

# Bethel Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

~ a community of faith coming together,  
for fellowship, study and service . . .  
seeking God's peace, justice and love ~



## **A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR GUESTS:**

We extend a warm welcome from Bethel Presbyterian Church!

We invite you to participate in signing the Friendship Folders adding your name and address and if you desire a church newsletter or a pastoral call.

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we say "sins...sin against us"  
rather than "debts..." or "trespasses..."

Prayer requests can be noted on the cards provided in the pew racks  
and placed in the offering plate.

**The Service for the Lord’s Day  
Bethel Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent  
December 18, 2022 - 11:00 AM**

*\* Indicates congregation standing if able.  
Congregational responses indicated in bold.*

**GATHERING AND GREETING OF GOD’S PEOPLE**

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements

*Please sign the Friendship Pad found in your pew, passing it down the pew then back.*

Prelude

“THE FIRST NOWELL”

Children’s Bell Choir

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Reader: Over a hundred people, from the ages of two to eighty years old, were asked the question, “What makes you feel connected; what makes you feel loved?” From the voices of different generations, hear their answers:

... ..

Reader: Today we light the candle of love as a reminder that from the very first generation, God has surrounded us with love. May this good news – these threads of love – not only weave deeper connections between neighbors, but shape our actions and allow us to see God more clearly.

*(We light the candle of Love)*

Reader: In a lonely world, let this light shine bright.  
From generation to generation, we are held in God’s love.  
Thanks be to God for that good news. Amen.

Call to Worship (*L = Leader, P = People*)

L: Praise the Lord!

Praise, O servants of the Lord; praise the name of the Lord.

**P: Blessed be the name of the Lord  
from this time on and forevermore.**

L: Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high,

**P: Who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?**

L: He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap

**P: To make them sit with princes, with the princes of the people.**

L: He gives the barren woman a home,  
making her the joyous mother of children.

**P: Praise the Lord!**

Prayer of Invocation

Let us pray:

O God of Elizabeth and Mary,

you visited your servants with news of the world's redemption  
in the coming of the Savior.

Make our hearts leap with joy,

and fill our mouths with songs of praise,  
that we may announce glad tidings of peace,  
and welcome the Christ in our midst. Amen.

\* Hymn No. 107      **“AWAKE! AWAKE, AND GREET THE NEW MORN”**

*A-wake! A-wake, and greet the new morn,  
for an-gels her-ald its dawn-ing.  
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born,  
be-hold! the Child of our long-ing.  
Come as a ba-by weak and poor,  
to bring all hearts to-get-her,  
he o-pens wide the heaven-ly door  
and lives now in-side us for-ev-er.*

*To us, to all in sor-row and fear,  
Em-man-u-el comes a-sing-ing;  
his hum-ble song is qui-et and near,  
yet fills the earth with its ring-ing;  
mu-sic to heal the bro-ken soul  
and hymns of lov-ing-kind-ness.  
The thun-der of his an-thems rolls  
to shat-ter all ha-tred and vio-lence.*

*In dark-est night his com-ing shall be,  
when all the world is de-spair-ing,  
as morn-ing light so qui-et and free,  
so warm and gen-tle and car-ing.  
Then shall the mute break forth in song,  
the lame shall leap in won-der,  
the weak be raised a-bove the strong,  
and weap-ons be brok-en a-sun-der.*

*Re-joice, re-joice, take heart in the night.  
Though dark the win-ter and cheer-less,  
the ris-ing sun shall crown you with light;  
be strong and lov-ing and fear-less.  
Love be our song and love our prayer  
and love our end-less sto-ry,  
may God fill ev-ery day we share  
and bring us at last in-to glo-ry.*

\* Call to Confession

One of the greatest gifts and challenges of faith  
is that we cannot be Christian alone.

We need one another.

We need one another to grow. We need one another to love.

And we need one another to see God more clearly.

So together, let us lift our voices in unison.

Let us lean into the ties that bind and pray to our merciful God.

