Bethany Presbyterian Church

Graham, North Carolina
www.bethanypreschurch.org
www.facebook.com/bethanypresbyterian

December 14, 2025 – 11:00 am
Third Sunday of Advent
Joy

GATHERING AS GOD'S PEOPLE

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Welcome to our service of worship. Although we are worshipping in a variety of locations, we still affirm that God is present in our worship, whether in-person or virtually. Our prayer is that all who worship with us this day will truly feel the presence of God in this time. Know that you are loved and we are so glad you are here!

TRINITY CHIMES

PRELUDE:

WELCOME

***OPENING HYMN #15:** *Rejoice! Rejoice, Believers* LAURENTIUS LAURENTI

Rejoice! Rejoice, believers,
And let your lights appear;
The evening is advancing
And darker night is near.
The Bridegroom is arising
And soon He will draw nigh;
Up, watch with expectation,
At the midnight comes the cry.

See that your lamps are burning,
Replenish them with oil;
Look now for your salvation,
The end of sin and toil.

The marriage feast is waiting,
The gates wide open stand;
Arise, O heirs of glory,
The Bridegroom is at hand!
Our hope and expectation,
O Jesus, now appear;
Arise, Thou Sun so longed for,
Above this shadowed sphere!
With hearts and hands uplifted,
We plead, O Lord, to see
The day of earth's redemption,
And ever be with Thee!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING SENTENCES (ISAIAH 35:1-2; MATTHEW 11:4-5)

What if joy were to break out unrestrained in our world? What would we notice?
The wilderness and dry land would be glad; the desert rejoice and blossom.
The blind would see and the lame would walk. Lepers would be cleansed, and the deaf would hear.
The dead would rise and the poor would receive good news.
May joy break out in our worship today as we anticipate the One who comes into our world!
Come thou long expected Jesus!

OPENING RESPONSE: *While We Are Waiting, Come (Choir 1st time; Congregation 2nd time)*

While we are waiting, come.
While we are waiting, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel
While we are waiting, come.

GATHERING PRAYER (ISAIAH 35, JAMES 5, MATTHEW 11)

Joyful and patient God, you break into our Advent busyness with your extravagant promise of glory and joy.
Fire up our imaginations with holy trust in your goodness.
Inspire us with a patience that sees beyond our habitual longing for past glories and understandings.
Move us beyond our too familiar criticisms of one another and of ourselves.
Open our eyes and help us see your compassion, already at work in our world: healing, restoring, strengthening, and telling the good news that you are near.
Make us signs of your everlasting joy for your people and for all the world
We pray in the name of Jesus, whose nearness we proclaim. Amen.

LIGHTING THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE ELSA PETERS

Today celebrate joy. Even though we don't feel ready, we praise God. We celebrate the wonder that something amazing is happening in our lives. We marvel and praise with Simeon:

You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples. It's a light for revelation to the Gentiles and a glory for your people Israel.

O God, we light the third candle of Advent.
We light the candle of joy.

The third candle is lit

We light this candle with joy for what God is doing. We see the signs of promise in those places in our lives that are filled with joy this holiday season.

Let us pray together:

Eternal God, who magnifies each of our souls, help us to pay attention to your signs in these last few days before Christmas. Point us toward your joy. Orient us toward the joy that you offer to us now and always. Amen.

OFFERING OURSELVES FOR RENEWAL

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (FROM A DECLARATION OF FAITH)

What do you believe?
In Christ, God gave us a glimpse of the new creation God has already begun and will surely finish. We do not know when the final day will come. In our time we see only broken and scattered signs that the renewal of all things is under way. We do not yet see the end of cruelty and suffering in the world, the church, or our own lives. But we see Jesus as Lord. As he stands at the center of our history, we are confident he will stand at its end. He will judge all people and nations. Evil will be condemned and rooted out of God's good creation. There will be no more tears or pain. All things will be made new.

TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES (ROMANS 3:23-24)

Holy and wonderful God, we confess that we have closed our eyes to what you are doing. We prefer to concentrate on problems, bad news and violence. When we do, we miss all the healing, freeing and helping you accomplish in our world. We pass up opportunities to participate in your Good News. We rob ourselves of so much joy. Forgive us and give us eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to understand, and hearts to treasure your mission in the world. Fill us with unquenchable joy at the coming of Jesus. Amen.

