Hanging of the Greens



11-29-2026
First Sunday of Advent

Bethany Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

This worship is being streamed live via Facebook and posted to our YouTube channel. The camera captures anyone in the first few pews of our worship space and beyond extending to the altar.

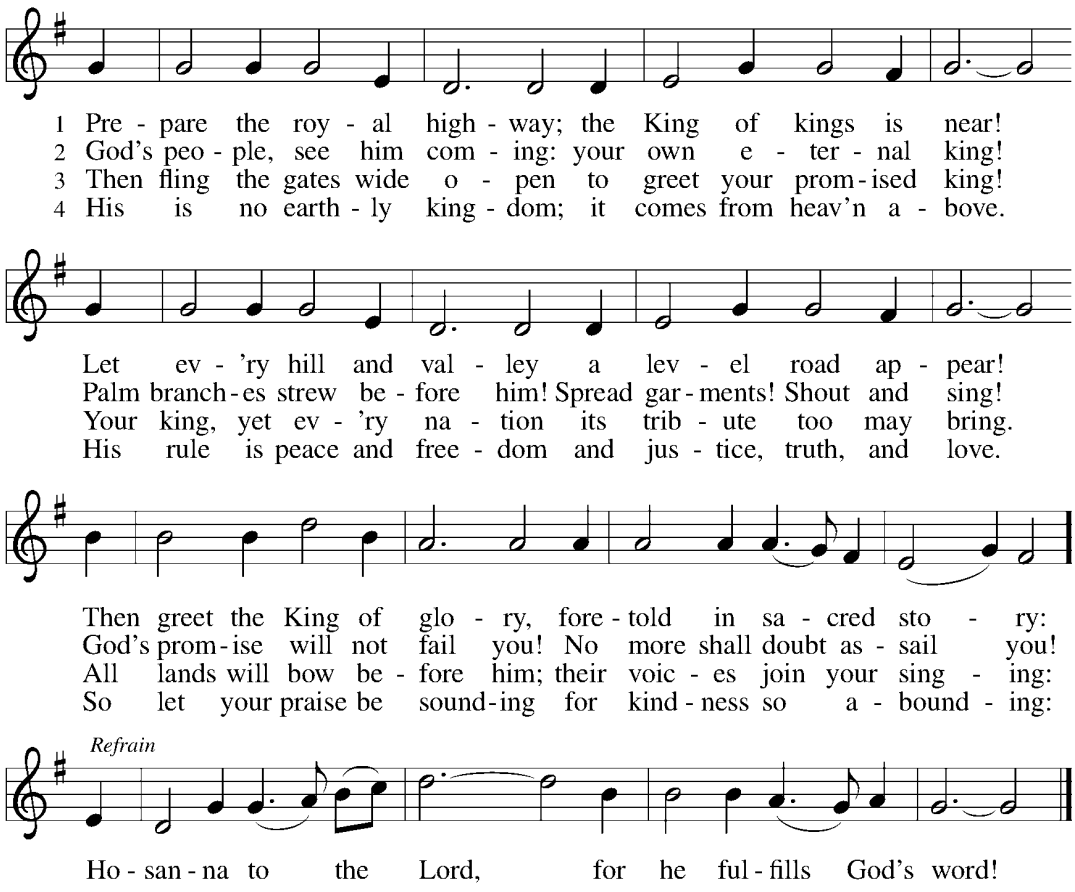
PRELUDE
LIGHTING OF CANDLES
RINGING OF THE BELL
WELCOME

*The gathered people of God stand and respond with the **bold printed** text.*

CALL TO WORSHIP (Jeremiah 33:14-15)
The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous branch sprout from David's line. He will do what is just and right in the land.

RESPONSIVE READING (Isaiah 11:1-6, 10)
A shoot will come from the stump of Jesse, from his branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord.
And he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he
sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips, he will slay the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together, and a little child will lead them.
In that day that the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples;
the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

HYMN *Prepare the Royal Highway* (ELW 264)



