

**December 31, 2023  
First Sunday of Christmas  
Bethany Lutheran Church (ELCA)**

**PRELUDE AND LIGHTING OF CANDLES  
RINGING OF BELL  
WELCOME**

*The people of God stand.*

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
the Word made flesh,  
our life and salvation.

**Amen.**

Trusting the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

God of life,  
**you promise good news of great joy for all people,  
and call us to be messengers of your peace.  
We confess that too often we hoard our joy,  
our resources, and our security.  
We nurture conflict and build barriers.  
We neglect the needs of our neighbors  
and ignore the groaning of creation.  
Have mercy on us.  
Where we are self-centered, open our hearts.  
Where we are reluctant, give us courage.  
Where we are cynical, restore our trust.  
Renew us with your grace  
and give us again the hope of eternal life in you.  
Amen.**

Hear the good news:

We are children of God and heirs of God's promises  
through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In † Jesus we are forgiven and redeemed.

Sing with joy, for all the ends of the earth  
shall know the salvation of God.

**Amen.**

**HYMN *Angels, from the Realms of Glory (ELW275)***



- 1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
- 2 Shep-herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch-ing o'er your flocks by night,
- 3 Sa - ges, leave your con - tem-pla - tions, bright-er vi - sions beam a - far;
- 4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais-ing God, the Fa - ther, Spir - it, Son,



once you sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:  
God with us is now re - sid - ing, yon - der shines the in - fant light.  
seek the great de - sire of na - tions, you have seen his na - tal star.  
ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing to the e - ter - nal Three in One.

*Refrain*



Come and wor-ship, come and wor-ship, wor-ship Christ, the new-born king.

## CHRISTMAS DIALOG

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world!

**He is the Light no darkness can overcome.**

At darkest night we gather to celebrate the great light of our salvation.

**With the heavenly host we sing, "Glory to God in the highest heaven."**

In Christ, God's Word is made flesh and lives among us.

**With the shepherds, we will tell of the wonders we have seen and heard.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*The people of God are seated.*

## WORD

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

### FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:10—62:3

*To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.*

A reading from Isaiah.

<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. <sup>62:1</sup>For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. <sup>2</sup>The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. <sup>3</sup>You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM 148

<sup>1</sup>Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;  
praise God in the heights.

<sup>2</sup>**Praise the LORD, all you angels;  
sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**

<sup>3</sup>Praise the LORD, sun and moon;  
sing praise, all you shining stars.

<sup>4</sup>**Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,  
and you waters above the heavens.**

<sup>5</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
who commanded, and they were created,

<sup>6</sup>**who made them stand fast forever and ever,  
giving them a law that shall not pass away.**

<sup>7</sup>Praise the LORD from the earth,  
you sea monsters and all deeps;

<sup>8</sup>**fire and hail, snow and fog,  
tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**

<sup>9</sup>mountains and all hills,  
fruit trees and all cedars;  
<sup>10</sup>**wild beasts and all cattle,  
creeping things and flying birds;**  
<sup>11</sup>sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,  
princes and all rulers of the world;  
<sup>12</sup>**young men and maidens,  
old and young together.**

<sup>13</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.

<sup>14</sup>**The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all faithful servants,  
the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD. Hallelujah!**

## **SECOND READING: Galatians 4:4-7**

*Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.*

A reading from Galatians.

<sup>4</sup>When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. <sup>6</sup>And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*The people of God stand.*

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (ELW p.188)**



Al-le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the  
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

## **GOSPEL READING: Luke 2:22-40**

*Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.*

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>22</sup>When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, [Joseph and Mary] brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's

Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, <sup>29</sup>“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

<sup>33</sup>And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

<sup>36</sup>There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup>When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*The people of God are seated.*

**SERMON**

*The people of God stand.*

**HYMN *What Child is This (ELW 296)***



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!


## APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

*Each petition ends with, "Lord, in your mercy." Those worshipping respond with the hymn below "O Lord Hear My Prayer" (ELW 751).*



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, an - swer me.  
or *The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: all my hope comes from God.*



O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and lis - ten to me.  
*The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: God, the well-spring of life.*

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

## PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.  
**And also with you.**

*The people of God are seated.*

## OFFERING

*We are grateful for your gifts and they are needed to continue the work of the church. For those worshipping online, options on ways to give are found on our website ([www.wbbethany.org](http://www.wbbethany.org)). Thank you! After the offering is gathered, we sing the people of God stand and sign the hymn below as the gifts are brought forward.*

## OFFERTORY HYMN *Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful (ELW 184)*



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that  
we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of  
all; u-nite them with the prayers we of-fer. Grace our ta-ble  
with your pres-ence, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

## OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

**God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Amen.**

## GREAT THANKSGIVING *(ELW p.190)*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

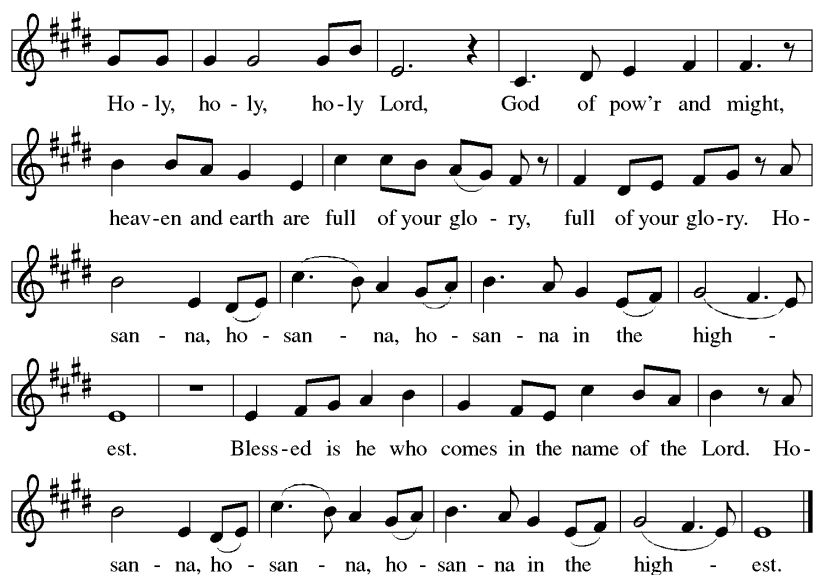
Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh, you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho-ly, ho-ly, ho-ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,  
heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry, full of your glo-ry. Ho-  
san-na, ho-san-na, ho-san-na in the high-  
est. Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-  
san-na, ho-san-na, ho-san-na in the high-est.

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

## LORD'S PRAYER (ELW p.191).

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to

**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.**

*The people of God are seated.*

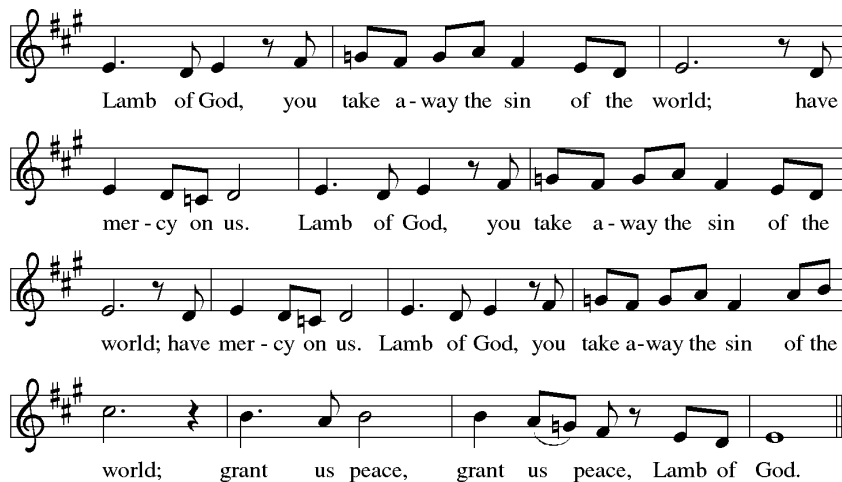
## COMMUNION

*Communion today will be distributed in a continuous line. The cups in the center of the tray contain white grape juice. All other cups are wine. Gluten-free wafers are available upon request.*

*All gathered who believe Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior are invited to come to Holy Communion with repentant hearts believing that Christ forgives our sins and guides our lives. Strengthened, forgiven, and nourished through this meal the Spirit sends us forth in service and to proclaim the good news of Christ's love. Children and adults who do not take communion may come forward for a blessing.*

## HYMNS DURING COMMUNION

### *Lamb of God (ELW p.191)*



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have  
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the  
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the  
world; grant us peace, grant us peace, Lamb of God.



## 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



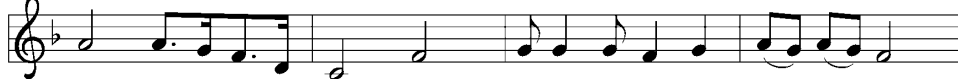
sends the on - ly Son, and sends the on - ly Son.  
man - ger in a stall, a man - ger in a stall.  
clothed the sky with light, who clothed the sky with light.  
glo - ry mag - ni - fy, your glo - ry mag - ni - fy.

Text: Nikolaus Herman, 1480–1561; tr. hymnal version  
Music: LOBT GOTT, IHR CHRISTEN, Nikolaus Herman  
Text © 2006 Augsburg Fortress

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## Go Tell It on the Mountain (ELW 290)

*Refrain*



Go tell it on the moun - tain, o-ver the hills and ev - 'ry - where;



go tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!



1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,  
2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when, lo, a - bove the earth  
3 Down in a lone - ly man - ger the hum-ble Christ was born;

*Refrain*



be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.  
rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.  
and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless-ed Christ-mas morn.

Text: African American spiritual, refrain: John W. Work Jr., 1872–1925, stanzas, alt.  
Music: GO TELL IT, African American spiritual

*The people of God stand.*

## PRAYER

Let us pray.

