



BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Sunday, July 12, 2026

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Worship Leader: Rev. Randy 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

You are the hope to the ends of the Earth :: O God our salvation

RINGING OF THE BELLS

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP #549

"As We Gather"

As we gather may your spirit work within us

As we gather may we glorify your name

Knowing well that as our heart begin to worship

We'll be blessed because we came; We'll be blessed because we came

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

God's Word is a lamp to our feet;

and a light to our path.

God's Word is made visible in Christ;

in him we are rooted in truth.

God's Word is revealed through the Holy Spirit;

and lived out in faithful service.

Come and listen for God's Word in this time of worship.

We wait to receive the Word of Life.

***OPENING PRAYER:**

**God of wisdom, You are the light of the minds that know you,
the strength of those who serve you, and rest for those who seek you.**

**God of growth, you sow and you gather, you tend and you prune,
you judge and you save.**

**God who gives us life, we come to you in worship,
to rest from our responsibilities, to turn from our distractions,
and worship you as Creator, Christ and Spirit,
this day and always. Amen.**

***OPENING HYMN #35 vs. 1-3**

"All Things Bright and Beautiful"

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

Gracious God, to begin again with you and one another, we confess to you our sins:

Faithful God,

**you have planted the seeds of faith in us,
but we confess we have too often not trusted you.**

**We fail to keep studying the wisdom of your word,
satisfied instead with what we think is true.**

**We consider that we already know enough,
rather than pursuing deeper encounters with you.**

Forgive us, God, when we think you have nothing more to offer us.

(time of silence)

WORDS OF GRACE

Beloved, rest in the assurance of Psalm 65:5, "By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas."

The Holy One receives and responds to our prayers and offers the promise of renewed life and the power of community in the kingdom of God.

Through Christ, we participate as witnesses, agents, and recipients of transformation for the glory of God and by the grace of God.

Thanks be to God! Amen!

* RESPONSE (tune: Doxology) “Be Thou, O God Exalted High”
 **Be thou, O God exalted high; And as Thy glory fills the sky,
 So let it be on earth displayed, 'Til Thou art here, as there, obeyed. Amen.**

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Psalm 65 – p. 646 of hymnal – Leader reads odd verses, the people read evens

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 NIV

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

¹⁸ “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

CHILDREN’S TIME

SERMON

“Tending the Soil”

*HYMN #483

“We are God’s People”

(Kathy will play through first)

THE LORD'S SUPPER

(God's table is open to ALL, regardless of affiliation or membership. Please hold the elements until all have been served and we will partake together. All bread is gluten free. The inner circles are grape juice; the outer rings are wine.)

INVITATION

PRAYER

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER OF THANKGIVING

We give thanks, loving God, that you have refreshed us at your table.

Strengthen our faith; increase our love for one another.

As we have been fed by the seed that became grain, and then became bread, may we go out into the world to plant seeds of justice, transformation, and hope. Amen.

COMMUNION RESPONSE #525 refrain only "One Bread, One Body"

**One bread, one body, one Lord of all
One cup of blessing which we bless
And we, though many, throughout the Earth
We are one body in this one Lord**

PRAYER CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE...THE LORD'S PRAYER

Petitions end with: God, in your mercy, **Hear our 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 #226 v. 1 "Spirit of the Living God"

**Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on me,
Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on me.**

**Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me.
Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on me.**

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY (At Bethlehem United Church of Christ, we collect TWO offerings each Sunday. Our regular operational offering is collected in the wooden plate. In the metal cans, we collect loose change and small bills for a monthly designated benevolent collection. Jingle Change for July supports Bethlehem's WISE efforts to de-stigmatize mental health and to be an active advocate in the community for those dealing with mental health conditions.

* OFFERTORY RESPONSE 447 v.1 "All Things are Yours"

**All things are yours! We make that true, when we return our gifts to you.
And so we give, and so we share, in Christ's strong name expressing care.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of growing seeds and souls, we offer our gifts in thanksgiving for your kindness to us. Bless and multiply them to add to the abundance of your love at work in the world. Make them seeds of new life to inspire faith in souls they touch in Jesus' name. Amen.

*SENDING 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 today were used with permission from <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/after-pentecost-7a-july-12/> and <https://presbyterian.ca/worship/>*

Bethlehem Announcements:

Save the Date!

Sunday, July 26 will be our annual outdoor worship and picnic. Details coming soon!

July 26 is also the date for the Rural Church Fellowship Youth Volleyball tournament to be held at Bethlehem. Volunteers will be needed to help with concessions, brat fry and bake sale.

RUMMAGE SALE!!

If you have items that other households might find useful, please save them for the sale. If you have items to donate, these can be dropped off in the new garage, next to the church. There is a table inside to locate your items. Please no TVs or other electronics.

Save the Dates: Your Help will be needed. Sign up sheets are available in the Fellowship Hall.

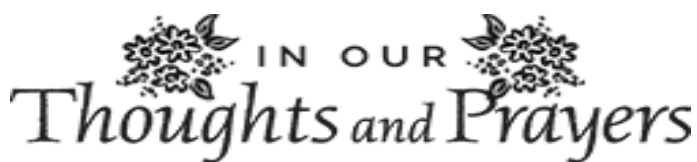
☐ **SPECIAL MUSIC!!**

Join us on Sunday, July 19 for special music sponsored by Donna Truttman-Retlich. Beginning before worship, at approximately 9am, Alex Meer will be sharing his talents. Alex will also play a piece during worship.

☐ **Vacation Bible School!**

Once again, we are partnering with St. Marks/ St. James for Vacation Bible School! Invite a friend! It's free!! Enrollment forms were mailed to Sunday School families, but if you need one, please ask Pastor Randy. Please return your enrollment ASAP.

- ☐ With the updating of new media equipment, there will be several items available for sale/donation. See items next to the sound room. Couch and chair are in the youth room.
 - VHS tapes
 - Large TV stand
 - Also available is a couch and rocking chair



Those grieving:

Family of Nick Artz (Neighbor of Louie and Kathy)
Family of Rachel Rabe (Aunt of Judy Mueller)

Those dealing with health concerns:

Elaine Brill	Tom Knier
Tyler Meyer	Janet
Judy Brockway	Davin Horneck
Jackie Volland	Karen Laack
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)

And for those in our church family who are dealing with concerns but wish to keep them private.

Those unable to worship with us: Merlin Ninmer Helen Henning

This Week at Bethlehem:

Today, Sunday 7/12: 9:30am Sunday worship w/ Communion; 6:30pm Youth Volleyball;
Happy Birthday Case Pennell!

Monday 7/13:!

Tuesday 7/14: 6:30pm Consistory

Wednesday 7/15: *Happy Birthday Dan Wempner!! Happy Anniversary Chad & Sara Jeanty!*

****SPIRIT NEWS DUE @ 5 pm****

Thursday 7/16:

Friday 7/17:

Saturday 7/18: *Happy Birthday Helen Henning!*

Sunday 7/19: 9:30am Sunday worship w/ Special Music; 6:30pm Youth Volleyball @ Saron;
Happy Birthday Austin Lau!

**July/August Panty Item:
Jar of Peanut Butter or Jelly**