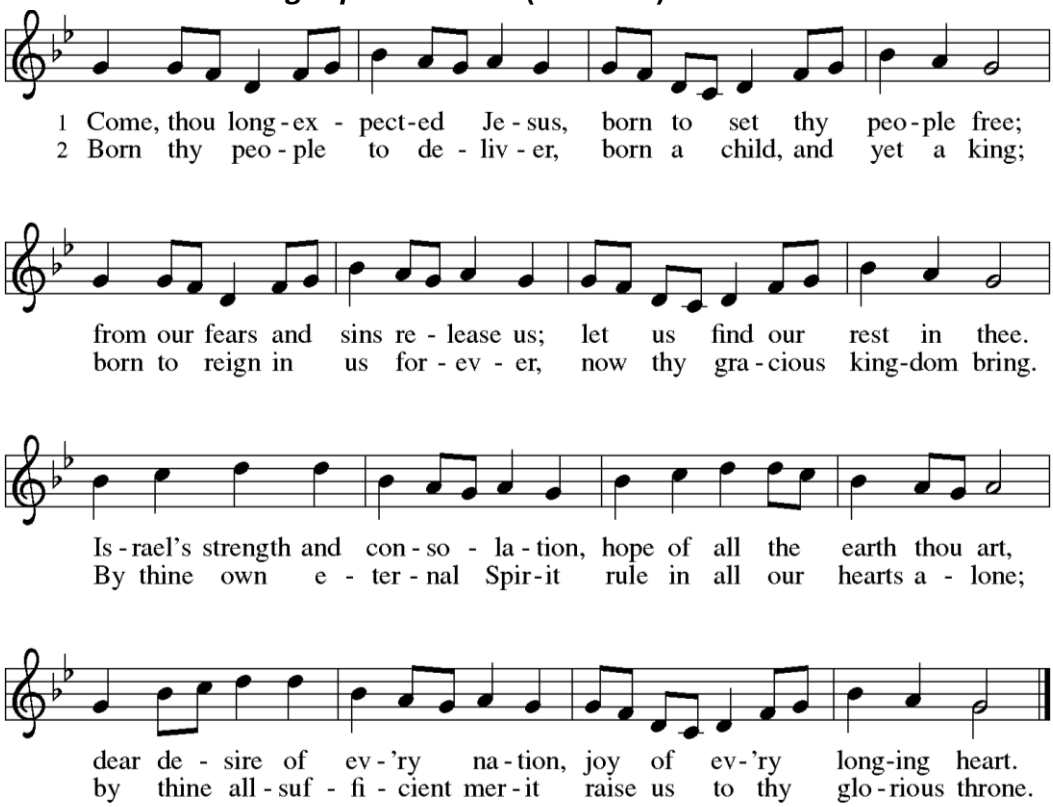
The people of God sit.

The Meaning of Advent

Advent is a time of preparation, a time of penance, and a time of waiting. As we make ready for Christ's coming, we prepare our homes with the symbols of Christmas, and we prepare our hearts by opening them to God's promise and by showing our repentance. Then, in anticipation, we wait, focusing our homes and hearts on God's greatest gift to the world - His son, born as a tiny babe in a humble manger in Bethlehem. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

Let us pray.
Heavenly Father, as we decorate this place of worship, adorn our hearts and minds with your love and peace. Help us focus with joy on the true meaning of Christmas. Clothed in your bountiful grace and love use us to spread the hope, peace, and joy of this season and witness to the world your gift of salvation through the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

HYMN *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus* (ELW 254)



The Advent Wreath

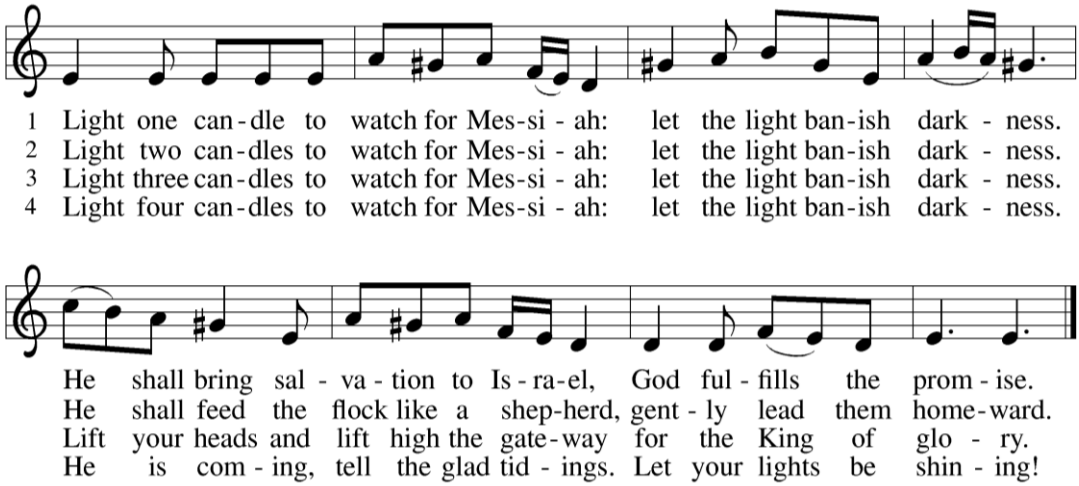
SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 9:2
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined.