\* Prayer of Confession

**God of today and tomorrow, when Mary was pregnant and afraid,  
she ran to her cousin Elizabeth's house.**

**Elizabeth threw open the door with joy  
and showered blessings upon her.**

**How often do we have that same opportunity?**

**How often do we leave the door locked,  
the curtains drawn, and the lights off?**

**How often do we shower critique or judgment  
instead of blessings and joy?**

**Gracious God, forgive us for our wrongs.**

**We want to see you when we see our neighbor. Amen.**

\* Sung Response No. 551 “LORD, HAVE MERCY”

LAND OF REST

*Lord, have mer-cy; Christ, have mer-cy;*

*Lord, have mer-cy up-on us.*

*Lord, have mer-cy; Christ, have mer-cy;*

*Lord, have mer-cy up-on us.*

\* Declaration of Forgiveness

Friends, this is what I know— God delights in us.

God throws open the door, just like Elizabeth, and says,

“Come on home. There is room for you here!”

And in that moment, we are blessed. In that moment, we are forgiven.

In that moment, we are seen, healed, and welcomed home.

So rest in this good news: you are saved by grace.

Let us respond together, using the words from Mary's song:

**“My soul magnifies the Lord,**

**and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**

**for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant,**

**Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed.”**

\* Sung Response No. 89 (*Refrain*)

*For you, O Lord, my soul in still-ness waits;  
tru-ly my hope is in you.*

## THE WORD

Children's Moment

Choral Anthem "LET ALL MORTAL FLESH KEEP SILENCE"

Prayer for Illumination

Let us pray:

God of all,

we are a mixed bag of distracted and forlorn, eager and anxious.

We hope that you might move through the obstacle course

we build up around our hearts— made out of questions and defenses—  
and douse us in good news.

For at the end of the day, all we want is to know that we are not alone,  
that you are always near.

So knock on our door,

sweet talk the guard dog we place in front of our vulnerable hearts,  
and come right in. Make yourself at home.

Pull us close and tell us your story of unbelievable good news.

We are listening. We are grateful. Amen.

Readings from Scripture

History 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (*Hannah's Prayer*) Pg. 234

Wisdom Psalm 113 (*God the Helper of the Needy*) Pg. 532

Gospel Luke 1:39-58 (*Mary Visits Elizabeth*) Pg. 53

Sermon "We See God in Each Other"

## RESPONSE TO THE WORD

### \* Affirmation of Faith

**We believe that creation is inextricably linked.**

**We belong to one another in an undeniable way.**

**We are bone of bone and flesh of flesh, life breathed into dust.**

**We believe that God invites us to live into that truth—**

**to love without abandon, to see the good in one another,**

**to trust that all belong to God.**

**We know that this life of connection is easier said than done,**

**which is why we gather in this space,**

**week after week, generation after generation, to be reminded:**

**We see God in each other. This we believe. Amen.**

### Sharing of Joys and Concerns

#### Prayers of the People

God of yesterday and God of tomorrow,

from the very beginning, you gave us the gift of relationships.

From the very beginning, you tucked us into communities.

From the very beginning, you wired us for connection.

From the very beginning, you made our hearts capable of love.

Thank you!

This gift of relationship has led us to people who lead us to you,  
and we are better for it.

So today, we want to say thank you for our Elizabeths—

for the people who have thrown open the doors for us,

who revel in our joy, who point out your presence in our lives,

and who are quick to affirm us and call us blessed.

Those people come in many shapes and sizes.

For some of us, the Elizabeths in our lives are family members—

parents and grandparents who have cheered us on along the way.

For others, teachers and coaches, neighbors and scout leaders,

professors and counselors come to mind.

And we can't forget the way our chosen family—

friends and partners—have been like Elizabeth for us.

These people have reminded us what love looks like in a hurting world,  
which has pointed us back to you.

So today, God, we ask for your help in opening our eyes even more.

We want to see you—in those who love us well and in those who don't.

We want to see you—in those whose coffee order we have memorized,  
and in those we've never talked to.

We want to see you, not only in those who are family—

who look like us or think like us—

but in those who come from very different places and positions in life.

From generation to generation,

you have left your fingerprints all over creation.

Help us to be like Elizabeth—

to see and celebrate glimmers of your good news—in all walks of life.

With hope we pray:

The Lord's Prayer (*sin / sin against us*)

Hymnal pg. 35

**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 sins,  
as we forgive those who sin 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. Amen.**



Invitation to the Offering

From generation-to-generation God has been at work within God's people.  
From generation to generation the Good News has changed lives  
and given us love without bounds or limits.

