

Bethesda Episcopal Church

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

21 December 2025

10.00am A Service of Lessons and Carols

Organ Prelude on 'Gabriel's Message'

Iain Farrington (b. 1977)

All stand when the sacristy bells ring.

The Entrance Hymn

Choir: Come, Thou Redeemer of the earth,
And manifest Thy virgin-birth:
Let every age adoring fall;
Such birth befits the God of all.

All: **Begotten of no human will,
But of the Spirit, Thou art still
The Word of God in flesh arrayed,
The promised Fruit to us displayed.**

**From God the Father he proceeds,
To God the Father back he speeds;
His course he runs to death and hell,
Returning on God's throne to dwell.**

**O equal to the Father, Thou!
Gird on thy fleshly mantle now;
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.**

**Thy cradle here shall glitter bright,
And darkness breathe a newer light,
Where endless faith shall shine serene,
And twilight never intervene.**

**All laud, eternal Son, to Thee
Whose advent sets thy people free,
Whom, with the Father, we adore,
And Holy Ghost, forevermore.**

Text: St Ambrose of Milan, 4th c.

Tune: Puer nobis nascitur, Hymnal #193

Remain standing. The Rector says the Bidding Prayer.

Beloved in Christ, in this holy season, let it be our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the Angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem, to see the Babe lying in a manger. Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by his holy Child; and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of his birth with hymns and songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of his whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for the mission and unity of the Church for which he died, and especially in this country and within this city. And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us at this time remember in his name the poor and the helpless; the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and those who mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; and all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love. Lastly, let us remember before God his pure and lowly Mother, and all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us, saying,

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.

May Almighty God bless us with his grace; Christ give us the joys of everlasting life; and unto the fellowship of the citizens above, may the King of Angels bring us all. **Amen.**

All sit for the carols and readings.

Carol Fum, Fum, Fum *traditional Catalan; arr. W. Llewellyn (1925-2023)*

Ancient prophets first foretold him. *Fum, fum, fum.*
John the Baptist did extol him:

*Come join the marching throng of Christians,
Come, and away to fill the churches
With your voices praising Heaven: Fum, fum, fum.*

Hear the prophet tell his story.
Christ is coming in his glory: *Refrain*

Hear, you people round about me.
Come and have your sins forgiven: *Refrain*

First Reading

Genesis 3:8-15

*God announces in the Garden of Eden
that the seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent

beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Thanks be to God.

Carol *Herefordshire Carol*

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

This is the truth sent from above,
The truth of God, the God of love,
Therefore don't turn me from your door,
But hearken all both rich and poor.

The first thing which I do relate
Is that God did man create;
The next thing which to you I'll tell
Woman was made with man to dwell.

Then after this twas God's own choice
To place them both in Paradise,
There to remain from evil free,
Except they ate of such a tree.

And they did eat which was a sin,
And thus their ruin did begin;
Ruined themselves, both you and me,
And all of their posterity.

Thus we were heirs to endless woes,
Till God the Lord did interpose;
And so a promise soon did run
That he would redeem us by his Son.

Text: English Folk Song

Second Reading

Isaiah 40:1-11

God comforts his people and calls on them to prepare for redemption.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it

up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Thanks be to God.

Carol *Lo, In the Time Appointed*

Healey Willan (1880-1968)

Lo, in the time appointed the Lord will come;
the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands:
for the Lord God shall come into his everlasting kingdom,
and upon the throne of David shall he reign forever. Alleluia.

Text: Sarum Antiphonale, 14th c.

Third Reading

Isaiah 35.1-10

The prophet proclaims that the Lord will come and save his people.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Thanks be to God.

Music *E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come*

Paul Manz (1919-2009)

Peace be to you and grace from him
Who freed us from our sins,
Who loved us all and shed his blood
that we might saved be.
Sing holy, holy to our Lord,
The Lord, Almighty God,
Who was and is and is to come;
Sing holy, holy, Lord!

Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell there-in,
Rejoice on earth, ye saints below,

For Christ is coming, is coming soon!
For Christ is coming soon.

E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come,
and night shall be no more;
They need no light nor lamp nor sun,
For Christ will be their All!

Fourth Reading

Isaiah 11.1-9

The Prophet foretells Christ's peaceable kingdom

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Thanks be to God.

Carol

A Dove Flew Down

Johannes Brahms ((1833-1897)

A dove flew down from heaven, a dove rare and pure,
In angel garb appearing, to greet a maid demure:
All grace I bring you, tender, lovely maid
No soul with such adorning has ever been arrayed. *Kyrie eleison.*

I bring you joyous greetings: The Lord is with you!
A Child you will be bearing; you must believe it's true.
So welcome, welcome, open wide your heart.
That God upon this visit His favor may impart. *Kyrie eleison.*

To this the virgin, bowing, responded with awe:
If this is what He wishes, His wish shall be my law,
Yet more than willing I surrender me,
If such Love is my Master, His servant I will be. *Kyrie eleison.*

And so the Gift was given, our Helper in need,
New life to dwell among us, Eternal God indeed!
This Jesus, Christ Child, Son whom Mary bore,
Is come to be our Savior, to heav'n our open Door. *Kyrie eleison.*

Text: German Carol, c. 1600; Trans, J.J. Vajda, 1971

The Congregation stands for the Fifth Reading and Collect.

Fifth Reading

St Luke 1:26-38

The Angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.' And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, 'Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' Then said Mary unto the angel, 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' And the angel answered and said unto her, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.' And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' And the angel departed from her.

