

BETHANY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018

Hours: Mon, Tues and Thurs. 9:00-1:00

Church Office: 610-868-4441

E-Mail: bethanyunitedchurch@rcn.com

Web address: www.uccbethany.org

Pastor Todd Fennell

Matt Miller, Consistory President

Susan Wright, Director of Music



December 31, 2023

First Sunday of Christmas

“Moving Forward United in Faith”

“Committed to Christ, United by Love. We are about God, Christ, the Word, and the Future. No matter who you are or where you are on Life’s journey, you are welcome here. We are Bethany United Church of Christ.”

BETHANY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

December 31, 2023

10:45 AM

If you are looking for a church home, we invite you to become part of the community of faith and mission here at Bethany.

**(*) PLEASE STAND AS YOU ARE ABLE
(Bold Text is said or sung by everyone)**

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE: "We Three Kings" ...arr. K. Mc Chesney
Handbell Choir

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.

C: He was in the beginning with God.

L: All things came into being through Him.

C: What has come into being in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

L: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

C: And the Word was made flesh and came and lived among us.

ALL: And we have seen His glory, the glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

*HYMN: #189 Angels from the Realms of Glory

*PRAYER OF INVOCATION (unison)

**God of love, open our hearts and minds this
Christmastide to the good and saving news of Jesus
Christ who was born in the winter's night to be the light
of the world forever. May we find in the hope, the peace,**

the joy, and the love that he brings all that we need and want for life abundant, both in this holy season and always. For his name's sake. Amen.

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Pastor: The peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also, with you.

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (unison): #198 Good Christian Friends Rejoice vs. 3**

Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice; now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save; calls you one and calls you all to gain his everlasting hall. Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

READING OF SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 61: 10 – 62: 3

Galatians 4: 4 - 7

* Luke 2: 22 - 35

Leader: This is the Good News

People: Thanks be to God

SERMON: Simeon's Christmas

OFFERING INVITATION

OFFERING OF OUR TITHES and GIFTS

**OFFERTORY: "A Child of Hope" ...L. Smith
Chancel Choir**

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE: #196 In the Bleak Midwinter vs.4**

What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a wiseman, I would do my part; yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

God of Justice and Love, transform these offerings, that they may be gifts of justice and love for a world in need of hope and help. Let love flow through these offerings, that they may become gifts of love for the world. Amen

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CALL TO PRAYER – PASTORAL PRAYER

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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

***HYMN: #188 Angels we Have Heard on High**

***BENEDICTION**

***CHORAL BENEDICTION: #218 Go Tell It on the Mountain
Refrain vs. 3 Refrain**

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and every-where; go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born. Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born, and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and every-where; go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

POSTLUDE

Our worship ends, our service begins!



FLOWERS and BULLETINS: are dedicated to the Glory of God. In addition we ask Godspeed to Pastor Todd and wife Jean as they begin a new phase in their life's journey.

GREETERS: Jack & Diane Brunner

USHERS: Jack Brunner, Volunteer

LAY READER: Len Kesselring

Scriptures

Isaiah 61: 10 – 62: 3 NRSV

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;

my whole being shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots

and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn
and her salvation like a burning torch.

² The nations shall see your vindication
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

³ You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the LORD
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Galatians 4: 4 - 7 NRSV

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶ And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir through God.

Luke 2: 22 - 40 NRSV

²² When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” ²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹ “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word, ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” ³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

Choir After Christmas Party

On Wednesday January 10th the Choirs will hold their annual After Christmas Choir Party. We will gather in Fellowship Hall at 6pm with each of us providing a covered dish, same format as last year as well as a \$2 exchange gift. Please sign up in the choir room or call the office!

The Bells

In July of 1965, English Handbells, a gift from Mr. And Mrs. Russell Rodenbach in memory of Mrs. Stewart Rodenbach were shipped from the White Chapel Bell Factory of London, England which began operation in 1570. The bells were dedicated on December 26 when a choir of 11 boys played the 25 note bells. (From Bethany UCC History Booklet).

End of the Year Sale

While cleaning out the office I came across the ends of items that were sold in the past here @ Bethany. They are on a table in the Narthex and may be purchased by placing a donation in the jar. Think stocking stuffers or mementos.

The Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross is an annual UCC offering that expresses our thanks to retired and active UCC pastors and lay church workers and their families that are facing financial need and other emergency needs. An envelope is attached to your bulletin. Thank you!

THIS WEEK AT BETHANY

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31 New Year's Eve

10:45AM Worship in the Sanctuary, last day of Pastor Todd's time with us. Join us after the service in Fellowship Hall for Cookies and coffee as we say Good-bye.

MONDAY, JANUARY 1 New Year's Day!

Office Closed

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2

9:00AM 1:00PM Office Hours

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3

7PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4

9:00AM 1:00PM Office Hours

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7 Epiphany Sunday

10:45AM Worship in the Sanctuary with Len Kesselring as our worship leader.

The Advent Wreath

The first hanging of the large Advent wreath in the Chancel took place in 1968. A ladder was used to hang it from the ceiling and this was done by the Bealer family. Then for a time, it was not utilized because the climbing became unsafe. Harry Denninger designed the pulley system that allows us to hang this beautiful advent wreath as a stunning accent to our holiday decorations. The candles are no longer lit on the wreath for fire safety reasons.