



# Bethany Presbyterian Church

Graham, North Carolina  
[www.bethanypreschurch.org](http://www.bethanypreschurch.org)  
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December 17, 2023 – 11:00 am  
*Third Sunday of Advent*  
*Joy*



"Joy," Jim Lukach

They praised and gave thanks to the LORD, singing responsively,  
"He is good, his graciousness for Israel lasts forever."  
Ezra 3:11 (CEB)

## 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! Parts of today's liturgy are from Ruth Burgess, Winter: Liturgical Resources for November, December and January (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2016); and LiturgyLink, <https://www.liturgylink.net>.*

### TRINITY CHIMES

**PRELUDE:** *Seeking the Savior*

GREG SEWELL

### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**\*OPENING HYMN #16:** *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*

SABINE BARING-GOULD

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,  
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;  
"All hail," said he, "O lowly maiden Mary."  
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

"For know a blessed mother you shall be,  
All generations praise continually,  
Your Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold."  
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,  
"To me be as it pleases God," she said,  
"My soul shall laud and magnify God's holy name."  
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born  
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,  
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:  
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

**\*OPENING SENTENCES**

"JUST WHEN," THOM M SHUMAN

Just when  
we expect you to  
arrive  
with anger streaming out  
of your ears,  
you come  
to sit next to us,  
listening to our deepest  
brokenness;

just when  
we figure you will show up  
to toss us in  
the nearest  
fire,  
you come  
to sweep up  
the ashes  
of every broken  
hope,  
refining them  
into the chalice  
of wonder;

just when  
we are certain you are hiding  
there  
in the shadows,  
ready to leap out  
and scare us into  
repentance,  
you come  
to swaddle us  
in garlands of grace,  
twinkling off and on  
in pure joy.

**OPENING RESPONSE:** *O Come, Let Us Adore Him*

O Come, let us adore him  
O Come, let us adore him  
O Come, let us adore him  
Christ the Lord.

For He alone is worthy  
For He alone is worthy  
For He alone is worthy  
Christ the Lord.

**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

### A PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God, our joy and strength,  
by the power of your Spirit  
prepare the way in our hearts  
for the coming of your Word,  
so that we may see the glorious signs  
of your promise fulfilled;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

### ENCOUNTERING SCRIPTURE

**LUKE 2:25-32**

PEW BIBLE, 1246

**EZRA 1:1-4; 3:1-4, 10-13**

PEW BIBLE, 582;584-585

The Word of the Lord.  
*Thanks be to God.*

### AN OFFERING OF OUR PLEDGES

#### OFFERTORY

**\*DOXOLOGY:** *Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow* (to the tune of O Come, O Come Emmanuel)

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.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.

#### \*BLESSING OUR GIFTS

**\*HYMN OF THE DAY #100 (GTG):** *Canticle of the Turning*

RORY COONEY

My soul cries out with a joyful  
Shout that the God of my heart is great,  
And my spirit sings of the wondrous  
Things that you bring to the ones who wait.  
You fixed your sight on your servant's  
Plight, and my weakness you did not spurn,  
So from east to west shall my name be  
Blest. Could the world be about to turn?

### Refrain

My heart shall sing of the day you bring.  
Let the fires of your justice burn.  
Wipe away all tears,  
For the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn!

Though I am small, my God, my all, you work great things in me,  
And your mercy will last from the depths  
Of the past to the end of the age to be.  
Your very name puts the proud to  
Shame, and to those who would for you yearn,  
You will show your might,  
Put the strong to flight, for the world is about to turn. **Refrain**

From the halls of power to the fortress  
Tower, not a stone will be left on stone.  
Let the king beware for your  
Justice tears ev'ry tyrant from his throne.  
The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn;  
There are tables spread,  
Ev'ry mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn. **Refrain**

Though the nations rage from age to age, we remember who holds us fast:  
God's mercy must deliver us from the conqueror's crushing grasp.  
This saving word that out forebears  
Heard is the promise which holds us bound,  
'Til the spear and rod can be crushed  
by God, who is turning the world around. **Refrain**

### TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES

"JOY VERSES CHEER," TERI PETTERSON

Let us come together to tell the truth about ourselves.

God, you promise joy –  
and to fulfill that promise you give us many gifts:  
gifts of doing justice, loving mercy, and bringing good news.

