

Bethel Notes

Sunday, December 24, 2023

Christmas Eve

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INTRODUCTION

"Rejoice always," begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. "All God's children got a robe," go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God's party.

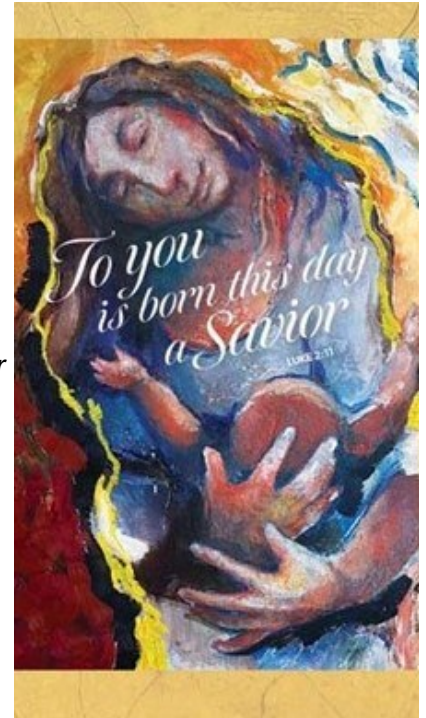
First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

Third Reading: Luke 2:1-7

Fourth Reading: Luke 2:8-20

Gospel of the Incarnation: John 1:1-9



**There will be NO Bethel Notes next week.
Next issue will be sent out January 4, 2024.**

Serving This Sunday

Musicians:

Mary Seim, piano

Lynn Ryan, piano

Lay Assistant:

Sandy Pepos

Ainsley Kubas

Usher:

Shannon Marr/Sara Sexe

Earl Terwilliger/TBD

Tech:

Gabe Smith

No Children's Church

Counters:

Pam Dougherty

Greg Grosenick

**Join us Sunday 9:30 AM in person or online at
bethelmt.org**

THIS SUNDAY AT BETHEL...

A special thank you to Bethel Brass Ensemble Dave Scholten, Steve Mueller, Kurt Mueller, Lynn and Kian Ryan, Sara Graft, and Adam Elkin for performing our special music today.

Join us next Sunday morning for our **New Year's Eve Hymn Sing** worship service at 9:30 am. This is a non-communion worship and will not be livestreamed, there will be not Children's Church.

Stay after worship for a few minutes to help clear the Christmas decorations, it will be most appreciated!

***The Bethel Office will be closed
Monday and Tuesday next week!***



Requesting Your Prayers

- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Tim Olson**, as he recovers from surgery.
- ✝ Prayers of comfort for **the family and friends of John Korpela** as they mourn his passing.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Bonnie Barnes, Debbie McCarty's mother**, recovering after a fall.
- ✝ Prayers of support and comfort for **Pat Berkeley**.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **AnneRose Rogers** as she continues to recover after a recent hospitalization.
- ✝ Prayers of health for **Don Bisgard** as his living center is under quarantine for Covid infections.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Dick Seim** as he continues regaining his strength.
- ✝ Prayers of healing and answers for **Anna Boucher** as they determine a cause and treatment for seizures.
- ✝ Prayers of healing and support for **Diane Young, Sandy Pepos' aunt**, recovering at home after a stroke.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Georgia Miller, cousin of Amber Erickson's**, as she has been diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer.
- ✝ Prayers of continued healing for **Travis Cushman** as he continues to manage health issues.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Harper Spurzem,** 8 year old student at Ulm School, receiving chemotherapy treatment for Hodgkin's Lymphoma.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Kristin, Bobbie Bowen's daughter**, as she manages a cancer diagnosis.
- ✝ Prayers of support for **Caleb Pottratz** who is struggling with depression.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Lynn Klaasen, sister of Jan Robitaille**, receiving treatment for cancer.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Lindy Coon, sister of former Bethel member Laura (Wandke) Overturf**, as she continues to slowly make progress as she recovers from a serious injury after a fall.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Alex Bostic** as he continues to manage his health.
- ✝ Prayers of strength in leadership for **Gustavo Driau, Regional Representative of South America**.
- ✝ Prayers of healing for **Ed Pottratz** as he continues cancer treatment.

**Celebration of Life for
John Korpela
Saturday, January 13, 2024
11:00 am
Bethel Lutheran Church
Reception to follow
in the Gathering Place.**

CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION AND CANDLE SERVICE

Join Us!!

