

***BETHLEHEM UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST***

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**Sunday, March 30, 2025
Fourth Sunday in Lent**

Worship Leader: Rev. Randy Koppenhaver

Organist: Kathy Bowe

***= Please rise in body or spirit**

CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: as you inhale, say the first part of the prayer to yourself, and say the second part as you exhale. Repeat 5x

Happy am I who is forgiven :: My sin is covered

RINGING OF THE BELLS

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

#556 "Surely the Presence..."

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation!

Thanks be to God for such great mercy.

Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Thanks be to God for new beginnings!

God has given us the ministry of reconciliation through Christ Jesus.

Together we will make a new beginning in Christ!

Let us worship God with joyful hearts, trusting God to renew us and all things.

We will lift our praises to God with hearts refreshed by grace.

***OPENING PRAYER**

Holy One, we come into your presence and the presence of this fellowship. We are seeking a

little light, some hope, healing. Open us to know you, to receive you and find here your transforming love. Amen.

*OPENING HYMN

#34 "Let all Things Now Living"

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

Dear God, your gifts are generous and yet we often fail to appreciate what we have been given. We demand more, but squander what we have received. Forgive us for taking for granted what we receive from you. When we fail to accept what you offer, or fail to steward those gifts, bring us back to awareness of you. Amen. (Time of reflection)

WORDS OF GRACE

However far we wander, God is always ready to receive us, to enfold us in love and grace. In the name of Jesus, we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God! Amen.**

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

#564 refrain "All Will be Well"

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who

reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Psalm 32 – p. 613 of hymnal- Leader-odd, people even – all on vs 11

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 – The Prodigal Son

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’

So he told them this parable:

Then Jesus said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.” So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of

hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.' " So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." '

CHILDREN'S TIME

SERMON

"It's not Fair!"

*HYMN #45 "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

This morning, we officially welcome Charly Ann Deignan to God's family. Charly was born on May 20, 2024 to parents, Stephen and Jennifer Deignan. Charly's sponsors are James Deignan and Rachel Gold.

INVITATION

WELCOME

Leader: They were bringing children to Jesus that Jesus might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, Jesus was indignant, and said to them,

People: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the realm of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the realm of God like a child shall not enter it."

Leader: And Jesus took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.⁴

ADDRESS

Leader: The sacrament of baptism is an outward and visible ...and the beginning of their growth into full Christian faith and discipleship.⁹

People: This is the water of baptism. Out of this water we rise with new life, forgiven of sin and one in Christ, members of Christ's body.

QUESTIONS OF THE CANDIDATES

CONGREGATIONAL ASSENT (please stand)

People: We receive this child as a new person in Christ. We offer our understanding and support as he/she explores life. We enfold this child in our love, seeking together to grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and all people. We join with these parents in telling the gospel in our midst so that this child may live with us for Christ, showing forth Christ's love for all people.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Leader: Let us unite with the church in all times and places in confessing our faith in the triune God with the United Church of Christ's Statement of Faith.

**We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit,
God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God,
and to your deeds we testify:**

**You call the worlds into being, create persons in
your own image,
and set before each one the ways of life and
death.**

**You seek in holy love to save all people from
aimlessness and sin.**

**You judge people and nations by your righteous
will declared through prophets and apostles.**

**In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our
crucified and risen Savior,
you have come to us and shared our common lot,
conquering sin and death and reconciling the
world to yourself.**

**You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating
and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding**

in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

PRAYER OF BAPTISM

ACT OF BAPTISM

PRAYER FOR THE BAPTIZED

*HYMN #516 "I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry"

PRAYER CONCERNS

CALL TO PRAYER

#403 "Lord, Listen to your Children Praying"

PASTORAL PRAYER... LORD'S PRAYER

Petitions end with: Faithful God,
embrace us with your hope.

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.

POST PRAYER RESPONSE

#403 “Lord, Listen to your Children Praying”

CALL TO THE OFFERING – Jingle Change for March helps offset Bethlehem’s pledge to OCWM (Our Church’s Wider Mission)

OFFERTORY

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE #438 v1**

“We Give Thee but Thine Own”

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

We place these gifts into your hands, O God. Bless them with your transforming grace so that they may become seeds springing up with new life in the world you love. Fill our hearts with that same grace so we can bring hope to weary and worried lives in Jesus’ name. Amen.

***CLOSING SONG “Go Now In Peace”**

***Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of ev’ry day.
Go now in faith. Steadfast strong and true.
Know he will guide you, in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love. A-men, A-
men, A-men.***

BENEDICTION-COMMISSIONING

Go in peace; be of good courage, hold fast to what is good, render no one evil for evil;

we will strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, help the afflicted, and honor all people,

lastly, love and serve God, and may the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Christ and Spirit descend upon you and remain with you forever.

Thanks be to our God. We go in peace. Amen

POSTLUDE

**This morning's prayers and liturgies are used with permission from: <https://presbyterian.ca/worship/> and www.ucc.org/worship-way/advent-4c-march-30/

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- We will be collecting donations for a Daycholah Center project that involves removing a window, installing a patio door, and building a deck on one of the cabins. The Rural Church Fellowship will match up to \$500, all donations collected from its member churches. There will be a basket for this free will offering on March 16, 23, and 30. Daycholah is also looking for volunteers for a work and clean-up day. See Steven Voland for details.

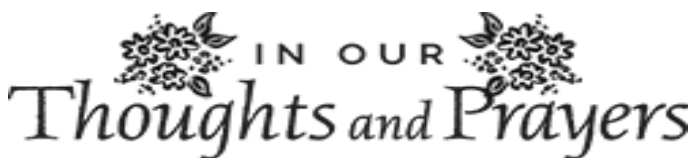
- On Sunday, May 4, Pastor Randy will be holding a "Communion class" during Sunday School. The start time for this class will be based on when it's convenient for the SS teachers. It shouldn't be more than 30 min, depending on student questions. Then they can return to their regular class. If you are interested in your child learning about the

meaning behind the Lord's Supper, please sign your child up in the Fellowship Hall.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS:

-Sunday, April 13 @ 3pm – Dramatization of da Vinci's *Last Supper* – St Paul's UCC, Sheboygan – See flyer

-Brat Fry – Wed. May 14 – 4p-7p – St. James UCC – Spring Valley



Those Grieving:

Wayne Stauss
Don Mogenson
Elaine Waack

Those struggling with health issues:

Diane Fidlin	Tony Bowe
Will Mathes	Heidi Konen
Darlene Horneck	Emily (Melissa's cousin)
Brad Westphalen	Dawson Horneck
Jessica Horneck	Tom Lefeber
Marie Rietbrock	Molly
Dana	Mary Beth Molitor
Hubert	Jason
Sage	Robin

Those unable to worship with us:

Merlin Ninmer Helen Henning

This Week at Bethlehem:

Today, Sunday 3/30: 8:00 Sunday School; 8:00 Confirmation; 9:30am Worship; *Happy Anniversary Joe & Doreen Schmidt!*

Monday 3/31:

Tuesday 4/1:

Wednesday 4/2: 5:30pm Lenten Devotions;

Thursday 4/3: *Happy Birthday Nikki Watson, Ann Moore, Tyler Hanson, and Sheri Wilharms!*

Friday 4/4: *Happy Birthday Greg Schultz!*

Saturday 4/5:

Sunday 4/6: 8:00 Sunday School; 8:00 Confirmation Class; 9:30am Worship w/ Communion; *Happy Birthday Lily Watson!*

April Pantry Items:

Bottle Of Hand Soap, Dish Soap or Shampoo

2025 Bethlehem UCC Leadership Team

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