The origin of the burning wreath is found in the traditions of Pre-Christian Germanic people who burned the greens in the hope of spring following a long winter. In the sixteenth century throughout Germany, the Advent wreath became a traditional symbol for many Christians. The circle of evergreens, having no end and bearing four candles, reminds us of the eternal Christ, the light of the world. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. Each Sunday in Advent a new candle is lit until all four glow on the fourth Sunday.

The three blue candles and single pink candle represent the four weeks of Advent leading up to Christmas. On the first Sunday of Advent, one blue candle is lit and represents hope, reminding us of God's promise that Christ is our hope and our salvation. On the second Sunday of Advent, a second blue candle is lit and symbolizes peace, reminding us that Jesus is the "Prince of Peace." On the third Sunday of Advent, the pink candle is lit and represents joy, reminding us of the angel's message "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11) On the fourth Sunday of Advent, the final blue candle is lit and symbolizes love, reminding us, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) Then on Christmas Eve, as the people of God gather to rejoice and give thanks for the birth of our Savior, the white candle is lit. This candle represents the true light, Jesus Christ, which has come into the world.

The first blue candle is lighted.

HYMN *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* (ELW 240, sing v.1 twice)



Evergreens

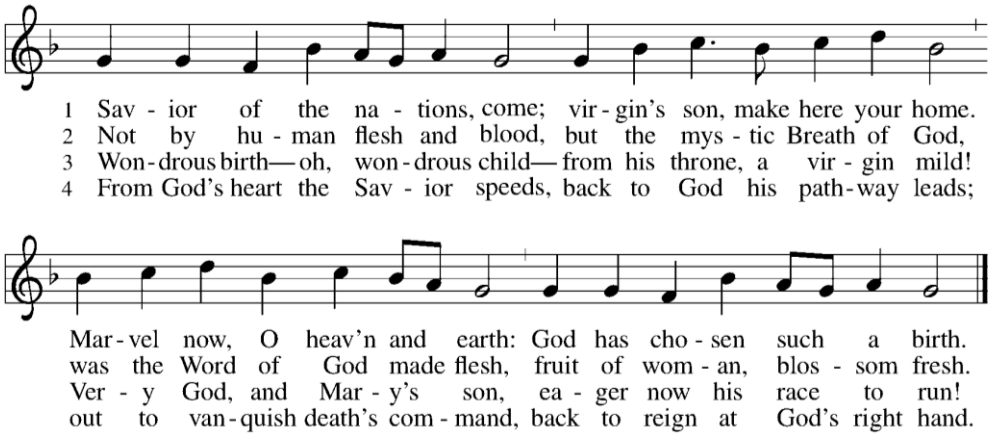
SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 92:12-15

12 The righteous flourish like the palm tree,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
13 **They are planted in the house of the LORD;**
they flourish in the courts of our God.
14 In old age they still produce fruit;
they are always green and full of sap,
15 **showing that the LORD is upright;**
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

The lights on the greenery are turned on.

Hanging greenery goes back to ancient Rome. Evergreen roping and wreaths were hung in homes and on buildings as a sign of victory. Evergreens include not only fir, cedar, and pine but also ivy, holly, and rosemary. Christians continued to follow the practice of hanging greens as a symbol of Jesus's victory over death. Evergreens offer a variety of symbols and traditions. Holly has become a sign of Christ's passion. The prickly leaves suggest the crown of thorns and the red berries, the blood that Jesus shed for our sin. A legend says that the rosemary shrub is fragrant because Mary laid the Christ child's garments on its branches. In the Middle Ages, rosemary was spread on the floor of homes at Christmas, and as people walked on it a pleasant aroma filled the air. The Evergreen also serves as a symbol of eternal life - always green, always fresh, and alive, everlasting. Thus, the Evergreen is symbol of the eternal promise of salvation through the everlasting God. The hanging of the greens has become a tradition of preparation for Christmas.

