Bethany Presbyterian Church

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

December 21, 2025 – 11:00 am
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Love

A Manger

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 #22:** *Angels From the Realms of Glory* JAMES MONTGOMERY

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.

Refrain:
Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!

Shepherds, in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
Yonder shines the infant light. **(Refrain)**

Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations;
Ye have seen His natal star. **(Refrain)**

All creation, join in praising
God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising
To the eternal Three in One. **(Refrain)**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING SENTENCES

Prepare the way of the Lord!
Lift every valley, lift every voice.
Prepare the way of the Lord!
And all flesh shall see the salvation of our God.

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 (MATTHEW 1, ISAIAH 7, ROMANS 1, PSALM 80)

In this season of love, hope and family, grant us joy and peace this day.
You offered signs to Joseph and Mary long ago-signs their son would be the Messiah, Emmanuel.
May your light shine on us here, that we might understand the signs in our lives.
We come with open hearts and minds to hear of your love coming into the world.
We come to hear of a young woman with child, a foster father with trust in God, a match you made in heaven to shepherd a tiny boy to his destiny.
Holy God, show us your peace as we make ready for your light in the world!

LIGHTING THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE ELSA PETERS

Today we stoke the fires of God's love. We rejoice that love is within us. It is revealed when we bind up the brokenhearted and comfort those who mourn. We hope that love will blossom in the justice we seek, as the priest Zechariah imagined:
He has granted that we would be rescued from the power of our enemies so that we could serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness in God's eyes, for as long as we live.

O God, we light the fourth candle of Advent.
We light the candle of love.

The fourth candle is lit

We light this candle to spring up with love. In the light and warmth of this candle, we hope that love continues to grow in all of our hearts as we celebrate the coming of Christmas.

Let us pray together:
Loving God, pour into our hearts this day the light of your love, warming us to one another, enlightening our understanding of others, and blooming abundantly as only our love can, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

OFFERING OURSELVES FOR RENEWAL

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (FROM THE CONFESSION OF 1967)

Out of Israel, God in due time raised up Jesus.
His faith and obedience were the response of the perfect child of God.
He was the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel, the beginning of the new creation, and the pioneer of the new humanity.
He gave history its meaning and direction and called the church to be his servant for the reconciliation of the world.

***HYMN OF THE DAY #27:** *Gentle Mary Laid Her Child* JOSEPH SIMPSON COOK

Gentle Mary laid her Child
Lowly in a manger;
There He lay, the undefiled,
To the world a stranger.
Such a Babe in such a place,
Can He be the Savior?
Ask the saved of all the race
Who have found His favor.

Angels sang about His birth;
Wise men sought and found Him;
Heaven's star shone brightly forth,
Glory all around Him.
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight,
Heard the angels singing;
All the plains were lit that night,
All the hills were ringing.

Gentle Mary laid her Child
Lowly in a manger;
He is still the undefiled,
But no more a stranger.
Son of God, of humble birth,
Beautiful the story;
Praise His Name in all the earth,
Hail the King of glory!

TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES

Great God, as we behold the birth of Jesus again, we are mindful of how we have failed to receive the fullness of that gift. The story points us to your glory. Yet, we struggle to join in the song of praise and thanksgiving. We are distracted and confused, so focused on things that matter little that we overlook the good news of great joy that you have prepared.
Tell us again that the Savior is born. Tell us again that we are forgiven. Tell us again that our lives can be abundant in faith, hope and love because of what you have given us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

AN OFFERING OF GOD'S GRACE

…In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

A Prayer for Illumination

Gracious God, illumine these words by your Spirit that we might hear what you would have us hear and be who you would us be, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Amen.

Encountering Scripture

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 pew Bible, 728-729

Matthew 1:18-25 pew Bible, 1170

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The Word in Music: *Canticle of the Turning* arr. by Anne Krentz Organ

The Word Proclaimed
Sermon: ***"Love"*** Rick Purcell, CRE

Prayers of the People

The 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 debts as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

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 #41:** *O Come, All Ye Faithful* John Francis Wade

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem!
Come, and behold Him,
Born the King of angels!

Refrain:
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing! **[Refrain]**

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation!
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all
Glory in the highest! **[Refrain]**

***SENDING**

Let us go, trusting that God is with us in Jesus Christ. Emmanuel. This day, this Christmas, and forevermore, God is with us. Emmanuel.
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the companionship of the Holy Spirit be with you and abide with you today and always. 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
Exercise classes will start back after the first of the year 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 21st 11:00am Advent 4: Love – Sanctuary

Tuesday, January 6th 10:30am The Women of Bethany Church Gathering
The Women of Bethany Church will come together on Tuesday, January 6th at 10:30am. in the Evie C. Marshall classroom.

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 21st - 4th Sunday of Advent

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

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

4:00 – Christmas Caroling

Wednesday, December 24th

5:00 – Christmas Eve Service

Thursday, December 25th

Christmas Day - Church Office closed

Sunday, December 28th - 1st Sunday of Christmas

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

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

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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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