

December 22, 2024  
Fourth Sunday of Advent

**PRELUDE AND BELL RINGING**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS, JOYS and CONCERNS**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: Isaiah spoke to a people called chosen,

**People: to a tribe called Israel, with a light of hope.**

Leader: Gabriel came to a town called Nazareth,

**People: to a girl called Mary, with a light of joy.**

Leader: Mary went to a palace called Bethlehem, to a stable called a nursery,

**People: with a light of love.**

Leader: We rejoice with Mary, for Love has flesh.

**People: Come now, O Child of Mary.**

**All: Come now, O Prince of Love.**

**OPENING PRAYER**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES** (see insert)

**\*HYMN**            *"Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing"* #250 UCC

**CALL TO CONFESSION**

**UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Lord, we are so excited. Christmas is almost here. We are impatient to hear the whole story. Slow us down again, Lord. Cause us to look at the blossoming of the branch and remind us that Your love is blossoming in our lives. As we hear Mary say "Yes!" to God's good news, help us to remember that Go continually calls us to be those who will bear the good news to those in need. Forgive us when we forget to do that. Heal our wounds and bind up our spirits. Enable us to go into Your world offering our lives, our gifts, our talents, for Your glory. In Jesus' name, we pray. **AMEN.**

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Leader: God's love and faithfulness have been at work in us. We are healed and forgiven. Rejoice in God's love and blossom.

**People: We are forgiven! We are loved! Thanks be to God!**

**\*RESPONSE**                            *"Gloria Patri"*

**INVITATION TO CHILDREN** (*Jesus Loves the Little Children*)

**CHILDREN'S TIME**

**HYMN**            *"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"* #275 UCC

**OFFERING OF OUR TIME, OUR TREASURES, OUR VERY SELVES**

*\*We Give Thee But Thine Own*" #351 UCC

## **\*UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**Because You know us, O God, You are aware of our reluctance to share what we have. You continue to call us, to challenge us, to use us in the work of Your kingdom. So take these gifts, and continue to call us to faithful lives and generous giving, so that others might be blessed as we are. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Leader: God of mercy.

**People: Hear our prayer.**

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**SCRIPTURE**            Matthew 1:18-25

## **RESPONSE TO THE WORD**

Leader: Heaven and earth will pass away but the Word of the Lord stands forever.

**People: Thanks be to God!**

## **Lighting of the Advent Candles**

Leader: On this day we bear witness to the light of Christ with all the faithful of every time and place.

Congregation: **With Isaiah and Jeremiah, prophets of Israel, we await the promised salvation of the Lord, and look for the coming of the one who will bring justice and righteousness to the earth.**

Leader: With John the Baptist, calling from the wilderness, we cry: "Prepare the way of the Lord! Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Congregation: **With Mary, the mother of Jesus, we magnify the Lord, rejoicing in God our Savior, for the Mighty One has done great things for us, and holy is God's name.**

Leader: With the writers of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we tell the good news of Jesus Christ, the child of Bethlehem,

Congregation: **who came to save us, and is coming again to rule in glory.**

All: **The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory. Alleluia!**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

TODAY - Guest Speaker Darrell Thompson

- Christmas Fund special offering (use incl. envelopes)

Christmas Eve service is this Tuesday, Dec. 24, at 6:30 p.m. Christmas Day service follows at 10 a.m. the next morning.

Visitation Sunday is next Sunday, Dec. 29. All are encouraged to visit another church. Bethany UCC will not have church.

Bethany UCC's Annual Meeting will be Sunday, Jan. 19, with a carry-in dinner at the hall after church, followed by the meeting. Please send ALL annual reports for the 2024 year for the auditors and Annual Meeting to either Lance Roskamp or Kevin Schrader no later than Wednesday, January 8.

Women's Fellowship will not meet in January.

January-February Upper Rooms are available in the entryway.

Living Water band has Christmas concerts at historic Nauvoo Theater today and tomorrow. See bulletin strip for more.

### SAVE THE DATES:

- Christmas Eve Service: Tuesday, December 24, 6:30 p.m.
- Christmas Day Service: Wednesday, December 25, 10 a.m.
- Visitation Sunday: Sunday, December 29 (no church)
- Church Annual Meeting: Sunday, January 19, after church

Mary Doyle is greeter today, Teresa Beeler in two weeks. Thanks to the greeter, Darrell, the musician, AV tech - all who helped with the service.

WELCOME ALL! If you are a visitor, please sign the guest register and come again.

## **Bethany United Church of Christ**

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*Love*