FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM

Traditional Worship Service
The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

The Service for the Lord's Day

WE GATHER

PRELUDE "Greensleeves" from *Four Carol Preludes* — Richard Purvis

WELCOME AND COMMUNITY LIFE

*ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING — The Hunsicker Family

In a world full of fear, where do you see the presence of love?

We see love all around us. We see love when people hold open the door. We see love in a warm embrace, a homemade casserole, a phone call after a long day. We see love in random acts of kindness and intentional acts of empathy. We see love all around us.

You are right. Even in a fearful world, love is all around us.

Today we light the candle of love as a remind of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, love is here. Love is world-changing. Love is shining bright. We only have to look for it.

Thanks be to God for a love like that! Amen.

*SUNG RESPONSE

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah (from *God to Glory*) — TIF IN VELDELE

Light four candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
He is coming; tell the glad tidings.
Let your light be shining.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

*GATHERING HYMN — #12

People, Look East — BESANCON

WE CONFESS

CALL TO CONFESSON

*Please stand as you are able

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

When you were afraid, did I stay by your side? Did I offer my hand, or did I leave you alone?
When you were afraid, did I choose solidarity? Did I see your fear, or did I only see mine?
Friend, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and we do too. So take a deep breath, and let's start again.
Thank you. Your mercy is a gift.
Now we must ask—when you were afraid, did we stay by your side? Did we offer our hands, or did we leave you alone? When you were afraid, did we choose solidarity? Did we see your fear? Or did we only see ours?
Friends, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Fortunately, God offers grace, and I do too. So take a deep breath, and let's start again.
Thank you. Your mercy is a gift.
We accept your grace and would love to start again.
May it be so, with God's help.
Alleluia, amen.

WE LISTEN

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE
Matthew 1:18-25 The Hunsicker Family

Leader: The word of the Lord;
People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON Rev. Lindsey Altvater Clifton
"The Greatest of These"

WE RESPOND

MOMENT FOR SILENT REFLECTION
Has your fear ever been a catalyst for love through connection and support? How is our congregation called to create change and share God's love through solidarity with people who are vulnerable and afraid?

*SERMON HYMN
Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn (from *Glory to God* – see back page)

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH
We have seen the valley. We have seen a sky without stars. We have seen the longest night, and *still* we believe. We believe in a with-us God. We believe in the hope of tomorrow. We believe that good news is louder than fear. We believe this good news is

for all people. So even when our knees shake, even when our voice trembles, even when fear is all around us, we will hold onto that good news. We will reach for each other. We will look for God in our midst. We will sing songs of joy. We will proclaim: *Unto us, love is born.* We have seen the longest night, and we have seen unimaginable love. So *still*, we believe. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND 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 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.

MINUTE FOR MISSION AND OFFERING

Call to Give

Offertory Of the Father's Love Begotten arr. Flor Peeters

*Doxology #592

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow OLD HUNDREDTH

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

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*SENDING HYMN #13

Prepare the Way, O Zion BEREDEN VAG

*BENEDICTION

In a fearful world, may you look for God's spirit. May you reach for each other's hands. May you choose courage whenever you can. And in all things, may you remember that good news is louder than fear. In the name of the one who calls, the one who sends, and the one who journeys with—go in peace and be not afraid. Amen.

POSTLUDE Rigaudon Gordon Young

You're welcome to stay and enjoy the Postlude or to depart while the music is played.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!

The poinsettias in the Sanctuary are given in honor of and in memory of loved ones by members of our congregation.

107 Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