HYMN *Savior of the Nations Come* (ELW 263)



Poinsettias

SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 60:1-2

[1]Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. [2]For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples, but the Lord will rise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.

Two poinsettias are placed upon the altar.

The poinsettia is known in Central America as the "Flower of the Holy Night." This blossom is a newer Christmas tradition beginning in the early nineteenth century when Dr. Joel Poinsett, our first ambassador to Mexico, introduced it to the United States. Its star shape reminds us of the Bethlehem star. Two legends have evolved from this flower. The first explains its origin. A little boy having nothing to give baby Jesus, prayed and as he did, the flower grew at his feet. He picked the blossom and gave it to the Christ child. The second legend tells us that the poinsettia was white representing the purity of Christ, but when Jesus died on the cross, the blossom changed to blood red. So, the star-shaped poinsettia reminds us of the holy night pointing us toward Good Friday.

The Christmas Tree, Star & Chrismons

SCRIPTURE READINGS

[3]Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" – *Galatians 3:13*

[5]But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. – *Isaiah 53:5*

[1]In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, [2]asking, "Where is the child who has been born King of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." – *Matthew 2:1-2*

Chrismons are placed on the tree during the reading and hymn below. The lights on the tree are turned on; however, the star will remain unlit until Christmas Eve when we celebrate the birth of the true Light of the world.

In ancient times, trees and all nature were held in great reverence as a symbol of rebirth. During the season of Yule, trees were brought indoors and decorated as part of pagan worship. Because of this, trees were banned in many Christian churches until the church leaders studied the words of Isaiah 60:13, "The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress all together, to adorn the place of my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of my feet."

A story is told of Martin Luther who was inspired by the beauty of an evergreen tree lit by the stars on Christmas Eve. He cut down the tree, brought it home, and lit the limbs with candles to simulate the stars in the sky above Bethlehem.

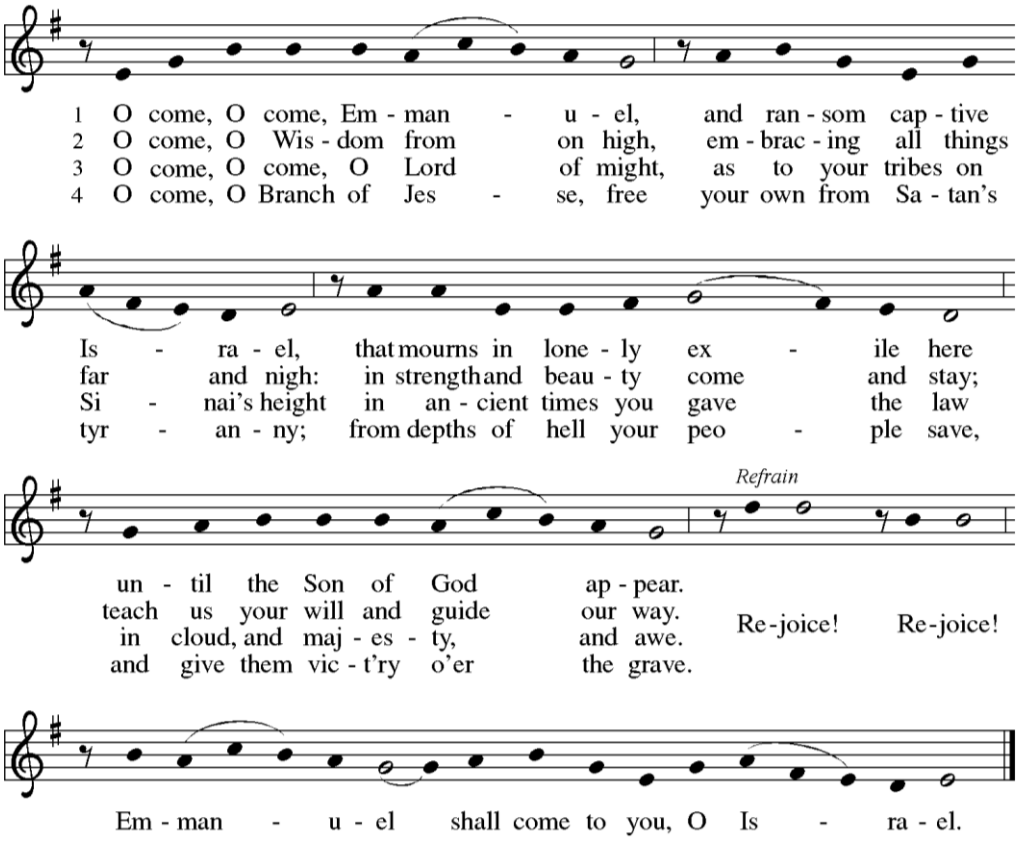
In the late Middle Ages, glass bulbs and the Bethlehem star were added. The Christmas tree also reminds us of the tree on which Christ was crucified. It serves as a wonderful symbol of our salvation and forgiveness through Jesus.

