



**BETHLEHEM UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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Sunday, April 26, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Eastertide

Worship Leader: Rev. Randall Koppenhaver

Musician: Kathy Bowe

The white peace candle on the altar is lit in solidarity with all peoples of the world affected by armed conflict, civil war, oppression, tyranny, exploitation and discrimination. God, bring them peace.

***= 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

The Lord is my shepherd :: I shall not want

RINGING OF THE BELLS

CALL TO WORSHIP #554

"Holy Ground"

We are standing on holy ground, And I know that there are angels all around

Let us praise Jesus now, We are standing in his presence on holy ground

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

God, our Shepherd, offers us abundant life.

God, you are with us!

God, our Shepherd, leads us by still waters.

God, restore our souls!

God, our Shepherd, walks with us through every dark valley.

God, we will not be afraid! God, our Shepherd, we praise you for your goodness and mercy with us every day.

***OPENING PRAYER**

**God of love,
we come together into your presence
trusting that your love has the power to defeat evil in the world.
We come together into your presence trusting that Christ
shows us that your love defeats even the power of death.
We come together into your presence trusting that your Holy Spirit
guides us through the darkest valleys.
We worship you with glad hearts,
praising you in the name of our Risen Lord,
praying with the breath of your Spirit in us.
Renew our strength and courage to face whatever each day holds,
so our lives will bring you honor and glory now and always. Amen.**

***OPENING HYMN #431 vs. 1,2,4 "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us"**

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

Loving God, trusting your grace and mercy, we come together to your throne of grace to confess our sins;

**God of love,
we confess that too often we let the events around us
shatter our trust in your love.
When terror strikes and innocents fall,
we wonder if love can defeat violence.
When truth gets lost among misleading claims,
we wonder if love can prevail over lies.
Forgive us, God, when we lose our trust in the power of your love
so soon after it raised Jesus from death's grip.
(time of silence)**

WORDS OF GRACE

The Apostle Paul asked: **What will separate us from the love of Christ?**
Hardship? Distress? Peril or sword?

No! he declared.

Neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. **Let us rejoice that, no matter what is happening around us, God's gracious and forgiving love will never let us go. May it be so!**

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Psalm 23

¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² **He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,**

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴ **Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,**

**I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.**

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ **Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.**

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

¹⁴ Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared,
“Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my
words!

³⁶ “Therefore, let all Israel know beyond question that God has made this Jesus,
whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

³⁷ When the crowd heard this, they were deeply troubled. They said to Peter and
the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in
the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive
the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ This promise is for you, your children, and for all who
are far away—as many as the Lord our God invites.” ⁴⁰ With many other words he
testified to them and encouraged them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse

generation.”⁴¹ Those who accepted Peter’s message were baptized. God brought about three thousand people into the community on that day.

John 10:1-11

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.⁸ All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.^[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture.¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

CHILDREN’S TIME

MESSAGES

*HYMN #513 vs 1-3

“Lord of Life and King of Glory”

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

THE ORDER OF CONFIRMATION: AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM

This morning, we officially welcome Theodore Gordon Reis to God’s family. Archer was born on November 12, 2025, to parents, Ben and Abigail Reis. Teddy’s sponsors are Corissa Eifrid and Jack “Taco” Reis

INVITATION and WELCOME

LEADER

Friends in Christ, we all are received into the church through the sacrament of baptism...and in the beginning of their growth into full Christian faith and discipleship.

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.

These people have found nurture and support in the midst of the family of Christ....It is by our confession that we are saved

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.

L: Do you believe in God?

P: We believe in God, Father Almighty.

L: Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

P: We believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

L: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

P: We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, Giver of life.

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

PRAYER

ACT of BAPTISM

PRAYER FOR THE BAPTIZED

HYMN #516 I Was there to Hear your Boring Cry"

PRAYER OF THE CANDIDATES

Candidates: O God, my God, known to me in Jesus Christ, I give myself to you as your own, to love and serve you faithfully all the days of my life. Amen.

*PRAYER OF THE CONGREGATION

Almighty God, who in baptism received these your servants into the church, forgave their sins, and promised them eternal life, increase in them the gifts of your Holy Spirit. Grant love for others, joy in serving you, peace in disagreement, patience in suffering, kindness toward all people, goodness in evil times, faithfulness in temptation, gentleness in the face of opposition, self-control in all things. Thereby strengthen them for their ministry in the world; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

ACT OF CONFIRMATION (Parents, sponsors, family members, mentors etc. may also come forward to “lay hands upon” the youth.)