Thanks be to God.

Remain standing. The Celebrant says

The Lord be with you. **And with thy spirit.**

Let us pray. 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, world without end. **Amen.**

All sit.

The Greetings

The Hymn at the Offertory #81

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.

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

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

All kneel.

All glory be to thee, O Lord our God, for that thou didst create heaven and earth, and didst make us in thine own image; and, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to take our nature upon him, and to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption. He made there a full and perfect sacrifice for the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again.

For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread; and when he had given thanks to thee, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Likewise, after supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink this, all of you; for this is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy people do celebrate and make, with these thy holy gifts which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; and looking for his coming again with power and great glory. And we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us, and, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, to bless and sanctify these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of thy dearly-beloved Son Jesus Christ.

And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, whereby we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies. Grant, we beseech thee, that all who partake of this Holy Communion may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, and be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction; and also that we and all thy whole Church may be made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, and in 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 Breaking of the Bread

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

Agnus Dei on French Carols

Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704)

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

*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 administered at the high altar. Please move at the direction of the ushers. During Communion, the Choir sings

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
Now and in the hour of our death. Amen.*

Music: Rihards Dubra (b. 1964)

Communion Hymn #54 (remain seated)

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

Veni Emmanuel, 15th c.

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***

**O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave. *Rejoice...!***

**O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight. *Rejoice...!***

**O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
bid thou our sad divisions cease,
And be thyself, our King of Peace.
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***

Organ

Puer Nobis (On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry)

Aaron David Miller (b. 1972)

Today at Bethesda

Welcome! Thank you for joining us this morning. If you would like to learn more about our parish community, introduce yourself to an usher. You may also complete the form on the back page of this bulletin for more information.

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

Thank you to our readers this morning; and to Kathleen Slezak, Derek Stannard, and members of the choir for the beautiful music.

Please join us for **refreshments** following the 10am service. Thank you to Jay and Kathy Hagle for hosting today. If you are able to host in January and/or February 2026, please sign your name on the sheet in the narthex.

The Parish Office will be closed from 19 December to 12 January inclusive.

Thursday 12.10 Communion services will resume in February.

The **Annual Parish Meeting** will take place following the 10am service on 1st February. Further details to follow.

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 by December 31st.

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.

Parish Outreach

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 a number of mechanical problems which affect the console and its functionality. After visiting Bethesda in late autumn 2023, technicians from Foley-Baker, Inc. of Tolland, CT, provided initial feedback and advice concerning ongoing care and maintenance of the organ. 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.

LifeWorks Community Action is a non-profit established in 1965 that works to alleviate poverty by assisting local families and individuals with a wide range of services. Bethesda is currently collecting the following items on behalf of **LifeWorks** during the Christmas season, which may be placed *in the box by the side door entrance*.

- ♦ Household cleaning supplies. Laundry detergent, dishwasher detergent
- ♦ Canned Foods including those low in salt, fat & sugar and gluten free.
- ♦ Diapers (size 4 & 5), baby wipes, and baby care products: shampoo and soap.
- ♦ Personal items: soap, toothpaste/brushes, shampoo, razors/shaving cream, deodorant.

Advent IV



'The Annunciation' by Fra Angelico (15th c.)

“Be it unto me, according to thy word.”

Christmas is nearly here! Each week, our Advent Wreath focuses our attention on the coming of Christ in Bethlehem. We light candles for the Patriarchs and prophets. We pray for grace and amendment of life.

Today, we light the last of the candles for the Blessed Virgin Mary. 'Be it unto me according to thy word,' Mary replies to the angel's message that she is to be the God-bearer. This is neither a passive shrug of acceptance nor a superhuman 'bring it on!', but a response of faith. Perhaps the word Mary used was the ancient Hebrew word for 'let it be so' - *Amen*.

When we say 'Amen' at the end of our prayers, it's not just a convenient way of saying 'we've stopped praying now' but an invitation for the Holy Spirit to bring to birth in us the things for which we've prayed. Vocation is never a one-off event, but a lifelong journey of challenge and discovery, walking into God's promised future in faith and trust.

May the Lord bless you and keep you this holy season.

Advent & Christmas at Bethesda

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

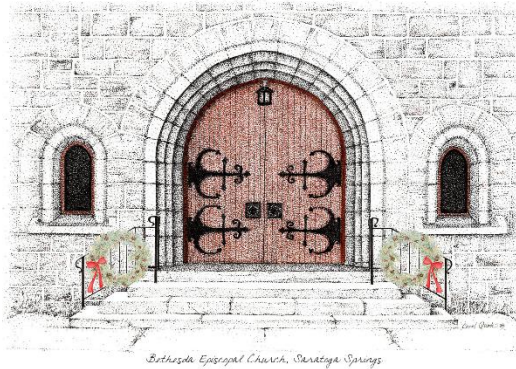
9am Holy Communion (said)

Sunday, 4 January

Second Sunday of Christmas

8am Holy Communion

10am Sung Eucharist



Please place this form in the collection plate if you would like us to get in touch with you:

Name:

Phone:

Email address:

Home address:

Preferred contact method:

Contact Reasons:

- ☐ Visitor or new resident
- ☐ Would like more information about the church and/or worship
- ☐ Interested in opportunities to serve
- ☐ Would like to speak with or have a visit from the priest
- ☐ Would like information about pledge envelopes or regular giving to Bethesda
- ☐ Other _____

The Reverend Charles Wallace, Rector

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