



“The Courage to Welcome”

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025
10:45AM

WWW.BETHANYPRESBY.ORG/SERMONS

To trust in Jesus
To love like Jesus
To grow in Jesus
To bring others to Jesus

WORSHIP THE LORD

WE GATHER

PRELUDE

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"
arr. Larry Sue (ASCAP); cpr 2024 Larry Sue

Bethany Chime Choir

WELCOME

Pastor Brian Janssen

CALL TO WORSHIP *(Please Stand)*

Pastor Larry Ruby

Do not be afraid—God is with us.

We welcome the promise of Emmanuel.

In the quiet faithfulness of Joseph, God's plan unfolds.

We open our hearts to God's surprising ways.

The child to be born is named Jesus, for he will save his people.

We rejoice in the Savior who comes to dwell among us.

God enters our world not with force, but with grace.

We come to worship the God who is with us.

Let us prepare our hearts for Christ's coming.

We worship with joy, trust, and hope.

Let us worship God!

OPENING PRAYER *(Please Stand)*

Pastor Larry Ruby

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING – Candle of Love

**Kevin, Ashley, Nolan
and Deacon Strouse**

HYMN *(Please Stand)*

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

No. 188

1 Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains, and the mountains in
reply echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

2 Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? Say what may the
tidings be which inspire your heavenly song? [Refrain]

3 Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing. Come, adore on
bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King. [Refrain]

CALL TO CONFESSION *(Please be seated)*

Pastor Larry Ruby

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Pastor Larry Ruby

**Merciful God, we confess that we prefer what is familiar to what is faithful. We
cling to our plans and reputations, and we resist the costly obedience of**

discipleship. We confess that we doubt your nearness, question your ways, and shrink back when your call disrupts our routines. Forgive us for the times we have been slow to trust, quick to judge, and hesitant to welcome your work in unexpected places. Make us ready for Emmanuel. Give us the courage to do what you ask, and the humility to receive the Christ you send. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Silent Confession*

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor Larry Ruby

Hear the good news: the angel said to Joseph, “Do not be afraid.” In Jesus Christ, God has drawn near to save, to forgive, and to restore. By the mercy of Almighty God, your sins are forgiven, and you are given new life—Emmanuel’s life within you. **Believe the gospel: in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.**

RESPONSE (*Please Stand*) **“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”**

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O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Pastor Larry Ruby

Since God has forgiven us in Christ. Let us be at peace with one another. The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all...**and also with you.**
The kids can come forward for the Children’s Sermon as you all take a moment to share the peace of Christ with those around you.

WE LISTEN

CHILDREN’S SERMON

Debby Hayes

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Pastor Larry Ruby

FIRST READING

Isaiah 7:10-17

Pastor Larry Ruby

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, “Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.” Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.”

ANTHEM

"Laudamus Te" adapted from Vivaldi's Gloria"

arr. Becki Slagle Mayo; cpr. BriLee Music

Duet: Pastor Brian Janssen and Caleb Auldrige

SECOND READING

Matthew 1:18-25

Pastor Brian Janssen

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"The Courage to Welcome"

Pastor Brian Janssen

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

WE RESPOND

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

THE OFFERTORY

"Savior of the Nations, Come"

Bethany Choir

Lyrics attr. Ambrose of Milan; Music by Lloyd Larson; Orchestration by Brant Adams; cpr 2008 Lorenz Publishing

THE RESPONSE *(Please Stand)*

"Doxology"

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Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; Amen.

THE PRAYER OF DEDICATION *(Please Stand)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

We pray this in the name of our Savior, who taught us to pray, 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

WE ARE SENT

HYMN (*Please Stand*)

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"

No. 191

1 It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near
the earth to touch their harps of gold: "Peace on the earth, good will to all,
from heaven's all-gracious King." The world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.

2 Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled, and still their
heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world; above its sad and lowly plains,
they bend on hovering wing, and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

3 For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old, when with the ever-circling
years shall come the time foretold when peace shall over all the earth its ancient
splendors fling, and the whole world give back the song
which now the angels sing.

BENEDICTION

Pastor Brian Janssen

CLOSING RESPONSE

"Advent Benediction"