***But we prefer Christmas cheer.***

***It's more fun for less effort.***

You call us to rejoice –  
to live with a joy deeper than cheer or happiness.  
More than sparkle and parties, a joy that brings you glory.

***But we prefer our own glory, our own smiles.***

***Forgive us, O God, our forced cheer and shallow celebration.***

*Silence*

***Show us again your way, that we may rejoice in you.***

***Lead us in your promised path. Amen.***

### AN OFFERING OF GOD'S GRACE

I proclaim to you in the name of our Savior who brings joy:

You are enough.

You are forgiven.

You are loved.

***Alleluia! Thanks be to God!***

# RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

THE WORD IN MUSIC: *O Holy Night*

CANTATA BY CRAIG ADAMS

ADVENT PRAYER

"HIGHEST JOY," STEPHEN M. FEARING

*We will open and close our time of prayer in song.*

**SONG #814 (GTG):** *In God Alone* (Choir 1<sup>st</sup> time; Congregation 2<sup>nd</sup> time) (sing 2 times)

TAIZÉ COMMUNITY

In God alone my soul can find rest and peace,  
in God my peace and joy.  
On-ly in God my soul can find its rest,  
find its rest and peace.

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.***

\*CLOSING HYMN #12: *People Look East*

ELEANOR FARJEON

People, look east. The time is near  
Of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able,  
Trim the hearth and set the table.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the guest, is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,  
One more seed is planted there:  
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
That in course the flower may flourish.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the rose, is on the way.  
Birds, though you long have ceased to build,  
Guard the nest that must be filled.  
Even the hour when wings are frozen  
God for fledging time has chosen.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the bird, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim  
One more light the bowl shall brim,  
Shining beyond the frosty weather,  
Bright as sun and moon together.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the star, is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth  
Christ who brings new life to earth.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
With the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

**\*SENDING**

"RESPONSES AND PRAYER FOR THE SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS," RUTH BURGESS

Trinity of loving,  
our end and our beginning,  
let your face shine upon us,  
let your love be born in us,  
bless us with new life.

***Amen.***

**\*CHORAL BENEDICTION:** *While We Are Waiting, Come*

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

**POSTLUDE:** *Fling Wide the Door*

HENRY BALCOMBE

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*\* Please stand in body or spirit.*



# Our Faith Community @ Work

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### **Throughout Advent - Holiday Respite - Sanctuary**

We are opening our Sanctuary to anyone who needs a moment of respite, meditation, and prayer during the Holiday Season. Pastor Jon or an Elder will be available to pray:

**Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9-11am**

**Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> – 9-11am**

**Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> – 5-7pm**

**Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup> – 11-1pm**

**Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> 11:00am Advent 3: Joy - Sanctuary**

Our choir will bless us with a Christmas Cantata

**Tuesday, December 19<sup>th</sup> Alamance Co. Mobile Library**

The Alamance County Public Libraries 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

**Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> 11:00am Advent 4: Love – Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall**

Our service of Carols and Cookies. A worship experience for the young and younger-at-heart to help us welcome Christmas! Invite your families!

**Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> 9:00pm Christmas Eve - Sanctuary**

A Christmas Eve Watchnight Vigil. Following the traditions of our mother Kirk, the Church of Scotland, this candlelight service will include Communion and conclude with our singing of Silent Night.

**Sunday, December 31<sup>st</sup> 11:00am Christmas Brunch Church – Fellowship Hall**

The first Sunday of Christmas. Join us for Brunch Church as we continue to celebrate Christmas and welcome in the coming year.

## This Week's Calendar:

Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> – Third Sunday of Advent – Joy; Christmas Cantata  
9:45 – Adult Sunday School - Bible 101 - Evie C. Marshall classroom  
11:00 – Worship (In-Person & Live Stream)

Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>  
6:30 – Choir Practice

Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> – Fourth Sunday of Advent – Love; Carols and Cookies  
9:45 – Adult Sunday School - Bible 101 - Evie C. Marshall classroom  
11:00 – Worship (In-Person & Live Stream)

Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Eve Service & Communion  
9:00pm – Worship



### Session

**Moderator:** Rev. Jon Phillips

**Clerk:** Randy Cousins

**Treasurer:** Glenn Patterson

### Class of 2023:

Chip Allen  
Randy Cousins  
Shelby Smith

### Class of 2024:

Karen Maxwell  
Kim Snyder  
Tracey Troxler

### Class of 2025:

Donna Mitchell-Ayers  
Tina Patterson  
Nancy Purcell

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### Staff

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