3:00 PM IN PERSON AND LIVE STREAM

5:00 PM IN PERSON ONLY

NO CHILDREN'S CHURCH

IN THE SANCTUARY



Dear Bethel Family,

On this week of Christmas I have some overwhelmingly exciting news. As we enter into 2024 our mortgage that was taken out almost ten years ago will go below \$100,000! This is a HUGE milestone for our congregation as we continue our concerted effort to pay off our mortgage so that we can continue to expand our various ministries here at Bethel. As we reach this milestone I want to begin by saying THANK YOU! We have only reached this milestone because of your generosity and commitment to this place and the ministry that happens here. I also want to invite you as we enter into these final weeks of the year to give a gift to Mission Freedom (the name of our mortgage pay-off effort) to celebrate this big moment. \$100,000 is incredibly attainable for our congregation. It could be 100 gifts of \$1,000 or 200 gifts of \$500, and our mortgage would be 100% paid off. So as you prepare for this tax season and ponder what charitable giving you might end the year with, I'd ask that you and your family consider a gift to Mission Freedom as a part of that process.

You may be asking, why is paying off this mortgage so important? Because when our mortgage is paid off it frees up our budget to expand the ways that we reach out into the community, care for our congregation, and continue to be good stewards of our building and property. It gives us a peace of mind that if we were to have a roof leak or a major electrical problem that we would have the ability to take care of that expense without having to run additional fundraising campaigns or dig into our memorial funds or emergency funds. To top it all off, the paying off of our mortgage will mark the completion of a project that was a dream for so many of our Bethel family that came before us. This building was a labor of love for many of you and for many that came before you. What an honor it will be to finish off this project together in the coming years!

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!

-Pastor Jessie

Giving Tree 2023

Lack of access to safe water is one of the biggest challenges to overcoming poverty. It's also one of the most powerful opportunities to create change. **With a simple water well, spring box or other water point, as many as 500 families gain access to clean, safe water.** Communities are healthier. People spend less money on medical expenses and more on food and education. And instead of spending hours each day gathering water for the family, women and children have time for work and school. Talk about a future filled with hope!



At Bethel, donations for our Giving Tree will go toward the construction of a simple water well. Our goal is \$2500.00 to make this happen. When you donate any amount to this project, take an ornament from the Giving Tree to hang on your tree at home. These simple ornaments were made by our LOGOs Youth Ministry and read "Christmas 2023. This year I gave the gift of clean water."

There are other needs that can be met through the Good Gifts Program from ELCA World Hunger. If you would like to donate to Good Gifts for other items such as goats, chickens, bibles, etc. pick up a Good Gifts catalog located in the Narthex and you can donate directly to ELCA World Hunger Good Gifts.

If you have any questions about this project you may contact any member of the ELCA World Hunger Committee Colleen Walker-Nelson, Judy Johnson or Shirley Cayko.

For questions about donating to this Giving Tree Project, see Tami Grosenick in the Bethel Office.

Merry Christmas.

An infographic titled "WATER" featuring a photograph of four women in traditional Brazilian attire standing near a simple water well. The infographic includes text about the cost of water projects and a quote from a woman in Brazil.

WATER

At an average cost of \$2,500, a spring box is one of many types of water projects supported by your gifts. Water wells can range from \$2,500 to \$10,000 or more, depending on the location and cost of materials.

Simple water well

One of the biggest challenges to overcoming poverty is lack of access to clean water. **With a simple well, or spring box, as many as 500 families gain access to clean, safe water.** Communities are healthier. People spend less money on medical expenses and more on food and education. And instead of spending hours each day gathering water for the family, women and children have time for work and school. Talk about a future filled with hope!

\$2,500 Simple water well

\$250 Share of a safe water project

With this new well... the water is better and clear, clear. This water fountain brought relief to us. We are isolated, and with this good water, we can help families who are without.

—Sirlêi, Brazil

Gifts on these
ELCA.or

GOSPEL MESSAGE

December 24, 2023

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, CHRISTMAS EVE You Belong

Who belongs? That is an enduring question for people of faith, and the beloved story of Jesus' birth in Luke's gospel helps to give us an answer.

Of course, Mary and Joseph have a place at the Savior's side on the night of his birth. Yet despite her call to bear none other than the Son of God (Luke 1:35), Mary is subject to the whims of earthly power. In compliance with the emperor's order, the couple make the trek to Bethlehem to be counted. But the baby will not wait to be born, and the guesthouse is so crowded that they have to lay him in a manger. Not the ideal conditions for labor and delivery! Nonetheless, for these new parents, home is where they make it. Wherever Jesus lies, that is where Mary and Joseph belong.