AN OFFERING OF GOD'S GRACE

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Amen.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

A PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Come Holy Spirit! Through the reading and hearing of the Word today,
may a deep and complete joy be born in us. Amen.

ENCOUNTERING SCRIPTURE

PSALM 146:5-10 PEW BIBLE, 778

MATTHEW 11:2-11 PEW BIBLE, 1183

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

THE WORD IN MUSIC: *Morning Star* CANTATA BY LLOYD LARSON

AN OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS

OFFERTORY

***DOXOLOGY #592:** *Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow* THOMAS KEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.
Praise Him, all creatures here below.
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

***BLESSING OUR GIFTS**

***ADVENT PRAYER**

***CLOSING HYMN #11:** *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?* PAUL GERHARDT

O Lord, how shall I meet You,
How welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet You,
My Hope, my heart's Delight!
O kindle, Lord most holy,
A lamp within my breast,
To do in spirit lowly
All that may please You best.

Love caused Your incarnation,
Love brought You down to me;
Your thirst for my salvation
Procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling,
That led you to embrace
In love all loves excelling
Our lost and fallen race.

A glorious crown You give me,
A treasure safe on high,
That will not fail nor leave me
As earthly riches fly.
My heart shall bloom forever
For You with praises new,
And from Your Name shall never
Withhold the honor due.

***SENDING**

Go out from this place to look for and support all that God is doing in our world.
Now unto the One who is able to do beyond what we can ask or even imagine be all honor and glory and power.
And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be
with us all, now and forever. Amen.

***CHORAL BENEDICTION**

"Peace" Composed by Christopher A. Bagley

POSTLUDE:

_____

** Please stand in body or spirit.*

Our Faith Community @ Work

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Sundays, 9:45am Bible Study – Evie C. Marshall Room

Wednesdays, 10:00am Bethany Exercise Class - Evie C. Marshall Room
On Wednesdays at 10:00am in the Evie C. Marshall classroom we will have our exercise classes. Come join us for fun and fellowship.

Sunday, December 14th 11:00am Advent 3: Joy - Sanctuary
Our choir will bless us with a Christmas Cantata

Tuesday, December 16th 11:00am The Women of Bethany Church Gathering
The Women of Bethany Church will come together on Tuesday, December 2nd at 11:00am. Lunch will be served.

Sunday, December 21st 11:00am Advent 4: Love – Sanctuary

Tuesday, January 6th 2026 Alamance Co. Mobile Library
The Alamance County Public Libraries mobile library with be at Bethany on the first Tuesday of each month. The mobile library will be in the church parking lot 10:30 – 11:30.
Please stop by and "check-out" this wonderful service the library has to share.

S.A.F.E. (Southern Alamance Family Empowerment)
How can we help S.A.F.E. for during the **Fall months**? They are asking for **Canned Chicken, Canned Tuna, 1 lb. bags of Rice and Spaghetti. Breakfast items (Cereals, Granola Bars, Oatmeal, Breakfast Bars), Children and Adult diapers and Feminine products.**
S.A.F.E. will be closed the 1st and 5th Saturday of the Month.
Consider donating your paper bags.

This Week's Calendar:

Sunday, December 14th - 3rd Sunday of Advent – Christmas Cantata

9:45 – Bible Study - Evie C. Marshall classroom

11:00 – Worship (In-Person & Live Stream). Stewardship Lunch after service

Tuesday, December 16th 11:00am The Women of Bethany Gathering

Wednesday, December 17th

10:00 – Exercise class

6:30 – Choir Practice

Sunday, December 21st - 4th Sunday of Advent

9:45 – Bible Study - Evie C. Marshall classroom

11:00 – Worship (In-Person & Live Stream).

Session
Moderator: Rick Purcell, CRE
Clerk: Randy Cousins
Treasurer: Glenn Patterson

Class of 2025:
Donna Mitchell-Ayers
Tina Patterson
Nancy Purcell

Class of 2026:
Chip Allen
Jean Payne
Ben Russell

Class of 2027:
Karen Maxwell
Kim Snyder
Brandon Troxler

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