The star serves as a symbol of Christmas in many ways. First, we remember the star of Bethlehem and the wise men who followed the star to find the Christ child as Matthew 2:2 states, "For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." The Bible, in Revelations 22:16, also refers to Jesus as the morning star. "I Jesus have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." As well, the starlight is universal, its rays are seen everywhere, and so stars have become the symbol of peace throughout the world.

These Chrismons are special Christ-centered ornaments and are the symbol of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection. The ornaments are white and gold to symbolize the purity of Christ and his kinship. These Chrismons have been lovingly, hand crafted by our own Bethany members.

The people of God stand.

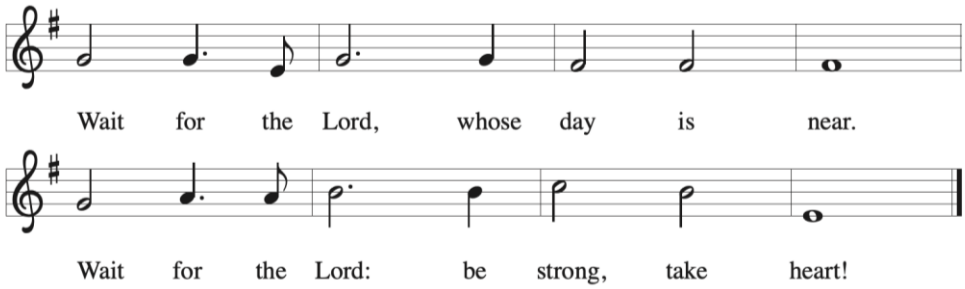
HYMN *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* (ELW 257)



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, "As we wait for the Lord, we pray" and the people of God sing "Wait for the Lord" (ELW 262).



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 greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace and then sit.

Gift Giving

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 2:10-11

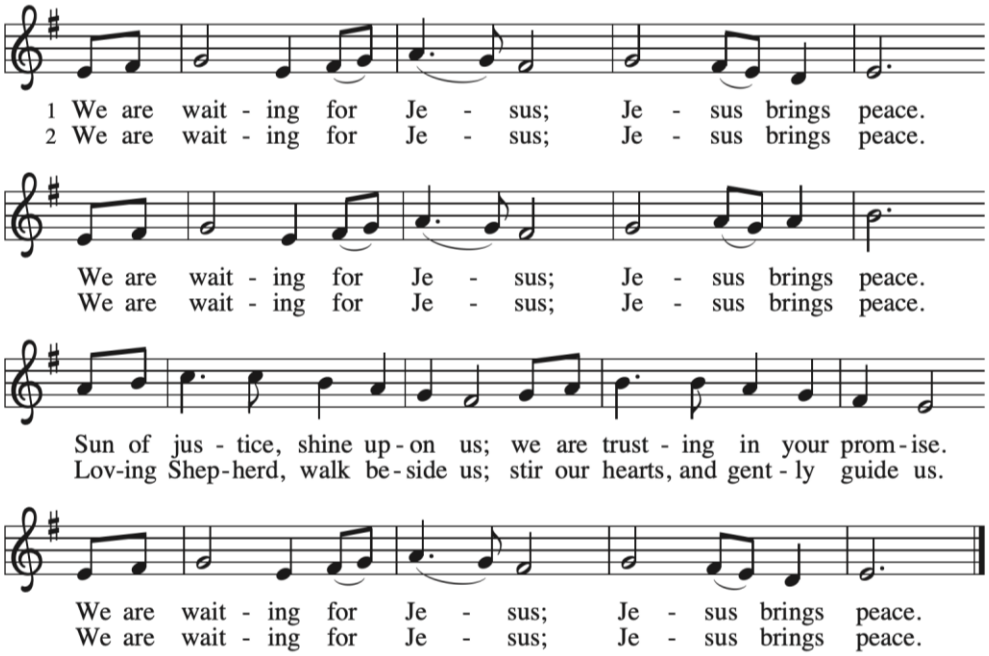
10When the wise men saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Gift giving is an ancient practice. St. Nicholas, born in Asia Minor, used his wealth to help the needy with unexpected gifts. The biblical account of the wise men bringing gifts to the Christ child may also have been the origin of Christmas gift-giving. Christians all over the world embrace the birth of Jesus as God's most precious gift. Kindness and hospitality shown during this season are done out of our love for Christ and the love he has gifted us with. Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

