

Bethesda Episcopal Church

The Third Sunday of Advent: Gaudete

14 December 2025

Sung Eucharist at 10.00

Organ

Chorale Prelude on 'Nun komm der Heiden Heiland'

Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

All stand as the choir and ministers enter.

The Entrance Hymn #61

From the Hymnal 1982

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath and Collect of the Day

At the chancel step, the Celebrant says

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

The candle for the Third Sunday of Advent is lit.

Light and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. *(61.1-3)*

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

The Celebrant says the Collect of the Day.

Let us pray. Stir up thy power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let thy bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

All sit.

The First Reading

Isaiah 35:1-10

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to

those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Remain seated. The Choir sings

The Gradual Psalm 146

Edward Bairstow (1874-1946)

Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help * whose hope is in the Lord their God; who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them; * who keeps his promise for ever; who gives justice to those who are oppressed, * and food to those who hunger. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind; * the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous; the Lord cares for the stranger; * he sustains the orphan and widow but frustrates the way of the wicked. The Lord shall reign for ever, * your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!

The Second Reading

James 5:7-10

A reading from the Letter of James.

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

All stand.

The Alleluia



Al - le - lu - ia. _____

Verse: Stir up thy strength, O Lord; and come and help us. **Alleluia.**

Remain standing.

The Holy Gospel

Matthew 11.2-11

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St Matthew.
Glory be to thee, O Lord.

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’

“Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to thee, O Christ.

After the Gospel, all sit.

The Christmas Pageant

The congregation is invited to participate in the pageant by singing the first verse of each carol.

Following the pageant, all kneel.

The Prayers of the People, Confession and Absolution

In our Intercessions this week we pray for the Anglican Communion and for the Episcopal Church in Brazil; in the Albany Diocese, we remember Jeremiah, our bishop, and the ministry of Loaves and Fishes, Albany. We ask God’s blessing on those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries, and those whose year’s mind falls at this time. In joyful expectation, let us pray to our Savior and Redeemer, saying, “*Lord Jesus, come soon!*”

O Wisdom, from the mouth of the Most High, you reign over all things to the ends of the earth: come and teach us how to live. **Lord Jesus, come soon!**

O Lord, and head of the house of Israel, you appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and you gave the law on Sinai: come with outstretched arm and ransom us. **Lord Jesus, come soon!**

O Branch of Jesse, standing as a sign among the nations, all kings will keep silence before you and all peoples will summon you to their aid: come, set us free and delay no more. **Lord Jesus, come soon!**

O Morning Star, splendor of the light eternal and bright Sun of righteousness: come and enlighten all who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death. **Lord Jesus, come soon!**

O King of the nations, you alone can fulfil their desires: Cornerstone, you make opposing nations one: come and save the creature you fashioned from clay. **Lord Jesus, come soon!**

O Emmanuel, hope of the nations and their Savior: come and save us, Lord our God. **Lord Jesus, come soon!**

Celebrant: Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Celebrant introduces the Confession, saying

Let us humbly confess our sins to Almighty God.

**Almighty God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
maker of all things, judge of all men:
We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness,
which we from time to time most grievously have committed,
by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine Majesty,
provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us.
We do earnestly repent,
and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings;
the remembrance of them is grievous unto us,
the burden of them is intolerable.
Have mercy upon us,
have mercy upon us, most merciful Father;
for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
forgive us all that is past;
and grant that we may ever hereafter
serve and please thee in newness of life,
to the honor and glory of thy Name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Celebrant says the Absolution.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

All stand. At the exchange of the Peace, you may greet those around you in the name of the Lord.

The Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And with thy spirit.**

Hymn at the Offertory #66

From the Hymnal 1982

Remain standing.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up unto the Lord.

Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

It is meet and right so to do.

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God. Because thou didst send thy beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee and saying,

The Sanctus and Benedictus

John Merbecke (1510-1585)

Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho - ly Lord God of hosts.

5
Hea-ven and earth are full of thy glo - ry. Glo - ry be to thee, O Lord Most High.

7
Bless-ed is he that com-eth in the name of the Lord: Ho-san-na in the high - est.

All kneel. The Celebrant says the Eucharistic Prayer. You may follow the text on p. 334 of the black Book of Common Prayer. The prayer concludes,

... by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Savior Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say,

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

The Fraction

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

The Agnus Dei

Harold Darke (1888-1976)

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace.

