

Grace Lutheran



Yoked parish of faith and service: Bethel & Zion

Love is spoken here! Be the living Eucharist!

Beginning of the current epoch of time, including our humanity.



Higgs Boson Particle representation: higgs-boson.org



The Second Sunday of Christmas ***January 4th, 2025***

8:45 AM Zion
10:30 AM Bethel

All are welcome!

The altars of this parish belong to God, and not to us. All people are welcome to participate in every aspect of our worship, including our open table for the Eucharist. We are honored by your presence this day and hope you find peace and refreshment as we celebrate the extravagant love of God, as followers of the Way of Jesus.

We live into the ongoing revelation of Christ! There is a place for you, here!

We Gather

The Holy Spirit calls us in community as people of the Way.

PRELUDE

GREETING The Grace of our Lord and Savior be with us always! **And also with you!**

PRAYER OF APPROACH

Let us pray: Almighty God, You have filled all the earth with the light of Your incarnate Word. By Your Grace empower us to reflect Your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The congregation stands

GATHERING HYMN

When Long before Time

ELW (red book) 861

The congregation is seated

We listen to God's Word

God speaks to us in poetry, creative writing, scripture, preaching & song.

A READING FROM HEBREW SCRIPTURE (Tanakh): Sirach 24:1-12 from the NRSVUE*

The figure of Wisdom played a major role in early discussions of Christology. Wisdom is the Divine Word, coming from the mouth of God, and ruling over all of creation. Wisdom, created at the beginning of time, made her dwelling place in Jerusalem among God's people.

¹ Wisdom praises herself and tells of her glory in the midst of her people. ² In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth, and in the presence of [God's] hosts she tells of her glory:

³ "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High and covered the earth like a mist.

⁴ I encamped in the heights, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.

⁵ Alone I compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depths of the abyss.

⁶ Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway.

⁷ Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose inheritance should I abide?

⁸ "Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator pitched my tent. [God] said, 'Encamp in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.'

⁹ Before the ages, in the beginning, [God] created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be. ¹⁰ In the holy tent I ministered before [God], and so I was established in Zion. ¹¹ Thus in the beloved city [God] gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my domain. ¹² I took root in an honored people; in the portion of the Lord is my inheritance."

Response This is the Word of the Lord! **Thanks be to God!**

PSALM (Wisdom 10:15-18a, 21)

read responsively

¹⁵ Wisdom once rescued an innocent and holy people from a nation of oppressors.

¹⁶ **She entered the soul of one of God's servants
and stood up to dreaded kings by performing miracles.**

¹⁷ She rewarded God's people for their hardships. She guided them along a miraculous journey.

She gave them shade during the day and brilliant starlight at night.

¹⁸ She led them through the deep waters of the Red Sea.

²¹ **Wisdom gave speech to those who could not speak; she even caused babies to speak clearly.**

The assembly stands to welcome the resurrected Christ!

Alleluia, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.

Preface Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus the Christ! ***Glory to you, O Lord!***

A READING FROM THE GOSPELS: John 1:1-18 from the *Good News Translation**

In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²From the very beginning the Word was with God. ³Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. ⁴The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

⁶God sent his messenger, a man named John {the Baptist}, ⁷who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message and believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light. ⁹This was the real light—the light that comes into the world and shines on all people.

¹⁰The Word was in the world, and though God made the world through him, yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to his own country, but his own people did not receive him. ¹²Some, however, did receive him and believed in him; so he gave them the right to become God's children. ¹³They did not become God's children by natural means, that is, by being born as the children of a human father; God himself was their Father.

¹⁴The Word became a human being and, full of Grace and Truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son.

¹⁵John spoke about him. He cried out, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'He comes after me, but he is greater than I am, because he existed before I was born.'"

¹⁶Out of the fullness of his Grace he has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another. ¹⁷God gave the Law through Moses, but Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is the same as God and is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Response The gospel of our Lord! ***Praise to you, O Christ!***

COLLECT

Let us pray; God our Father, in Love You sent Your Son that the world may have life: lead us to seek him among the outcast and to find him in those in need, for Jesus Christ's sake. ***Amen.***

The congregation is seated

MESSAGE

Pastor Andrew

The congregation stands

HYMN OF THE DAY

He Came Down

ELW 253

CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,

maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,

begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

O God, You reveal Yourself wherever two or three are gathered in Your name. Be with us now, not only in the infant Jesus and resurrected Christ, but in the beloved people of this assembly. Merciful God,

Holy One, receive our prayer.

You reveal Yourself in the waters of the womb; in brooks, ponds, and oceans; and in the waters of baptism. Grant us wisdom to tenderly care for the earth as a garden watered by Your Grace. Merciful God,

Holy One, receive our prayer.

You reveal Yourself in blessed diversity. Help us to look for You in people near and far, in bodies of all kinds, and in kindred young and old. Let us seek You in many places, praising You in many tongues. Merciful God,

Holy One, receive our prayer.