And perhaps to the dismay of exhausted parents, the shepherds also belong in the presence of the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord, that first night. Noteworthy infants usually attract noteworthy visitors, but the messenger of God sends the birth announcement to lowly field hands instead. Jesus is born in the city of David not just to anyone, but *to them*; he is a sign of God's salvation not in the abstract, but *for them*. No wonder these marginal, mostly neglected members of the community glorify and praise God for all they hear and see (Luke 2:20).

The wonder of Christmas is that you belong in Jesus' company too. The baby in the feeding trough foreshadows the Lord at his table. And if the child in the manger is *for you*, then so is his life, given and poured out. Come, taste and see for yourself. Receive this good news of great joy, peace, and God's favor, then sing your praise to God in reply. From sundaysandseasons.com.

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December 2023 Newsletter

Well, we've made it to the last few weeks of 2023. We at Family Promise Great Falls hope that this has been a great year for you, as it has been for us. This year we've served over 200 families with 383 children with services such as eviction prevention, case management, shelter, food assistance, showers, laundry services, shuttle services, and so much more! Yes, it has been a busy year, but much good work was done. Now it's almost time for Christmas, and our partner Horizon Credit Union has had their staff busy shopping for our shelter children. We'll take a closer look at what our current needs are a little later...

An evening at P. Gibson's-

On January 23rd, 2024, we will be at P. Gibson's for their Family Promise donation day. We'll have all the details in next month's newsletter, so be sure to keep an eye out for more information. We are looking forward to sampling some of their delicious menu and seeing all of you there!

A Christmas Wish-

One of our shelter families was just approved for an apartment! This young mother of three is very excited to begin her journey in a new home soon. After working with Family Promise Great Falls this young mother and her children are proud to announce their departure from Promise Place Shelter in the upcoming weeks and thank everyone who has helped them along the way. We're very proud of their progress and will be here for continuing case management and support if they need us.

Christmas is coming-

Christmas is less than 3 weeks away, and we're spreading as much holiday cheer as we can around the office. Our day room is decorated with a tree and some ornaments thanks to our volunteers and some donations from local families. We'll be collecting items for Christmas dinners for the families we work with over the upcoming weeks, so if you'd like to donate a box of stuffing or a can of veggies, please just drop them off at our office at 1019 Central Ave. We currently have two families in the shelter but work with several more families that could use some help for the holiday season. We will also be accepting donations of Walmart gift cards for the families that need a little extra help with gifts.

A Home for the holidays-

A few months ago, we met a family of four who had been staying in a tent for some time. We were unable to offer this family shelter, as Promise Place Shelter was full, but we continued case management with them hoping something would come up. Well, after several months this family found a home that will meet their needs and is within their monthly budget. With a little help from Family Promise Great Falls this family moved into their new home just in time for Thanksgiving and Christmas. We were even able to provide them with a Thanksgiving meal kit thanks to our proud partners at Clearwater Credit Union. Thank you so much to everyone who has donated or supported our mission to end childhood homelessness this year, you are all the glue that keeps us together. More importantly, you're helping to keep families together. After all, families being together is what the holiday season is all about .

A very special thank you-

We would like to thank everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to come and visit with us for our holiday "Appreciation Party" that we held on November 16th. It is a blessing that we have so many people in our community (and beyond) who have helped us support our mission to end childhood homelessness, one family at a time. The real blessing is in getting to know all these wonderful people within our community, whose hearts are so generous. It is only through your continued support that we can serve as many families as we have this year. The numbers speak for themselves, with our organization serving significantly more families this year than last. So, thank you for taking the time to come and meet the Family Promise family, and thank you for your kindness and generosity. We truly appreciate all of you, and hope that this holiday season brings you joy and many blessings.



Looking forward to 2024-

In the coming months we'll have more information about how you can volunteer your time with Family Promise, as well as more information about the next SOC HOP. As always, if you'd like to stay up to date with all of the happenings around our office, you can follow our Facebook page "Family Promise Great Falls" or check out our website at www.familypromisegf.org. We'll also have more information in the upcoming weeks about our evening at P. Gibson's on January 23rd, such as times that we'll be on hand to answer any questions you may have. We hope that 2023 was a year filled with laughter, family, and friends and look forward to serving more families in 2024. From our family in the office to yours, we wish you a happy holidays and look forward to 2024!



