

BERN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
820 West Leesport Road, Leesport, PA 19533

Blessed be his
glorious name
forever; may his

G**RY**

fill the whole earth.
Amen and Amen.

Psalm 72:19, NRSV

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Sunday, December 4, 2022 — 10:00 a.m.

INTRODUCTION

At the heart of our Advent preparation stands John the Baptist, who calls us to repent and make a new beginning. As the darkness increases, we turn toward the approaching light of Christ. For Christians he is the root of Jesse, the righteous judge who welcomes all, especially the poor and meek of the earth. We wait with hope for that day when the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and there will be no more hurt or destruction. From the Lord's table we are sent in the spirit of John the Baptist to proclaim that in Christ the kingdom of God has come near.

PRESERVICE MUSIC

PRELUDE "My Faith" -arr. by Barry Braman
-Piano/Organ Duet by Jane and Sally

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(*) Please stand as you are able.

LBW (green hymnal) WOV (blue hymnal)

GATHERING

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

C: **Blessed be God's name forever. Amen.**

P: Beloved, now is the time to wake from sleep. Let us confront our sins, and confess them to the one who is merciful and just.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: God of new beginnings,

C: **we confess that we have not welcomed your holy reign. We have strayed from your paths. We prepare for war instead of peace. We dishonor one another and your creation. Purify us with your refining fire and set us again on your way of love, that we may bear fruit worthy of repentance, and welcome your coming among us.**

P: People of God, a new thing is growing in our midst, a tender branch, a living sign. By water and the Spirit you are joined to this wonder. You have put on † Christ, and your sins have been washed away. Rejoice in the way of the Lord.

C: **Amen.**

*** GATHERING HYMN**

“The King Shall Come”

LBW #33

*** APOSTOLIC GREETING**

P: The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also with you.**

*** KYRIE**



1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.
Re - new us with your sav - ing pow`r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

* HYMN OF PRAISE

vs. 1



1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.
2 Glo-ry be to Christ for - ev - er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.
3 Ho - ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a - lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre - a - tion, Fa - ther of sur - pass - ing worth:
Son of God and gra - cious Sav - ior, you have come from heav'n a - bove;
Ho - ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex - alt you, we a - dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.
on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.
Je - sus Christ, with God the Spir - it, in the Fa - ther's splen - dor bright.



Saints and an - gels bow be - fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.
Hear our prayer; re - store, for - give us; in your prom - ise firm we stand.
For the peace that we in - her - it, glo - ry be to God on high!

* PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray together.

C: **Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming nurture our growth as people of repentance and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

SPECIAL MUSIC "My Jesus, I Love Thee" -arr. by Bobby L.
-Piano/Organ Duet by Jane and Sally Huguley, Jr.

*** ADVENT LITANY**

P: Praise to you, O God, who gives us courage to start again.
You fasten righteousness around your waist and baptize
with the Holy Spirit's fire. Bless us as we mirror your
mighty fire in these simple flames, and teach us to mirror
your justice in the paths we prepare. We ask that peace
abound, until none hurt or destroy over all the earth.

C: **Amen.**

*** ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING**

“Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah”

vs. 1 and 2

Light one candle to watch for Messiah:

let the light banish darkness.

He shall bring salvation to Israel,

God fulfills the promise.

Light two candles to watch for Messiah:

let the light banish darkness.

He shall feed the flock like a shepherd,

gently lead them homeward.

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 11:1-10

*Isaiah describes the coming of a future, ideal ruler who will
renew David's royal line (the stump of Jesse). Gifted by the
spirit of God, this ruler will reign with perfect justice. Enmity
and danger will be restored to harmony and peaceful
coexistence.*

¹A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

²The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

⁹They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the
peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall
be glorious.

L: Word of God, word of life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 (*read responsively*)

¹Give the king your justice, O God,

and your righteousness to the king's son;

²**that he may rule your people righteously
and the poor with justice;**

³that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.

⁴**Let him defend the needy among the people,
rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor.**

⁵May he live as long as the sun and moon endure,
from one generation to another.