Communion is distributed at the high altar. Please move at the direction of the ushers. During Communion the Choir sings

Zion, at thy shining gates, Lo, the King of Glory waits; haste thy monarch's pomp to greet,
Strew thy palms before his feet.
Christ, for thee their triple light, Faith and hope and love unite; this the beacon we display
to proclaim thine advent day.
Come and give us peace within, loose us from the bonds of sin; take away the galling
weight Laid on us by Satan's hate.
Give us grace thy yoke to wear; give us strength the cross to bear; make us thine in deed
and word, thine in heart and life, O Lord.
So, when thou shalt come again, Judge of angels and of men; we with all thy saints shall
sing: Alleluias to our King.

Music: George Guest (1924-2002) Text: Benjamin H. Kennedy (1804-1889)

Communion Hymn #272 (remain seated or kneeling)

From the Hymnal 1982

After Communion, all kneel.

The Post Communion Prayer

Said by the Celebrant.

Let us pray. Keep us, O Lord, while we tarry on this earth, in a serious seeking after thee, and
in an affectionate walking with thee, all the days of our life: that when thou comest, we may
be found, not hiding our talent, nor yet asleep with our lamp unfurnished, but waiting and
longing for our Lord, our glorious King, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Blessing and Dismissal

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the
knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God
Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you
always. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Closing Hymn #72

From the Hymnal 1982

Organ Postlude on "Sleepers, Wake!"

Arr. by Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748)

Today at Bethesda

Welcome! Thank you for worshipping with us this morning. If you are interested in learning more about Bethesda Church, please introduce yourself to an usher.

Thank you to those **reading and leading prayers:** at 8am Lynne Priestley; and at 10am Colette Manny, Amelia Kinsey, and Chris Lyons.

The **Advent wreath** is given in memory of Bruce Solenski by Kathleen and Mark Anspach.

Thank you to the Goss family for hosting **coffee** following the 10am service.

Thank you to all who helped decorate the church for Christmas.

Holy Communion - Thursdays at 12.10.

The **Mere Christianity** study group meets next Sunday at 9am.

Bethesda holds its annual **Festival of Lessons and Carols** next Sunday at 10am.

Office Hours this week are Tuesday & Wednesday 10.00—noon, and Thursday 1 - 3.30pm. The office will be closed from 19 December to 12 January.

Special Monthly Envelope for December The Casavant organ, located in the chancel of the church, has served Bethesda Church well since it replaced the historic E.M. Skinner pipe organ in 1968. Nevertheless, the last 55 years of service have shown considerable wear on the instrument, including deterioration of pipework and wind leaks; water damage, dust and debris; and several mechanical problems which affect the console and its functionality. Given the important role music plays in Bethesda's liturgical life, the Vestry has agreed that contributions to December's appeal will be directed to organ maintenance.

Year-End Gifts to Bethesda Please remember Bethesda in your Christmas and end-of-year giving plans. Our ministry and parish operations depend on your faithful support. Tax receipts are issued for gifts received on or before December 31st.

Parking The lot adjacent to the church, which is accessible via Congress Street, offers free parking for the first two hours.

All Saints' Cathedral presents **A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols** on Tuesday, 23rd December at 7pm, with music for brass and organ beginning at 6:30 PM. Free admission. The Cathedral is located at the corner of South Swan and Elk, in Albany.

Advent III: Gaudete!



"I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

The Third Sunday of Advent is also known as *Gaudete* or Rejoice Sunday, when, on the Advent wreath we light a candle representing John the Baptist. This week, we are not lighting a somber purple candle, but a jolly pink one! Rose pink, to be precise; a color that originally signified a lightening of the mood and a relaxing of the disciplines of Advent when more rigorous observances were traditionally kept during the Middle Ages.

The name *Gaudete* was taken from the first word of the introit appointed for this Sunday in the Latin mass: *Gaudete in Domino semper* or "Rejoice in the Lord always." Though we are still in 'waiting mode', Christmas is coming - and with it, good news of great joy for all people!

Sunday, 21 December

Advent IV

8am Holy Communion

10am Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve

4pm Sung Eucharist

10pm Blessing of the Crib and Sung Eucharist

Christmas Day

9am Holy Communion (said)

Sunday, 28 December

Sunday after Christmas

9am Holy Communion (said)

Sunday, 4 January 2026

Second Sunday after Christmas

Services at 8am and 10am

The Reverend Charles Wallace, Rector
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