You reveal Yourself in new life. Support those beginning a new job, a new relationship, or a new living situation, especially those displaced because of tragedy or loss. Be with all others who need Your life-giving touch this day (*especially*). Merciful God,

Holy One, receive our prayer.

You reveal Yourself in holy communion. Sustain all who provide food and fellowship in this parish and in the wider community. Make our tables signs of Your welcoming Presence among us. Merciful God,

Holy One, receive our prayer.

You promise to turn mourning into joy and to comfort those who weep. We remember those who have died and look to being united with them in Your glory. Merciful God,

Holy One, receive our prayer.

Lord of the church:

hear our prayer, and make us one in heart and mind to serve You with joy for ever. Amen.

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Savior, Prince of Peace. ***Amen.***

Trusting in God's steadfast Love and faithfulness, let us confess our sin:

Silence is kept for reflection.

Reconciling God, ***we yearn for Your Presence to transform our grief, pain, and despair.***

We confess that we have not always prepared room in our hearts for Your Love;

we have not always recognized Your presence among us;

we have not always embraced Your message of peace.

We cry out, weary with the burden of violence, oppression, and fear.

We confess our failure to make room for those seeking refuge;

our participation in violent systems that harm Your innocent ones;

our reluctance to embody Your good news.

Be born in us today and teach us to sing the joyful song of Your saving power. Amen.

God's Grace upon Grace flows over us. ☩ Christ's presence redeems the whole creation. Our sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad! ***Amen.***

THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with us always! ***And also with you!***

We share in God's Holy Communion

God feeds us with the risen Christ's presence!

GATHERING OF GIFTS

choir (Auburn)

OFFERTORY

ELW 182

As the gifts of bread, wine, and currency are brought forward, the assembly stands.

***Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of blessing.
Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.
Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u-nite them with the prayers we offer now.
Grace our ta-ble with Your Pres-ence, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.***

OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of glory, great are Your wonders among us and many are the blessings You bestow. Use us and these Your gifts for the needs of the world, that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in Your saving Grace, through Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

PREPARATION OF THE TABLE

There is a place for you at the table of God. Come, receive the food that does not perish, a taste of life eternal.

LITURGY OF THE SACRAMENT

The Lord be with you! ***And also with you!*** Open up your hearts! ***We open them up to the Lord!***
Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God! ***It is right to give God thanks and praise!***

Most merciful Lord, Your Love compels us to come in. Our hands have been unclean, our hearts are not fully prepared; we are not fit even to eat the crumbs from under Your table. But You, Lord, are the God of our salvation, and share Your bread with sinners.

So cleanse and feed us with the precious body and blood of Your Son, that he may live in us and we in him; and that we, with the whole company of Christ, may sit and eat in Your kingdom.

We pray You, Gracious God, to send Your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the sacrament of the body of Christ and his blood of the new covenant. Unite us to Your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable in Your sight, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

On his last night with the disciples, Jesus took bread at the table, praised You, broke it and gave it to them saying, "Have some, this is my body."

Our Lord also took a cup of wine, praised You, and gave it to them saying, "This is my blood of the covenant, which has been poured out for many."

In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under Your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with all Your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of Your daughters and sons; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is Yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised.

AGNUS DEI (*Lamb of God*)

ELW pg. 154

- 1) Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.***
- 2) Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.***
- 3) Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.***

THE EUCHARIST

Bread is distributed to the hand by the pastor, individual pre-filled cups of grape juice or wine may be taken from the silver trays: the inner-most ring on each tray is the grape juice.

A gluten-free alternative is available from the Assisting Minister.

Believing in the real presence of Christ, Grace practices open-table, Eucharistic hospitality.

All people, baptized or not, are welcomed to The Meal.

Those who do not wish to commune may come forward for a blessing signified by crossed arms.

COMMUNION HYMN

ELW 285

POST EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

Let us pray.; O God, who makes us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only son, Jesus Christ: grant that as we joyfully receive him for our redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him,

when he shall come to be our judge; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.

Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all Your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise Your name; through Christ our Lord. ***Amen.***

We go out to serve God

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The congregation stands

BLESSING The triune God, glorious Mystery, holy Incarnate One, abiding Comforter,
✠ bless us with endless Grace, peace, and joy.

SENDING HYMN *He Comes to Us as One Unknown*

ELW 737

DISMISSAL Glory to God in the highest! ***And peace to God's people on earth!***
Go in joy. Embody God's redeeming grace. ***Thanks be to God.***

POSTLUDE

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*Scripture translations are in the public domain and sourced through <http://www.biblegateway.com>