⁶**Let him come down like rain upon the mown field,
like showers that water the earth.**

⁷In his time may the righteous flourish;
and let there be an abundance of peace till the moon shall be
no more.

¹⁸**Blessed are you, LORD God, the God of Israel;
you alone do wondrous deeds!**

¹⁹And blessed be your glorious name forever,
and may all the earth be filled with your glory. Amen. Amen.

SECOND READING: Romans 15:4-13

God's promise to include Gentiles within the circle of God's blessed people has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Christians live out their unity by welcoming and encouraging each other just as Christ has welcomed them into God's family.

⁴Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, ⁶so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ⁸For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles,
and sing praises to your name”;

¹⁰and again he says,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;

¹¹and again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples praise him”;

¹²and again Isaiah says,

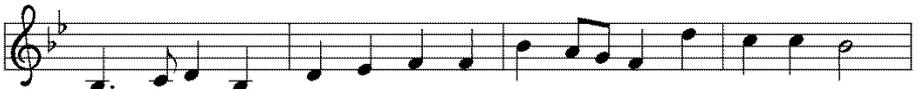
“The root of Jesse shall come,
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

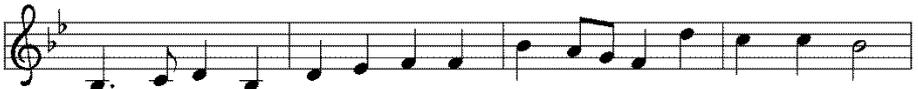
L: Word of God, word of life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

*** GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

*** GOSPEL: Matthew 3:1-12**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the third chapter.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.** (*sung*)

Just before Jesus begins his public ministry, John the Baptist appears, calling people to mend their ways and speaking of a powerful one who is to come.

¹In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

⁴Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

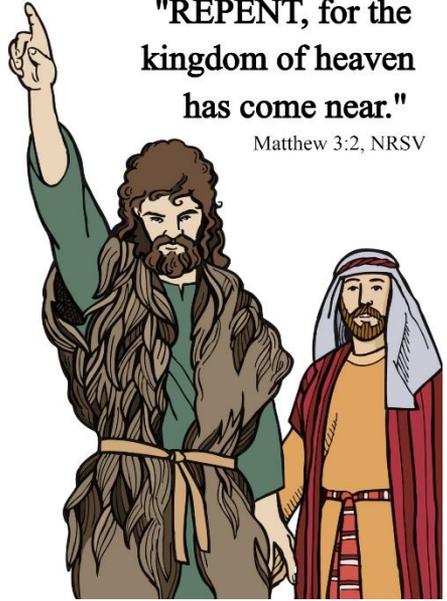
C: **Praise to you, O Christ.** (*sung*)

SERMON – Pastor William Fryer

Silence for meditation.

**"REPENT, for the
kingdom of heaven
has come near."**

Matthew 3:2, NRSV



HYMN OF THE DAY

“Prepare the Royal Highway”

LBW #26

* APOSTLES’ CREED

P: God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, let us confess our faith:

C: **I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

* PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: As we prepare for the fullness of Christ’s presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

A brief silence.

P: God, you renew the church in every age. We give thanks for hymn writers and theologians. Inspire teachers, writers, and musicians to delight and instruct your people. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: You give us a vision of creation in harmony, when hurting and destruction will be no more. Teach us to be stewards of the earth and companions to its creatures. Restore to balance and wholeness what human greed has harmed.

God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: You defend the cause of all who are poor and oppressed. Raise up leaders who will govern with equity and serve the common good. Guide judges, lawmakers, and public officials to protect the rights of those who cannot advocate for themselves. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: You deliver those in need from suffering and fear. Come to the aid of any who are exploited or abused, especially children, elders, and victims of human trafficking. Provide safety and help to our neighbors without shelter, refugees, and those fleeing violence. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: You urge your people to welcome one another as you have welcomed us. Nurture ministries of hospitality and care in this and every congregation. We pray for people who are homebound, hospitalized, or separated from loved ones. We pray especially for Lisa, Tina, George, Barbara, Tim, Jane, Myra, Bob, Ruth, and all those we name in our hearts or aloud... God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: You embrace all who have died trusting in your promises, and we give thanks for their faithful witness. Sustain us in hope until we are united with them in the joy of your eternal presence. God, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: You bless us with the gift of supply pastors who shepherd our congregation each Sunday. Bless us with patience, wisdom, and guidance as we go through this time

of change, and we pray that you would lead us in the right direction as we discern your vision for our future. God, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: God of longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray.

