

Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter

216 N. Main Street • Belmont, NC 28012 • Sunday, December 31st, 2023

The First Sunday after Christmas Day



GATHERING/WELCOME

PRELUDE *Break Forth (From: The Christmas Oratorio) J.S Bach*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism,
as the presiding minister begins.*

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

C **Amen.**

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

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

P God of life,

C 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.**

P 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.

C **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG: *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice* LBW 55
(All verses)

GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
C **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P 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.
C **Amen.**

FIRST READING

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

A reading from the second chapter of Samuel.

Having dedicated her son Samuel to God's service, Hannah visits him every year when she and her husband Elkanah come to the temple to offer sacrifices. God grants Hannah more children, and Samuel himself gains favor in the sight of all.

¹⁸Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the Lord repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the Lord"; and then they would return to their home.

²⁶Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people.

A The word of the Lord.
C **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL: *Prepare the Royal Highway* LBW 26
(Verses 1, 4)

SECOND READING

Colossians 3:12-17

A reading from the third chapter of Colossians.

Just as newly baptized Christians in the early church were clothed with new garments upon arising from the baptismal waters, so all who have received God's gift of life in Jesus Christ are covered with the character of Christ.

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

A The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL: *Oh Little Town of Bethlehem* LBW 41
(Sing all verses)

PSALM 148. Read Responsively

- ¹ Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens;
 praise him in the heights!
- ² **Praise him, all his angels;
 praise him, all his host!**
- ³ Praise him, sun and moon;
 praise him, all you shining stars!
- ⁴ **Praise him, you highest heavens,
 and you waters above the heavens!**
- ⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord,
 for he commanded and they were created.
- ⁶ **He established them forever and ever;
 he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.**
- ⁷ Praise the Lord from the earth,
 you sea monsters and all deeps,
- ⁸ **fire and hail, snow and frost,
 stormy wind fulfilling his command!**
- ⁹ Mountains and all hills,
 fruit trees and all cedars!
- ¹⁰ **Wild animals and all cattle,
 creeping things and flying birds!**
- ¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples,
 princes and all rulers of the earth!
- ¹² **Young men and women alike,
 old and young together!**
- ¹³ Let them praise the name of the Lord,
 for his name alone is exalted;
 his glory is above earth and heaven.
- ¹⁴ **He has raised up a horn for his people,
 praise for all his faithful,
 for the people of Israel who are close to him.**

CAROL: *Angels From the Realms of Glory* LBW 50
(Sing verses 1, 2, & 4)

THIRD READING

Luke 2:41-52

A reading from the second chapter of Luke.

Jesus grew up in a family that went to the Passover festival each year. It was in this environment of faithful adherence to the law that Jesus grew into spiritual maturity and an understanding of his identity and mission.

⁴¹Now every year [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." ⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

A The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL: *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* (Sing all verses)



- 1 It came up - on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
- 2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come with peace - ful wings un - furled,
- 3 And you, be - neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing low,
- 4 For lo! The days are has - t'ning on, by proph - ets seen of old,



from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
and still their heav'n - ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world.
who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow:
when with the ev - er - cir - cling years shall come the time fore - told,



"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all - gra - cious king."
A - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov - 'ring wing,
look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing;
when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors fling,



The world in sol - emn still - ness lay to hear the an - gels sing.
and ev - er o'er its ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.
oh, rest be - side the wea - ry road and hear the an - gels sing!
and all the world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

Text: Edmund H. Sears, 1810–1876
Music: CAROL, Richard S. Willis, 1819–1900



FOURTH READING

Luke 2:1-7

A reading from the second chapter of Luke.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

A The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL: *Of the Father's Love Begotten* LBW 42
(Sing all verses)

FIFTH READING

Luke 2:8-16

A reading from the second chapter of Luke.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ 'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'¹⁵When 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.' ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

A The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**



CAROL: *The First Noel* LBW 56 (Verse 1)

SIXTH READING

John 1:1-14

A reading from the first chapter of John.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

A The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

A brief silence.

You inspire faith in our hearts and call us to rejoice with our whole selves at the salvation you bring. Make our churches places of belonging for all people in the fullness of their being. Raise up the gifts and the witness of people who are neurodivergent, living with disability, or bearing invisible illness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your praise is sung throughout creation in all times and seasons. As the new year turns, ground us in your changeless and sustaining love. Keep us attentive to the rhythms of the cosmos and inspire us to live in harmony with all the earth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Give hope and stamina to leaders who work tirelessly for the sake of the most vulnerable. We pray especially for organizations working on behalf of children to provide basic needs, to protect from abuse and neglect, to address trauma, and to rescue from trafficking. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Sustain all people who, like Simeon and Anna, have been waiting for salvation and wholeness. We pray especially for anyone living with cancer or chronic illness, all people who are in physical rehabilitation or addiction recovery, and those experiencing complications from long COVID. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Let this community of faith be a joyful and welcome place for all ages and generations. Teach us to honor the wisdom of children, the inquisitiveness of youth, the thoughtfulness of adults, and the knowledge of elders. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We give thanks for all the beloved who lived with expectation and departed this life in peace. Sustain us in joy until we join them around your throne. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

Amen.

PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

OFFERING

ORGAN ANTHEM: *Gentle Mary Laid Her Child* Manz

OFFERTORY RESPONSE: *In the Bleak Midwinter* All Stand & Sing

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him---give my heart.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

P 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.

C Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

BLESSING

P God bless you and keep you, † Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever.

C Amen.

CAROL: *Go Tell It on the Mountain* LBW 70

POSTLUDE: *Rise Up, Shepherd* LBW 70

SENDING:

P Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news

C Thanks be to God.

*Thank you to our lector, Brian Achor.

*The altar flowers were given by SarahJo Plemmons in honor of SarahJo and Robert's one year anniversary and in loving memory of Vicki Jane Plemmons on her birthday.

*Special thank you to Deacon Rachel Bailey for leading worship today.

Schedule:
Sunday, December 31st
10:30 am - Worship in the Sanctuary

NOTE: All classes and music activities resume January 7th

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"Journeying through faith in a joyful, safe community, welcoming and serving Belmont and beyond."

Our core values are: **Embrace, Grow, Connect, and Give.**