The laying on of hands is an ancient biblical, symbolic gesture used in Christian traditions to impart divine blessing, authorize ministry, facilitate healing or receive the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER OF CONFIRMATION

QUESTION ABOUT PARTICIPATION

WELCOME

Let us, the members of Bethlehem United Church of Christ, express our welcome and affirm our mutual ministry in Christ.

We promise you our continuing friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of the church of Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit may we continue to grow together in God’s knowledge and love and be witnesses of our risen Savior.

GREETING OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

PRAYER

BENEDICTION

Minister: Go in the peace of Christ

All: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM

“Walk with them Lord”

PRAYER CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE...THE 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.

POST PRAYER RESPONSE

**Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus,
to reach out and touch him, and say that we love him.
Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.**

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY (Jingle Change for April supports One Great Hour of Sharing, a Special Mission Offering of the UCC that supports partners worldwide with ministries that fund health, education, and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response.)

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE Tune "Doxology"

**Let trumpets sound and voices sing!
Let all on earth their praises bring!
For Christ has conquered sin and death
And given life eternal breath.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God with a tender heart, we thank you for the care you offer to us as our Shepherd. Bless the gifts we offer so they will spread your abundant love to lives in need of caring. Bless our lives so that we may care for the world as we follow Jesus day by day. 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

POSTLUDE

***liturgies and prayers for this morning were used with permission from:
presbyterian.ca/worship/*

Bethlehem Announcements:

- Building and Grounds meeting on Tuesday May 5th in the church library.
- Merry Christians Brat Fry Sat., May 9 from 10:00 to 2:00 at the Piggy Wiggly. Featuring steak sandwiches.

It's UNDY 500 time!!! Please bring your new undergarments for the Guest House (men's shelter) in Milwaukee. We are collecting throughout the month of May.

Note: All items must be NEW and in the original packaging

- Men's Underwear - BOXERS and BOXER BRIEFS ONLY (No "tighty whiteys" please)
- Men's Undershirts

Please buy a variety of sizes in each item

- Men's S, M, L, XL, 2X,3x, and 4X Undershirts (**note: Guest House is currently completely out or low on M, L and XL t-shirts**)
- Men's S, M, L, XL, 2X, 3X and 4X Underwear (**note: Guest House is currently completely out or low on M, L and XL underwear**)

Community Announcements:

- Sunday, May 3 @ 1pm – Sheepshead Gathering at St. James UCC, Newton
- Friday, May 8 – Fish Fry – 4p-7pm – Dine in or Carry Out – Community UCC, 174 N. East Street, Elkhart Lake – See flyer
- Wed. May 13 – 4p-7p – Brat Fry at St. James UCC, Newton
- Sat. May 30 – Treasures in the Trunk Sale – 9am-2pm @ Salem UCC, Plymouth – Vendor spots still available too! See Flyer!

IN OUR
Thoughts and Prayers

Those dealing with health concerns:

Judy Brockway	Davin Horneck
Dayton Horneck	Jackie Voland
Louie Bowe	Dawson Horneck
Heidi Konen	Darlene Horneck
Jessica Horneck	Margaret
Sofia	Willow
Hubert	Larry
Chase Goekes	Tyler Smith
Molly	Linda Skinkis (sister of Judy Brockway)

Those unable to worship with us:

Merlin Ninmer Helen Henning

This Week at Bethlehem:

Today, Sunday 4/26: 8am Sunday School; 9:30am Sunday worship w/ Baptism and Confirmation

Monday 4/27: *Happy Birthday Mia Watson and Ryan Rabe!*

Tuesday 4/28:

Wednesday 4/29: *Happy Birthday Louis Bowe!*

Thursday 4/30:

Friday 5/1: *Happy Anniversary Kerry & Sharon Rumpff and Rick & Linda Rabe!*

Saturday 5/2: *Happy Birthday Elizabeth Deignan and Barb Henning!*

Sunday 5/3: 8am Sunday School; 9:30am Sunday worship w/ Communion; *Happy Birthday Sara Jeanty! Happy Anniversary Garrett & Ginny Schultz and Kevin & Mandy Voland!*

May/June Panty Item: Cereal