C: Amen.

*** SHARING OF THE PEACE** (American Sign Language)

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us share a sign of that peace with one another.

MEAL

*** THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

*** THE PREFACE**

P: It is indeed right and salutary...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



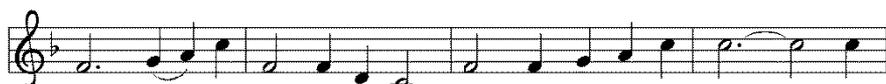
* THE SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -



san-na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

* THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

LBW, page 70

* THE LORD'S PRAYER

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as our Lord Jesus taught us:

C: **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,
forever and ever. Amen.**

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God, who has come to save you.

*** THE AGNUS DEI**



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*** POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: **Amen.**

*Prepare
the way
of the
LORD.*

* POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE

“O Lord, Now Let Your Servant”



1 O Lord, now let your ser - vant de - part in heav'n - ly peace,
2 Then grant that I may fol - low your gleam, O glo - rious Light,



for I have seen the glo - ry of your re - deem - ing grace:
till earth - ly shad - ows scat - ter, and faith is changed to sight;



a light to lead the na - tions un - to your ho - ly hill,
till rap - tured saints shall gath - er up - on that shin - ing shore,



the glo - ry of your peo - ple, your cho - sen Is - ra - el.
where Christ, the bless - ed day - star, shall light them ev - er - more.

* POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

P: Let us pray. Faithful God, in this meal you have remembered your mercy, bringing heaven to earth in the body and blood of Christ. As we wait for the day when all your promises will be fulfilled, sustain us and strengthen us by this holy mystery. Guide us toward your promised future, coming to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

C: **Amen.**

SENDING

* BLESSING

P: God the eternal Word, who dwells with us in Jesus, and who holds us in the grace of the Holy Spirit, ✠ bless you now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

* **SENDING HYMN**

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

LBW #60

* **DISMISSAL**

P: Go in peace. Christ is near.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

* **POSTLUDE**

“Trumpet Tune”

-Johann K. F. Fischer

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COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS UPDATE:

UPDATED WORSHIP GUIDELINES: If you choose, face masks are no longer required in our building during worship. We respect the decision of those individuals who wish to continue masking. They are encouraged to take the precautions they feel are necessary to protect their health.

SANCTUARY SEATING: For your convenience and comfort the sanctuary now has open seating. The pews on the **RIGHT** side will remain taped for those who wish to continue to remain physically distant during worship.

CONTACTLESS OFFERING is being practiced. You may place your offering in the plate near the door of the sanctuary; give on-line; or through the mail. Thank you for giving generously as an act of worship and an expression of the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity and faithfulness. Thank you.

WELCOME to all who have gathered here for worship this morning! If you are a visitor to Bern, please sign the guest book in the narthex or fill out the yellow card in the pew rack and

place it in the offering plate. We rejoice in the opportunity to worship our Lord together!

WE WELCOME TO THE LORD'S TABLE all the baptized. We believe that Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, is present in the bread and wine as God's gracious gift to us. For those who prefer it, grape juice is available in the pre-filled glasses in the trays at the front of the center aisle. Contactless elements are available from the Greeter when you receive your bulletin or in the tray at the front of the aisle. Please notify an usher if there is a need for the pastor to bring communion to the pew. Children who do not yet commune are invited to come forward to receive a blessing.