Bethany Choir

by David Lantz III; cpr. 2025 Lantz Choral Publications

POSTLUDE



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

From

- ❖ Nikki O'Brien in memory of loved ones.
- ❖ Tom and Cheryl Harold in memory of Marian Harold.
- ❖ The Hess Family in memory of our father, mother, and sister.
- ❖ Jeanine Rainone in memory of Jerry Rainone and Al Olshinsky.
- ❖ Deb Perkins in memory of Joe Perkins and Marie Davis.
- ❖ Karen Harkins in memory of Lou Nowasielski.
- ❖ Tim and Darlene Anderson in memory of Ralph and Gladys Anderson, and Albert and Rose Susa.
- ❖ Dale and Susan Anderson in memory of Esther and Burt Crawford and John and Evelyn Anderson.
- ❖ Joseph K. Oyler in memory of his wife Pauline Oyler.
- ❖ Lynne and Mike Suchoza in honor of children and grandchildren.
- ❖ Barb and Jack Crawford to the Glory of God, in honor of their ever-growing lovable family and in memory of loved ones.
- ❖ Bob and Patti Pulice in memory of our parents.
- ❖ Kyli and Heidi Martin in honor of Judy Rippentrop and in memory of Doug and Shirley Howard.
- ❖ Beckie Dreibelbis to the Glory of God and in honor of her children and grandchildren.
- ❖ Alice, Robert and Tammi Montagna in memory of Mark Montagna.
- ❖ Jessica and Stella Mae Paracca in memory of Grandma, Joanie, Dolorus, Bud and Deb and Walter Wentzel.
- ❖ Pat Mishizen in memory of the Myers and Mishizen families.
- ❖ Rona Matteo to the Glory of God.
- ❖ Rev. Carol Visser and family in memory of Rev. Dr. Richard Visser.
- ❖ Colleen Heasley to the Glory of God.
- ❖ The Brickner family in memory of Emily Brady and Melany Hamilton.
- ❖ Shawn and Michele Zwigart in memory of their granddaughter Isabelle Paige Skinner.
- ❖ Clara and Lorenzo Talerico to the Glory of God.
- ❖ Xuelai Wu in memory of her uncle.
- ❖ George "Fred" Gerstacker Jr. in memory of his beloved wife Roberta J. Gerstacker and friend Edith Moore.
- ❖ Thomas and Carole Aspinall in memory of Harry and Ruth Aspinall and Charles and Irene Fox.
- ❖ Bruce and Donna Carman in memory of Bruce and Sylvia Carman.
- ❖ Mark and Nancy Schneider in memory of Mary and Dick Schneider.
- ❖ Ruth and Guy Doyle in memory of Barb and Jerry Phelps.
- ❖ Alec Heiskell and Sarah Paviol presented to the Glory of God.
- ❖ Bill, Beth and Sarah Paviol in memory of Sarah Durkin (Bill's mother), and Harry and Gladys Cimarolli, Beth's parents.
- ❖ Betty L. Copeland in honor of Judy Gastgeb, Connie Segeleon and Mary Weise and in memory of Curtis D. Copeland.

- ❖ Julie, Chris, Jenna and Michael Foltz in memory of Billy Arbogast and their grandparents.
- ❖ The Petrow Family in memory of Barbara Rank and Elinore and Joseph Petrow.
- ❖ Mike and Denise Leigh to the Glory of God.
- ❖ Elaine Gray and family in memory of William T. Gray and deceased members of the Gray and Iagnemma families.
- ❖ Kim, Terry, Adrienne, TJ and Samantha and Jeff in honor of Evelyn Barbish and in memory of William Barbish.
- ❖ Bob and Jana Grimm in memory of Pops Grimm and Mom and Dad Phillis.
- ❖ Jim Penderville and Kristi Woolsey in memory of Joy and Jack Penderville and in honor of Mel and Nancy Woolsey.
- ❖ Alice Eiszler in memory of her loving husband Jeffrey and loving parents Wassil and Stella Serniak.
- ❖ Connie Rucker in memory of parents Leonard and Eileen Unitas.

Please remember to take home your poinsettia(s) following worship (at either 5:00pm or 7pm) on Christmas Eve. If you are unable to join us for worship on Christmas Eve, you may take your poinsettia(s) today.

WELCOME TO BETHANY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

We are delighted to have you in worship with us this morning!

FOR OUR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN - A Nursery Room is across the hall from the pulpit side of the Sanctuary. It is equipped with a speaker system from the sanctuary so any parent(s) who wishes to stay with their child(ren) in the nursery can hear the worship service. **A Cry Room** is at the rear of the Sanctuary – entry is through a door in the Narthex near the usher's table. *We encourage you to use these rooms as needed.* **Worship Bags** are available for children to use during the worship service. The bags can be found at the Usher's Desk. **Sound amplification devices** are available to those who might need or want to use them. Our ushers are available to help with any needs that you have during worship.

NEWS FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS- Today we welcome in to the life of our congregation the following members: Lynne Walker, Bonnie Katruska, Rick Smith, Lisa-Ann Smith, Elizabeth Smith, Doreen Grove, Lauren Stark and Matt Stark.

The Membership Team is holding a hot chocolate bar after each service today. Join us for a cup of hot chocolate, some cookies and fellowship to meet the new members.

Today's ushers are Laura Dugan, Heather and Karen Lucas, and Carol Cowser.

The flowers are presented to the Glory of God by Nikki O'Brien in honor of her husband Jack's birthday.

Christmas Eve service times will be 5:00pm for the Family service and 7:00pm for the Candlelight service.

We have one service on Sunday, December 28th at 10:00am!

PROGRAM AND EVENT NEWS

BETHANY DEACONS BACKPACK DRIVE - The Bethany Deacons are hosting another backpack drive to gift to the Southwood Boy's home. These bags will be gifted to every new admission throughout the 2026 year. **You can donate until Dec. 25th!** We are asking for \$20 per backpack. You will be supporting the purchasing of the backpack and the essential items we provided them with: socks, towels, toothbrush, shampoo and more! All items are purchased and put together by the Deacons. Cash or checks with "**backpack**" in the memo are accepted. Please put cash in a labeled envelope and place in the offering plate, or give to Sarah Paviol or Edgar Shafer.