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). Thank you! After the offering is gathered, the people of God stand and sing the hymn on the next page as the gifts are brought forward.

HYMN *We Are Waiting for Jesus* (All Creation Sings 905)



OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray.

Just as the Magi presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the new-born king, so also may our gifts be an offering of thanksgiving for the sending of your Son into the world to redeem us from our bondage to sin and death. During these four weeks of Advent, use us and the gifts we bring in sharing the good news of great joy through word and service in our community and in the world; for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The people of God sit.

The Nativity Scene

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 2:15

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

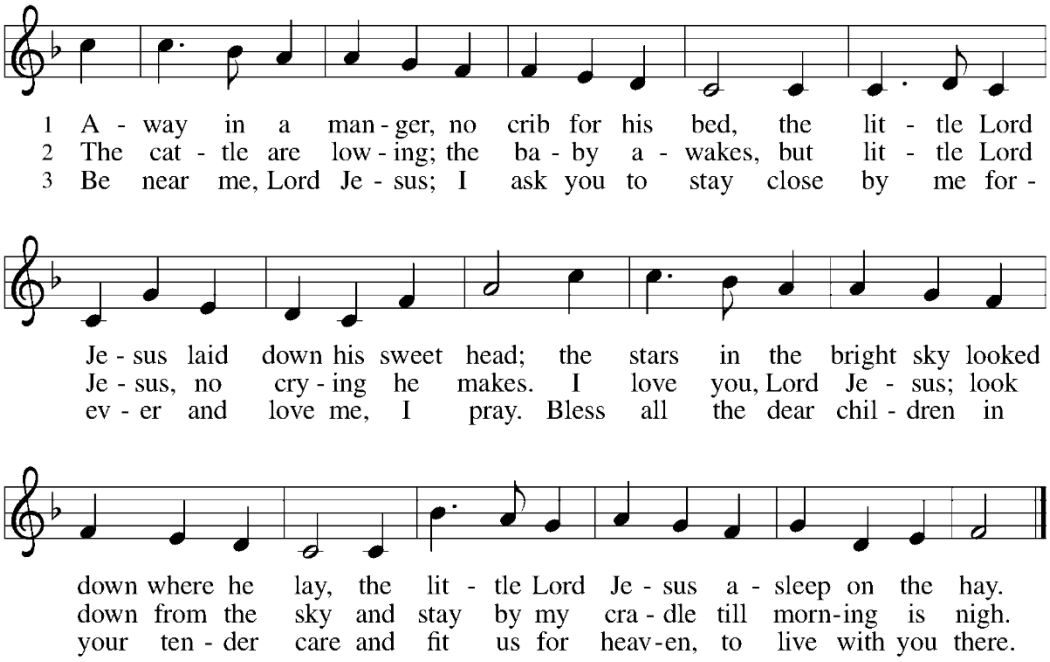
The Nativity is set up during the reading below.

In the Middle Ages, when a few people could read, and the church services were in Latin, carved figures were used to tell Bible stories, especially the story of Jesus's birth, the Nativity. This scene bears many names; Nativity scene, Christmas manger, Manger scene, and Crèche, to name a few.

St. Francis of Assisi is given credit for popularizing the manger scene in 1224 when he used a cave outside a small Italian town and set up a manger scene with live animals and real people. Jesus, the Christ child, was life-size and was made of wax.

