

**Third Sunday in Advent**  
**December 10, 2023**  
**The Road to Bethlehem - Choral Program**

Introduction to the Day

“Rejoice always,” begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. “All God’s children got a robe,” go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God’s party.

**Greeting**

The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.  
**And also with you.**

**Children’s Message - Lighting of the Advent Candle**

**“The Road to Bethlehem”**

Congregation sing when directed

Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o’er the plains  
And the mountains in reply echo back their joyous strains.  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo, gloria, in excelsis Deo.

**Narration 1**

Sometimes the road we end up on is not the road we expected.

Of all the places, in all the world, no one expected to be on the road to Bethlehem. Nothing good came from there. Why would anyone go?

But many would. Something had changed. Something was calling them, drawing them, inviting them to it.

Because suddenly, the road that led to Bethlehem, was the road that led to God.

**“A Highway for Our God”**

**Narration 2**

Why did they all come? Why travel all that way? Who, in the dark of the night or loneliness of grief, hasn’t hoped for a Light that is lasting?

Who, in moments of transcendent joy or fleeting beauty, hasn’t longed for the Creator and Source of it?

Who, when the world is so broken and unfair, hasn’t desired a Judge who brings mercy and justice in balance?

All. All hope, all long, all desire this Messiah. It was this hope that kept each one walking toward Him, all the way to Bethlehem.

**“Come, Messiah”**

### **Narration 3**

Mary and Joseph began on their road to Bethlehem quietly; with gentle angels, dreams, and songs. The vision was beautiful, but the road was long.

How easy it would have been for God to deliver this small family on angel wings or clouds. And yet, here they were, on a dusty road, step after step, faithfully plodding.

Perhaps, as she went, Mary sang the song she had composed for this Child: “God has lifted up the humble, He has filled the faithful with good things.” Maybe she sang this even as the donkey carried her through the dust.

Perhaps, as he went, Joseph listened to this song from his wife, and leaned just a bit closer to her, to the donkey, to the unborn Child. Maybe, he wondered at her words as his stomach rumbled. Could such hope be true? Be here? He set his heart on finding out when they reached Bethlehem.

### **“Holy Child of Bethlehem**

#### **Narration 4**

The Shepherds did not start on a road at all. They stood on sheep paths in the soft grass that night. They listened to the familiar, small sleeping noises of their flock. They gazed up with tired eyes at familiar stars. And then, suddenly, something new appeared in the sky. Then, they were wide awake!

An angel. A promise: “Today, in Bethlehem, a Child has been born to you. He is the Messiah. The Lord.” Angel choruses appeared, singing, “Glory!” And then, the sky was dark and familiar again. But nothing was the same.

They gathered together to discuss what they had seen, but the discussion did not last long. If it were true God had come to them, what could they do now but go to Him? They left their sheep. They found the path. They started their walk to Bethlehem.

Offering

### **“Shepherds in the Field”**

#### **Narration 5**

The best news the shepherds ever heard came in lights, proclamations, and songs from angels in the night sky. This is what started them down the road. But it was not just the journey that changed them; it was the Person at the end of it.

As they walked toward this promised King, they may have discussed what it would take to get a chance to see Him. Would they be permitted? They knew they weren't a well-respected group. Would they be turned away?

What a surprise, to find what they found: a scene they could easily enter and knew much about. There was no guard at the door; just a few sheep, which made them laugh. Oh, this is not a normal King. This is a King for us!

In the quiet, in the stillness, there among the hay, they held and beheld Him: Jesus. This endless God made Himself small enough to hold. How could it be? And yet it was here in Bethlehem.

## **“Shepherd’s Cradle Song”**

### **Narration 6**

The Magi came later, with no sweet songs on their lips or promises to follow. King Herod sent them to find this promised Messiah. Herod said he wanted to worship Him. But even as he spoke, the Magi sense the lie in his words.

How could a person start on a road marked with suspicion, deception, and destruction, and end anywhere else? Herod set them on that dark path, but it was a star in the sky that lit their way.

It was a star in the sky that replaced their suspicion with joy. It was a star in the sky that illuminated Jesus’ small face; God’s great love.

They gave their gifts freely. They knelt at His small feet. They heard the voice of God in His small words. They felt the love of God in His small presence. Having seen and heard, they left Bethlehem. But Bethlehem never left their hearts. Every path leads to God when it is God you are following.

**Communion** #471

### **“The Journey”**

#### **Blessing**

##### **Narration 7**

You might not know what road you are on today, or you might not be sure where it leads.

It could be you are on a road you did not choose, or at least, would not again.

Nothing about where you are is an accident. You are here, today. And whether through words, songs, light or some quiet hope, Bethlehem calls to you.

A Child has been born there: Jesus, Emmanuel.

And even as you make your way to Him ...

...Jesus has come to you.

### **“Christ is Born in Bethlehem”**

Congregation sing when directed

Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing:

Come adore on bended knee Christ the Lord the newborn King.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo, gloria in excelsis Deo.

Dismissal

# December Financial Snapshot

## Your Generosity in Action:

From a recent Ruby's Pantry customer:

"Having a family of 5 on one income can be financially hard. The first thing you start to lose out on is food. With just a small donation I received so much more than just food. The volunteers that helped are truly touched with the Holy Spirit as they help with a smile, words of encouragement, and every step of this process was comforting. I haven't felt so welcome and so loved by people who know nothing about me in a very long time. Thank you for that alone! Being on the lower income side of the scale can be embarrassing and isolating. But not here. With Ruby's Pantry you are with family getting a helpful hand, not a hand out.

**THANK YOU!!**

Through December 6

Total Revenue **\$6,811**

December 22: \$35,773

Total Expenses **\$5,006**

December 22: \$29,365

Difference to date:  
**\$1,805**

**Advent at Good Shepherd**

Sunday, December 10	Sunday, December 17
Good Shepherd Music Ministries	Shepherd's Kids Christmas Program
"The Road to Bethlehem"	"Big Big Story!"
Followed by	Followed by
The Annual Christmas Tea	French Toast Bake Fellowship Brunch

**GORA**

Episcopal Church of the  
GOOD SHEPHERD  
NORON - BETH - LEAH

## Your Generosity in Action:

Our 4th Quarter Mission Offering Partner,  
Feed My People Food Bank,  
has set a goal to raise \$100,000 in funds to ensure that every member of  
our west central Wisconsin community can celebrate the holidays with a  
full heart and a full plate. We are grateful to join them in these efforts.



THANK YOU!!

*Blue*  
**CHRISTMAS**  
*Saturday, December 9th*  
*2:00 pm*  
*A Service of Hope and Comfort*  
*St. John's Lutheran Church*  
*1804 Highland Ave*  
*Eau Claire, WI 54703*

**The flowers on the altar** are in memory of Lois Stolts.

**Christmas worship schedule**

Dec. 24 - 10 a.m. and 4:30p.m. Christmas Eve Worship

Dec. 25 - 10 a.m. Christmas Day Worship

Dec. 31 - 10 a.m. Worship

**End of the year items**

All donations must be received in the church office by **NOON Dec. 29** to receive credit for 2023.

Start thinking about your **annual reports!**

**Altar flowers**

The flower chart for 2024 is up! Sign-up to have flowers on the altar for birthdays, anniversaries or just because! Flowers are \$22 and can be paid for during the month you are signed up.