PRESCHOOL GINGERBREAD CONTEST - The Preschool 4 year old's class with Mrs. Rubritz won 1st place in the Preschool/Kindergarten category in the Pittsburgh Gingerbread House Competition! The house will be on display downtown until New Year's Eve. *"Childhood is not a race to see how quickly a child can read, write and count. Childhood is a small window of time to learn and develop at the pace which is right for each individual child."*



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CELEBRATION - The 8th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration will be held Monday, January 19, 2026 at Bethany Presbyterian Church at 6:30pm. The musical program includes a brief message, adult and youth community service awards, and community prayers. All are welcome to attend!

BYG DECEMBER EVENTS – TODAY is our Progressive Dinner and Christmas Party! We will meet at the church at 4pm. We will stop at various volunteer's houses and have multiple courses that include snacks, sides, entrees, and desserts. This event will serve as our Christmas party, so bring an item from home (or an item purchased for less than \$5), to participate in our White Elephant Gift Exchange. Christmas PJs and festive attire are highly encouraged!! We will NOT meet Sunday December 28th
Make sure to stop in the Welcome Center and grab January and February's schedules!

JENNA'S 2ND ANNUAL JOY DRIVE FOR LIGHT OF LIFE RESCUE MISSION - All donations will be going to the Light of Life Rescue Mission which transforms lives through the love of Christ by providing food, shelter, and hope to men, women, and children experiencing homelessness, poverty or addiction. Please drop off donations in the bin in the Welcome Center.

UPWARD BASKETBALL - Upward Basketball at Bethany begins again in January! We have a record number of players registered this year. 306 players, ages K5 through 2nd grade, will be taking to the courts with their first practices the week of January 12th. Our first game day is Saturday, January 24th, and the last game day is Saturday, February 28th.

If you can give us an hour or two, or more, on a game day to help manage this amazing program, please consider helping us. We have a variety of ways you can help - from being on the courts as a referee, to running the scoreboard and clock, to making sure the players get their snack after their games. Please contact Beckie Price or Mike Suchoza for more information, or to let us know of your availability to help. Beckie can be emailed at upward@bethanypresby.org. Thank you!

MISSION NEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE CHURCH FINANCES AS OF DECEMBER 14, 2025

Thank you for your continued support.

	2025 YTD (\$)	2024 YTD (\$)	+/- (\$)
Contributions*	\$ 516,042	\$ 521,791	\$ (5,749)
General Fund Subsidies (Transfers)	311,265	327,000	(15,735)
Investment Income **	14,598	36,284	(21,686)
Total General Fund Income	\$ 841,906	\$ 885,075	\$(43,169)
Year to Date Budget	938,971		
+/- Budget	\$ (97,065)		



QR Code
for online
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*For purposes of this report, any prepaid pledges have been spread over 52 weeks.

** Investment income is updated monthly upon receipt of investment statements.

A friendly reminder from the Stewardship team, please write the amount of your giving on the outside of the envelope when turning in your offering. This helps make the job of those counting much easier.

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms”. 1 Peter 4:10 calls us to action to share with others our God given talents and blessings. Let us receive His grace and strength so that we may glorify Him and serve generously.

December Special Offering – Christmas Joy / Mission Flights International

The special offering envelope for December supports the Christmas Joy offering. 50% of this collection supports the Presbytery Christmas Joy offering which helps current and retired church workers in their time of need and develops our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges.

The other 50% will support Missionary Flights International (MFI), a faith based nonprofit mission aviation organization operating flights between Florida and areas of need in the Caribbean. MFI’s mission is to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in partnership with Bible-centered missions by providing reliable transportation and logistics service. MFI flies missionaries, their families, and household effects to and from the field. MFI also transports work teams and their equipment for short-term ministry. MFI receives mail and cargo for mission work that the staff handles with care and delivers as soon as possible.

As the end of the year approaches, please keep in mind that all contributions for 2025 must be received by the church no later than December 31, 2025. IRS general rules state that a check placed in the church offering plate in January 2026 cannot be recorded as a 2025 contribution, even if the check has been dated 2025. The only exception to this rule would be for contributions that are mailed and postmarked in 2025. These contributions would be deductible in 2025 even though the contributions were not received until 2026.

WEEK AHEAD

Sunday, December 21

4th Sunday of Advent

8:15AM and 10:45AM – Worship

9:30AM - Sunday School

4:00PM – BYG Progressive Dinner and Christmas Party
Youth and Adult Ukulele Practice after the second service

Monday, December 22

6:30PM - Body Carpenter Workout

6:30PM - Men's Huddle Group

Tuesday, December 23

7:00PM – ALANON

Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

5:00PM – Family service

7:00PM – Candlelight service

Thursday, December 25

Christmas Day

Office Closed

Friday, December 26

Office Closed

Saturday, December 27

9:00AM – SUPPLEMENTAL DIAPER BANK

11:00AM – Knitters

Sunday, December 28

10:00AM – Worship service