Just for *YOUTH*

The big picture of Christmas

Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

Simple pictures tell the big story of Christmas. Listen to the story of Jesus' birth as it is told today in the gospel.

Number the seven pictures to put them in the correct order.



This Week...

Read the Christmas story from Luke or from picture books at home. Notice how different artists tell Jesus' story with pictures.



*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Amen*

Songs of joy

Swiftly winging, angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bringing: Christ the child is Lord of all! (from the hymn "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly.")



Many Christmas carols you sing have rhyming words.

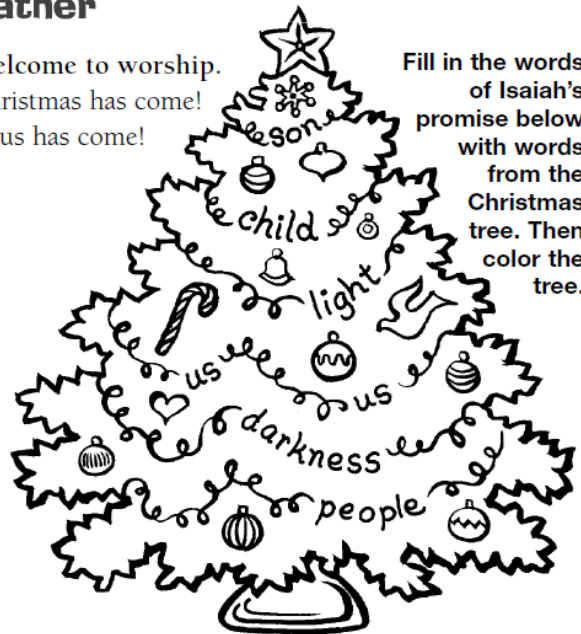
Find five sets of rhyming words in this picture and draw a line between each pair of words (hint: mat and hat).

My favorite Christmas song about Jesus is:

gather

Welcome to worship.
Christmas has come!
Jesus has come!

Fill in the words of Isaiah's promise below with words from the Christmas tree. Then color the tree.



The _____ who walked in _____
have seen a great _____. For a
_____ has been born for _____, a _____
given to _____ (Isaiah 9:2,6).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday 12/25

- Merry Christmas, Bethel Office is closed.

Tuesday 12/26

- Electric City Bible Study, Zoom meeting 7:00 am
- No Men's Breakfast
- Bethel Office Closed, Christmas Day observed

Wednesday 12/27

- No Bible Study
- No LOGOs Youth Ministry

Friday 12/28

- Bethel office is closed.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 12/31

- Hymn Sing Worship Services led by Patrick and Lynn Ryan, no communion, no Children's Church, no livestream

Monday 1/1/2024

- Happy New Year! Bethel Office is closed.

Tuesday 1/2

- Electric City Bible Study, Zoom meeting 7:00 am
- Men's Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall 7:00 am

Wednesday 1/3

- Bible Study led by Pastor Jessie on Zoom 10:00 am
- No LOGOs Youth Ministry
- Jack Pinski Eagle Scout Ceremony 6:30 pm

Thursday 1/4

- Exec Board Zoom meeting 6:30 pm

Friday 1/5

- Bethel office is closed.
- Aitz Chaim Friday worship 6:00 pm

Fellowship Ministries

Electric City Bible Study—online

What a great way to connect with one another! Join our bible study via Zoom, Tuesday mornings at 7:00 am. Contact Laurie Turner at lolli51gus@icloud.com for a link to join the meeting.

Men's Breakfast

Join us for a fun and engaging conversation, and insightful discussion of each week's lectionary texts as we meet in the Fellowship Hall Tuesday mornings at 7:00 am. Contact Dave Scholten at dscholten@dlsconsulting.net for more information.

Hope Circle—in person

This group meets once a month usually on Thursday evenings. Bible study and fellowship are celebrated with this group of ladies. Contact Terry Korpela to be on the group email for meetings and prayer requests terry.korpela@gmail.com.

January

Weekly Text Study

with Pastor Jessie

Wednesdays, 10:00 am via Zoom, Pastor Jessie will be leading discussion on the text readings for the upcoming Sunday. Dig deeper in the interpretation of the readings and discuss ways they give us guidance in our daily lives. If you would like to join this meeting, email bethelgf.pastor@gmail.com to be added to the mailing list.