OFFICE HOURS:

Church Phone: 610-374-4343

Church Email: bernlutheranchurch@gmail.com

Secretary Korinne: I will be on vacation this week.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Members: Lisa Miller, Tina Hissinger, George Schaeffer, Barbara Speicher, Tim Moyer, Jane Schaeffer, Myra Bernhart, Bob Frey, and Ruth Keeney

Family and Friends: Family and friends of Frederick Hotzman, Jr., Sheri Mafeo, Bishop Christopher deForest, Eleanor, Shannon Helms and family, Austin Kennedy, Ann Skinner, Glenva, Warren, Courtney Davis, Giselle Davis, Joanne King, Tim Brown, Robin Brown, Matt DeLeon, Marcia Stoudt, Pastor Joyce Seip, Peter and wife, Bill and Joan Carpenter, Arthur W. Zimmerman, Natalie, Charles Trophe, Michael and Troy, Bob Stoner, Ashley Rizzuto, Philip Triantis, Mike, Peggy Deemer, Joe and Karen Young, Brian, Jamie Hey, Glenn Jones, Kailey, Renee Fullmer, Patrick, Susan, Owen Hey, Joyce, Rev. Fred Foerster, Brenda Frey, and Lesley Wegman.

(If you would like to add anyone to our prayer list, please contact Korinne in the church office. Please also notify her of anyone that could be removed.)

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS AND SPONSORS:

ORGANIST: Jane Battaglieri

OPENER: Richard Gruber

LECTOR: Donna Marks

ACOLYTE: Aiden Angstadt

GREETER: Barbara Auchenbach

ALTAR FLOWERS: Given to the Glory of God by Richard and Christine Gruber in celebration of their 48th wedding anniversary.

BULLETINS: Given to the Glory of God by Richard and Christine Gruber in honor of Austin serving overseas.

INCOME TOWARDS EXPENSES: 11/27/2022 = \$4,334.00

ATTENDANCE: 11/27/2022 = 32

CELEBRATIONS THIS WEEK:

BIRTHDAYS: 5–Marlies Goetz, 7–Margaret Hey

ANNIVERSARIES: 7–Richard and Christine Gruber (48 years)
7–Jeffrey and Sandra Schucker (48 years)

WHAT'S ON THE CALENDAR THIS WEEK:

- Sunday, December 4
- Catechetical Class, 9:00 a.m.
 - Worship, 10:00 a.m.
 - Second Sunday of Advent
 - Pastor William Fryer
 - Sunday School, 11:00-11:30- a.m.
 - Social Hall Rental – Matt Kasisky
- Tuesday, December 6
- Berks Quilters Guild, 5:00 p.m.
- Friday, December 9
- Frog Pond, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- Saturday, December 10
- Tentative Social Hall Rental
- Sunday, December 11
- Catechetical Class, 9:00 a.m.
 - Worship, 10:00 a.m.
 - Third Sunday of Advent
 - Pastor Kenneth Gould
 - Sunday School, 11:00-11:30- a.m.
 - Christmas Cards for Homebound Members Due
 - Poinsettia Orders Due

THANK YOU to Pastor William Fryer for leading us in worship this morning and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

OFFICE CLOSED – The church office will be closed the week of December 5. Our Secretary, Korinne, will be taking vacation. She will be back in the office on Tuesday, December 13. Phone messages will be checked daily.

POINSETTIA ORDERS – We will be decorating our sanctuary with red and white poinsettias for our Christmas Eve worship service. If you would like to order any plants, order forms can be found on the round table in the narthex. A minimum of 60 poinsettias are needed in order to decorate the poinsettia tree, with 25 of those being white for the cross in the middle. Orders are **due by next Sunday, December 11th**. Thank you!

STAFF CHRISTMAS GIFTS – If you would like to contribute towards monetary Christmas gifts for our Designated Pastor, Gary Rarick, our organist, Jane Battaglieri, or our Secretary, Korinne Hotzman, please place your donation in an envelope (envelopes can be found on the round table in the narthex) and clearly mark the amount you are contributing to each staff member's gift. If nothing is noted on the envelope, your contribution will be divided evenly between the staff members. Contributions may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the church. **All contributions must be received by Sunday, December 18**. Thank you!