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.**

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

**BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✝ give you peace.  
**Amen.**

**HYMM *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice (ELW 288)***



1 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;  
2 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;  
3 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;



give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to - day;  
now ye hear of end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ was born for this!  
now ye need not fear the grave; Je - sus Christ was born to save!



ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man - ger now.  
He has o - pened heav - en's door, and we are blest for - ev - er - more.  
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the ev - er - last - ing hall.



Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!  
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!  
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

**SENDING**

On the mountain, over the hills and everywhere, go tell the good news of great joy for all people that Jesus Christ is born!  
**Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE**

*Please join us refreshments and fellowship in the fellowship hall.*

<b>OUR WORSHIP ASSISTANTS</b>		
<b>Ministers of:</b>	<b>Today</b>	<b>January 7</b>
<b>Music</b>	Jill Barnhart	Jill Barnhart
<b>Proclamation (Lector)</b>	Bruce Jeffries	Alan Beyer
<b>Minister of Technology</b>	Jill Taylor	Cole Crosthwaite/Tate Frantz
<b>Worship (Altar Care)</b>	Stacey Beyer/Cindy Knoop	Shawn & Tonya Samuelson

This worship is being streamed live via Facebook and will be posted to our Website and X (formerly Twitter). The camera captures anyone in the first few pews of our worship space and beyond extending to the altar.

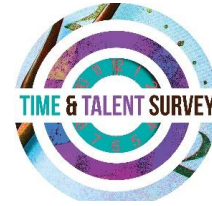


Thank you for worshipping with us today. Just as Jesus welcomed the stranger, we believe all are welcome here. Please join us again next week. For more information about our life together in Christ, visit: [www.wbbethany.org](http://www.wbbethany.org)

Stay u to date with happenings from around the Southeastern Iowa Synod by signing up for the weekly E-News. Visit: <https://seiasynod.org/follow-us/>

Continuing stewarding God's gifts to us, particularly our time and talents, it is time again to collect information about who, what, and how we want to share our blessings. You can pick up a Time and Talent Survey in the church entryway and return it to the office or go to the website and fill it out online.

<https://forms.gle/x146kvK3DaY1TgEE8>



## Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 21, 2023  
after worship

Remember, a "Voting Member" per our Constitution and Bylaws is defined as:

**C8.02.c** Voting members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation.

**sunday school**  
with Bethany Lutheran Church

Preschool - Grade 3  
**January 7, 14, 28**  
8:30 - 9:15 AM  
WORSHIP AT 9:30 AM

## OUR mission

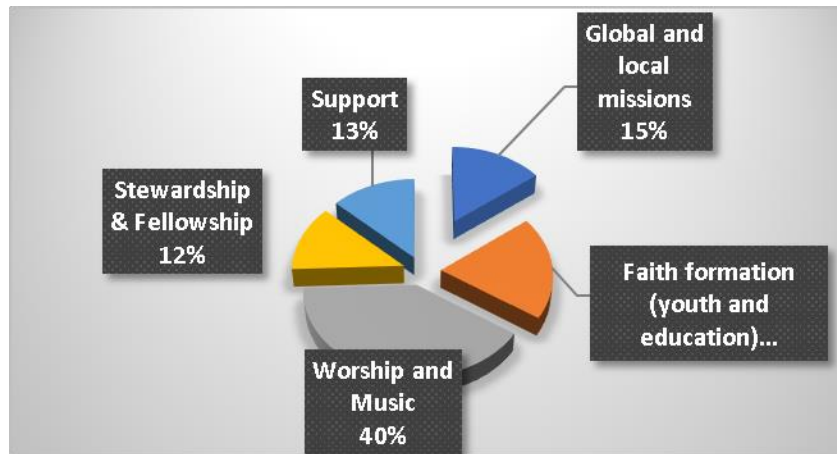
To grow so deep in Christ through worship, education, and fellowship that we celebrate by reaching out to others.



**TO GROW SO DEEP IN CHRIST**  
**through worship, fellowship, and education that we celebrate**  
**by reaching out to others.**

This Pie chart reflects the 2023 budget distribution: Worship – 40%, Education – 20%, & Fellowship – 12%. Through These ministry programs the Holy Spirit is at work feeding our faith, growing us in Christ and inspiring our evangelism programs where we reach out to others and share our gifts.

[We are asking for your support to help us sustain and grow the mission component of the pie chart in 2024 by increasing your weekly offering commitment.](#)



We have many ways for you to give and 3 easy and quick options are:

- Online with the blue “Give Now” button on our website. Visit [wbbethany.org](http://wbbethany.org).
- Our automated giving program through Vanco. This is a great way to automatically set your financial gifts throughout the year. The sign-up forms can be found on our website or contact our Administrative Assistant Paula Casper, or our Financial Secretary Claudia Beyer and they can provide you the forms.
- Sunday’s offering plate in worship.



**Southeastern Iowa Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

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