
It takes root below and bears fruit above.
The gardener tends to it with steadfast love.
Today we continue our Advent journey.
Today we light this candle of love.

[Lighting of the fourth candle.]
Come, let us worship the God of love.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

**All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.
For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.** —Psalm 36:7–9, NRSVUE

*OPENING PRAYER:

Emmanuel, we come today with arms wide open, ready to meet your precious son. Your love for us is so full that you sent a fragile babe to share your holy word, knowing that he would face human pain. Open us, God! Prepare us for his coming, that we may be messengers of your abundant love, and act to ease the suffering of all. Amen.

*OPENING HYMN #123

“Hark the Herald Angels Sing”

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:

**Majestic Redeemer, in these last days before the birth of your son, we admit that we ask often for a sign. We put you to the test, beg for miracles, for mercy, for proof of your holy word.
We doubt, even as we retell the old stories. We are like Joseph – shamed, questioning, fearful of the truth of Mary’s dream – not wanting to be taken as fools for believing in something that seems too precious to be true. We are as afraid as the shepherds in their fields, sometimes as cowardly and cruel as Herod. You have given us the most sacred gift, yet we often lack the faith to accept it. Amen. *Time of silent reflection...***

WORDS OF GRACE

God’s love for us encompasses every doubt and disaster we will imagine.
God did not turn from our ancestors when they fell short, and God will not turn from us.

Our humanity is not a flaw. It is the gift of the divine, sealed in Emmanuel's humanity. **Praise be to God!**

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"Gloria Patri"

**Glory be to the Father, And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen, Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Isaiah 7:10-16 (NIV)

¹⁰ Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹ "Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test."

¹³ Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, ¹⁶ for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

Matthew 1:18-25 (NIV)

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^[a]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered 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 home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

PRAYER CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER...THE LORD'S PRAYER

Each petition end with sung response: *Joy, joy for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary.*

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SUNG PRAYER RESPONSE #403 “Lord, Listen to your Children Praying”

Lord, listen to your children praying, Lord, send your Spirit in this place; Lord, listen to your children praying, Send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

OFFERTORY At Bethlehem United Church of Christ, we collect TWO offerings each Sunday. Our regular operational offering is collected in the wooden plate. In the metal cans, we collect loose change and small bills for a monthly designated benevolent collection. December's Jingle Change supports the UCC's Christmas Fund. (*“The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.”*)

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE Doxology to tune of “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”
**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above ye, heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Love and Light of the world, we give you thanks for these gifts. We give you thanks for the privilege of generosity. We give you thanks for the ability to share your divine love in a tangible form with our siblings around the world. Help us to remember, as we await Christ's birth, to give more generously than we receive, knowing we will always be rich in your abundant love. Amen.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Cast: Manager - Mia Watson

Desk Clerk - Melanie Voland

Bell Man - Jacob Riesterer

Concierge - Ellie Holz

Spa Manager - Kamlynn Rumpff

Chef - Blake Holz

Donkey Dolly - Hallie Brockway

Narrator - Kylie Brockway

Donkey - Colton Aschenbach

Mary - Shelby Aschenbach

Joseph - Stephen Deignan

Shepherd - Jayden Jeanty

Wise Men - Mark Voland, Easton

Rumpff

Bethlehem extends a huge "Thank you" to our Sunday School teachers: Sarah Arnold, Jenny Brockway, Steven Voland, and Ginny Schultz. We also thank Kathy Bowe for all her behind the scenes work! The Children's Program is a wonderful tradition at Bethlehem!

*HYMN #132

"Away in a Manger"

Congregation joins

*CLOSING SONG #107

"Joy to the World"

BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

POSTLUDE

***liturgies for this morning were used with permission from: ucc.org/worship/ unless noted otherwise.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Pastor Randy will be out of state 12/25-12/30. In the event emergency pastoral care is needed, Rev. Dan Krueger of Saron UCC has agreed to be on call. 920-946-3351
- Heifer International: Due to the generosity of the Bethlehem people plus an addition by the Merry Christians, \$3000 was sent to Heifer International. That amount not only exceeded our goal for 2025 but also exceeded the amount given in 2024. This allowed us to give 3 Heifers, 3 Goats, 3 Sheep, 3 Pigs, 3 Flocks of Chicks, 4 Honeybee Hives, and 4 Baskets Garden Seeds. This came at a great time as Heifer International announced a donor willing to match 5 times contributions received during this time period.

- Chili Supper Tickets Available – packets of 10 tickets for the February 4, 2026 Chili Supper are available in the Fellowship Hall. Please sign out any packets you take. If you'd like less than 10 please see Kaye Radder. Payment is due by Feb 4.
- Bethlehem UCC is signed up to work at the Sheboygan Warming Center on Sunday, January 26. The shift is from 6pm-9pm. The work involves setting up for dinner, serving dinner, washing dishes (commercial dishwasher) and cleaning up. There are five slots available. Sign up in the fellowship hall.
- **CALLING NEW MEMBERS!!** If you've been visiting for awhile and feel like Bethlehem is a "good fit" for you, we will be inducting new members on Sunday, February 8. We will meet at 8:45 am that morning for a little paperwork and Bethlehem "education," followed by the induction during worship. We will celebrate after worship with a reception. Please see Pastor if you'd like to join Bethlehem, or if you have questions.



Those Grieving:

The Family of Tom Phillip, Jr
 The Family of Jeanette Wriedt
 The Family of Will Mathes

Those struggling with health issues:

Louie Bowe	Dawson Horneck
Heidi Konen	Darlene Horneck
Brad Westphalen	Jessica Horneck
Sofia	Melissa
Hubert	Larry
Chase Goekes	Tyler Smith
Mark	Molly
Willow	

Those unable to worship with us:

Merlin Ninmer Helen Henning

This Week at Bethlehem:

Sunday 12/21: 8:00am Sunday School; 9:30am Sunday Worship w/ Children's Program

Monday 12/22:

Tuesday 12/23:

Wednesday 12/24 6:30pm Christmas Eve Worship w/ Lessons and Carols

Thursday 12/25: 9:30am Christmas Worship w/ Communion

Friday 12/26:

Saturday 12/27: *Happy Birthday Ryan Jeanty!*

Sunday 12/28: NO Sunday School; 9:30am Sunday Worship w/ Hymn Sing

December Panty Item: Box of Cereal