Let us give our gifts now to God so that God's love may grow  
and continue to live on in generations to come.

Offertory

“JOY TO THE WORLD”

Children's Bell Choir

\* Hymn No. 606 “**PRAISE GOD, FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW**”

*Praise God, from whom all bless-ings flow;  
praise him, all crea-tures here be-low;  
praise him a-bove, ye heaven-ly host;  
praise Fa-ther, Son, and Ho-ly Ghost. A-men.*

\* Prayer of Dedication

God of love, we give you thanks for your faithfulness  
that extends beyond this time and place.

Bless these gifts that have been given, that they may help us to bring love  
that shines brighter than the hate we see in the world.

Bless all of us here, that we may embody your love  
and be beacons of it in the world. Amen.

THE SENDING FORTH

\* Hymn No. 100 “**MY SOUL CRIES OUT WITH A JOYFUL SHOUT**”

*(CANTICLE OF THE TURNING)*

*My soul cries out with a joy-ful shout  
that the God of my heart is great,  
and my spir-it sings of the won-drous things  
that you bring to the ones who waits.  
You fixed your sight on the ser-vant's plight,  
and my weak-ness you did not spurn,*

*so from east to west shall my name be blest.  
Could the world be a-bout to turn?*

*(Refrain)*

*My heart shall sing of the day you bring.  
Let the fires of your jus-tice burn.  
Wipe a-way all tears,  
for the dawn draws near,  
and the world is a-bout to turn.*

*Though I am small, my God, my all,  
you work great things in me,  
and your mer-cy will last from the depths of the past  
to the end of the age to be.  
Your ver-y name puts the proud to shame,  
and to those who would for you yearn,  
you will show your might, put the strong to flight,  
for the world is a-bout to turn.*

*(Refrain)*

*From the halls of power to the for-tress tower,  
not a stone will be left on stone.  
Let the king be-ware for your jus-tice tears  
ev-ery ty-rant from his throne.  
The hun-gry poor shall weep no more,  
for the food they can nev-er earn;  
there are ta-bles spread; ev'ery mouth be fed,  
for the world is a-bout to turn.*

*(Refrain)*

*Though the na-tions rage from age to age,  
we re-mem-ber who holds us fast:  
God's mer-cy must de-liv-er us  
from the con-quer-or's crush-ing grasp.  
This sav-ing word that our fore-bears heard  
is the prom-ise which holds us bound,  
till the spear and rod can be crushed by God,  
who is turn-ing the world a-round.*

*(Refrain)*

*My heart shall sing of the day you bring.  
Let the fires of your jus-tice burn.  
Wipe a-way all tears,  
for the dawn draws near,  
and the world is a-bout to turn.*

\* Charge and Blessing

As you leave this place, may you go knowing that  
from generation to generation, we have been claimed and loved.  
From generation to generation, God has been by our side.  
From generation to generation, we are not alone.  
The God of yesterday and the God of tomorrow knows you by name,  
loves you, and calls you forth,  
saying, “Go be the person you are called to be,  
love wildly, do justice, and come back soon.”  
May it be so. Amen.

\* Sung Response No. 91 “COME, COME EMMANUEL”

*Come, come Em-man-u-el.  
Come, Em-man-u-el.  
Come, come Em-man-u-el.  
Come, Em-man-u-el.*

\* Postlude

“GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN”

Children’s Bell Choir

MUSIC ATTRIBUTIONS

“Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn”  
Text: Marty Haugen, 1983, alt.  
Music: Marty Haugen, 1983  
Text & Music © 1983 GIA Publications, Inc.)

“Lord, Have Mercy”  
Text: Trad. Liturgical text  
Music: American folk melody; arr. Richard Proulx, 1984  
Music Arr. © 1986 GIA Publications, Inc.

“For You, O Lord, My Soul in Stillness Waits”  
Text & Music: Marty Haugen, 1982  
Text & Music © 1982 GIA Publications, Inc.

“My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout / “Canticle of the Turning”  
Text: Rory Cooney, 1990  
Music: Irish melody; arr. Rory Cooney, 1990  
Text & Music Arr. © 1990 GIA Publications, Inc.

“Come, Come Emmanuel”  
Text and Music: James J. Chepponis, 1995  
Text and Music © 1995 Gia Publications, Inc.

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“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”