Our manger scenes today include camels - a common animal in the East. They are called "Ships of the Desert." The camel's presence reminds us of the wise men from the East who came seeking the Christ child.

HYMN *Away in a Manger* (ELW 277)



Sending

The assembly stands

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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.

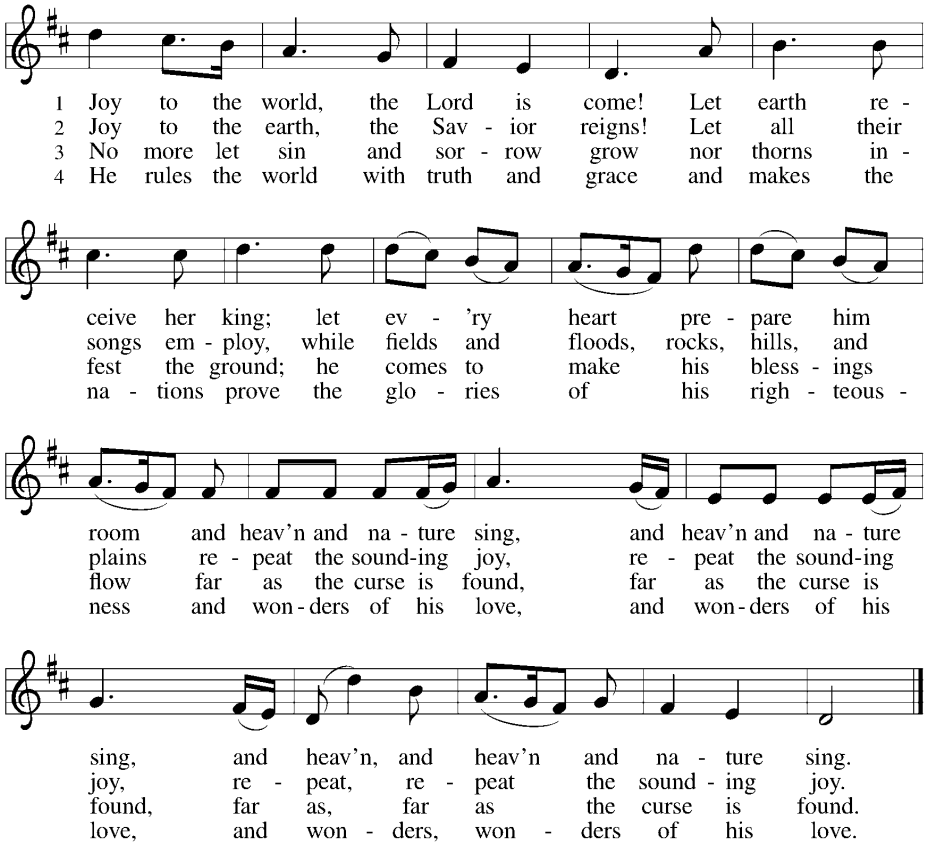
The hour has come for us to wake from our slumber,
because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed,
the night is nearly over; the day is almost here,
so, let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. (Romans 13:11-12)

Let us pray.
Lord, creator of all there is - trees, flowers, and light - be with us through this Advent season as we wait with patience for the coming of the Christ child. As we have adorned this place of worship, let our hearts be adorned and shine with your everlasting light. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the babe of Bethlehem.
Amen.

BLESSING

May Christ, the light of the world, shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path. Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN *Joy to the World* (ELW 267)



Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

We invite you to join us for coffee, refreshments and fellowship



Thanks to all assisting with preparing our space for the Advent and Christmas seasons.
Meaning of Advent: Deb Anderson
Advent Wreath: The Fonseca Family
Evergreens: Anne, Katie & Eli Anderson/Fetzer
Poinsettias: Jill Barnhart
Christmas Tree: The Bruns' Families and the Knoop Families.
Gift Giving: John Black
Nativity: Al Beyer and Gina & Jay Strong

OUR MINISTRY ASSISTANTS		
Ministers of:	**Today**	**December 6th**
Music	Jill Barnhart	Jill Barnhart
Proclamation (Lector)	Hanging of the Greens	Jon Twing
Hospitality (Greeter)	Nancy Bruns	Al & Claudia Beyer
Technology	Dale Swenson	Dave Poppen
Worship (Altar Care)	Pat Cassabaum	Stacy Beyer
Food & Fellowship	Opportunity to assist!	Opportunity to assist!



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