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA – Thank you to everyone who supported Bern Cemetery Company in honoring our veterans by purchasing a wreath. The wreaths will be placed in the cemetery on Saturday, December 17. A service will be held before in Bern UCC at 1:00 p.m. Wreaths will be laid after the service. If you would like to help with the laying of the wreaths, please contact Barry Shurr at 610-372-7229.

ALTAR FLOWER, BULLETIN, AND NEWSLETTER SPONSORSHIPS

– In order to provide high quality weekly bulletins and cover mailing costs, we invite you to become an Altar Flower sponsor for \$35.00/week or a Bulletin sponsor for only \$20.00/week. You can also sponsor our monthly Newsletter for \$40.00/month. You are welcome to sponsor any of these items in honor of important birthdays/anniversaries, in honor of or in memory of someone, or to the Glory of God. Sign-up sheets for 2023 are now available on the bulletin board in the hallway.

The **ADVENT SEASON** is all about reflecting on how we can prepare our hearts and homes for Christ's birth in the world as it is today. On the round table in the narthex you will find several items that may be helpful during the coming Advent season and will bring a deeper sense of God's presence with you and great love for you. **Advent Study:** This booklet is filled with thoughts and questions to ponder each week. Taking quiet time with this booklet may provide a helpful antidote to the stimulation and commercialization that can be so overwhelming at this time of year. **Advent Calendar:** This year's calendar is bright with color and proclaims, "Glory to God and on earth peace." Open a window each day as a way to "count down to Christmas." You may find a prayer or a hymn that reflects the mood of Advent: both longing for and expecting God to fulfill God's promises of peace, security, and love for all God's children. Behind other windows you will find suggestions for good gifts, ways through which God works to fulfill those promises. **ELCA Good Gifts Catalogue:** You will notice items in the Advent calendar correspond to items listed in this catalog. You may find a gift to choose from to honor a loved one.



Christmas Cards for our **Homebound Members**

You may have noticed a table with a basket on it in the hallway on your way into church. We are collecting cards to send warm wishes to our homebound members for Christmas and to let them know we are thinking about them. All you have to do is sign the card, put the member's name(s) on the envelope, place it in the basket, and we will take care of the rest.

Bern's homebound members are:

Robert Frey
E. Berry and Margaret Hey
Beatrice Kauffman
Ruth Keeney
Jack and June Kochan
Arlene Lengel
Ann Myers
George and Jane Schaeffer
Pauline Shuman
Ronald and Phyllis Stonefelt
Doris Supplee

Please have your cards to church by **Sunday, December 11th.**
Thank you!



AN IMPOSSIBLE VISION?

Today's image from the Old Testament reading of a world at peace—a peace so full and universal that it extends to every living creature—may feel as comforting as it does unbelievable, at least by our logic (Isaiah 11:1-10). Wolves and lambs aren't friends. Lions don't eat straw. Children should not play with snakes. In the animal kingdom—and *we are animals*—there are predators and prey. Whether we take it literally or metaphorically, "Eat or *be* eaten" is how we've been taught to survive in the wilderness.

And yet here, on this wilderness morning, we hear the prophet telling us that it does not have to be this way—indeed, that it *will* not be this way forever. In the new world God is coming to bring, we won't need to tear each other apart just to survive. Somehow we will be able to live together in peace.

No wonder that of all the ways God could have revealed the depths of holy love and brought reconciliation to the world, God chose to come as a little child, a child no one thought possible, a branch from a tree that was seemingly long dead.

Beholding this child moves us to repentance, turning us from all the ways we demonize and hurt each other, and calling us instead to offer peace. Rather than taking the bait set to keep us fighting, we come together to eat the bread and drink from the cup set at the Lord's table.

In the new creation, our identity is no longer defined by our lineage or status, as those who came to be baptized by John imagined, or by being enemies, prey, or predator. Instead, in Christ's baptismal waters we are given a new life as beloved kin. With God all things are possible!