IN OUR PRAYERS: Donald Tremblay, Rose Marie Faragoli, Donna Brunnell, Mike & Cindy Dube, Russ Terrien, Tom Toeppner, Sandy Staples, Jim Mooney, Karen Carlson, Judy Garneau, Paul Josephson, Edla Bloom, Steve Hynes, Dennis, Peter & Georgia Kosciusko, Tony Genga, Henry Lewis, Glenna Brownell, Roberta Briggs, Joan Bejune,, Billy Rogan, Don & Judy Leombruno, Samantha Hanks, Mark Glandville, Grace Ray, Jack Fenton, Mark Stevens, Jill Ducat, Jim Mahoney, Amy Runge, Heather Gregar, Kenneth Johnson, Lois Kane, Beth Johnson, Bill Withers, Pr. Judy L., Molly Oberst, Gary Kaufman, Betty Jane Weagle, Valerie Cotter, Jim Henrickson, Kelly O'Brien Hartnett, Butch Ames, Judy Sawicki, Anne Berberian, Carol Katagher, Julie Dawes

NOTE REGARDING SCRIPTURE USAGE: *Our denomination is an exegetical (Spirit-led) tradition in that we preach and teach according to the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), a three-year cycle of recommended texts primarily used within main-line denominations as inspiration; Eastern and Western rites of Catholicism use a variant. As such, Church of England second and third service texts within the RCL are also valid. The Book of Q (Sayings Gospel), The Gospel of Thomas and The Gospel of Mary Magdalene may also be used when their material is found to be more historically accurate to what scholarship has uncovered as the way Jesus would have addressed his disciples and hearers against what the canonical writers adjusted/appended at times for the teaching of their ancient congregations.*

Music for January 4, 2026

Prelude: "God's Son Has Come" by J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

Postlude: "In Thee is Joy" by Marcel Dupre (1886-1971)

Anthem: "Light of the World We Hail Thee" text by John S. B Monsell (1811-1875)

Music by Lawrence W. Watson (1860-1925)

Today's music: The anthem "Light of the World We Hail Thee" celebrates the idea of Christ as a source of light unveiling the darkness of evil and ignorance from humankind. Light is important imagery during the season of Epiphany. Both the prelude and postlude are based on earlier tunes and used by the composer as the basis for their work. The postlude is preceded by the original 1571 choral by Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi (1554-1609) and followed by Marcel Dupre's interpretation.

IN-HOUSE ADULT EDUCATION

JOIN US on Wednesday, January 7th

2 PM in the Bethel Library!

Freedom

Working from true stories of human resilience represented in the books:

The Secret Gate, Mitchell Zuckoff, Random House, 2023

The Cave, Amani Ballour, M.D. & Rania Abouzeid, National Geographic, 2024

Wednesday, January 28th

2 PM in the Bethel Library!

PROOF OF GOD

Working from the books (the first book recommended by regular study participants):

GOD The Science The Evidence, Michel-Yves Bollere/Olivier Bonnassies, Palomar, 2025 *Int'l Best Seller more than 400,000 copies*

The Allure of the Multiverse, Paul Halpern, Basic Books, 2024

ANNUAL PARISH/CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, January 18th

11:45 AM @ Bethel, Voosen Hall

Single Meeting for the entire parish/2 congregations

Annual Reports available as of Sunday, January 4th in the narthex locations

Single special vote: acceptance of Parish Constitution/Bylaws w/language updates from this past summer's ELCA General Assembly in Chicago.

Copies to peruse in-house available in narthex locations on 1/4, 1/11 & 1/18

Grace Lutheran



Yoked parish of faith and service: Bethel & Zion

MISSION STATEMENT

"To boldly share God's Love and Grace universally in and through our communities."

VISION STATEMENT

Modeling the welcoming nature of God, we are humbly called and driven by the Spirit to witness, engage and walk with each other authentically, as Jesus' hands and feet, providing spiritual, emotional and physical nourishment.

Through evolving partnerships with ecumenical and other social service organizations we affirm justice and wholeness under the "agency of Grace" that feed the needs and hope of all.

The Rev. Andrew H. Borden, Pastor

pastor_andrew.b@verizon.net

Ann Spinner, Parish Administrator

bethelauburn@verizon.net

Main Office: 508-832-3427

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Randy Bloom – Minister of Music **Lois Toepfner**, Deacon – Minister of Music Emeritus

Shannon Papandrea - Sexton

Garret Peters - Treasurer

Kate Valleli – Christian Education Coordinator

Adam Hanks – Bell Director

Ann Spinner, Kate Valleli – Financial Secretaries

Marie Sturdevant, Adam Hanks – Lay Worship Leaders: NES Lay School of Theology: Auburn 8 AM, Worcester 2nd Sundays

Parish Council

President – **Dave Valleli (B)** Co-Vice-Presidents – **Jennifer Courtney (Z)**, **Jessica Caminero (B)**

Council – **Cheyenne Courtney (Z)**, **Ruth Thompson (B)**, **Joan Parker (B)**, **Leanne Carraher (B)**,
Heather Connors (B), **Virginia Carlson, (Z)**, **Adam Hanks (B)**, **Donna Hayes (Z)**

Worcester Campus - **Zion Lutheran**

41 Whitmarsh Avenue, 01606

Auburn Campus - **Bethel Lutheran**

90 Bryn Mawr Avenue, 01501

ReconcilingWorks
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION



NST
Refugee Accompaniment



Grace  Lutheran
Café

