

“Lord,
I believe.”

John 9:38, NRSV



BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

11608 Lax Chapel Road - Kiel, WI 53042

Phone: 920.894.3332

Email: BethUCCKiel@outlook.com

Follow Bethlehem UCC on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/bucckiel/>

or Bethlehem's website at www.bethlehemkiel.org

CCLI Copyright and Streaming Lic # 11640740 and CSPL193734

Sunday, March 15, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Worship Leaders: Confirmation Students

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

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place;

I can feel his mighty power and his grace.

I can hear the brush of angels' wings, I see glory on each face;

surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Leader 1: Some days, it's hard to recognize the signs,
when what we have come to know and rely on is ablaze
and everything looks like ashes.

Leader 2: Do you not know what the Holy One can do with ashes?*

Assembly: Then the Earth-maker knelt down and formed humanity from the dust of the ground, and breath breathed new life. (Genesis 2:7)

Leader 1: Some days, it's difficult to believe the signs, when truths are erased and buried and there is nothing left to witness but the bare dirt.

Leader 2: Do you not know what the Holy One can do with dirt?

Assembly: Then the Pain-bearer spat in the dirt and made mud spreading it on the man's eyes and visions appeared of a new day rising. (Mark 9:6-7)

Leader 1: Some days, it feels impossible to embrace the signs, so we come together to pay attention, and seek, and be changed

Leader 2: finding our grounding in the ashes that were once stars in the dirt that holds galaxies in the mud that birthed our bones and breath.

Assembly: Then the Life-giver who made safe ground in the middle of the sea said: See, I am doing a new thing. Do you not perceive it? and a way was made out of no way toward hope. (Isaiah 43:16-19)

*OPENING PRAYER:

**Gracious and loving God,
you are the Source of all that sustains us.
You are compassion, embracing us when we call for mercy.
You are mercy, guiding us through anxious times.
You are wisdom, revealing truth to challenge and renew us.
Holy One, you bless us with your presence day by day,
so we turn to you in worship, as Creator, Christ and Spirit,
offering you our love and loyalty, our prayers and our praise,
Amen.**

*OPENING HYMN #74

“O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing”

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:

**God of life and love,
we confess that events around us shake our trust in your love.
When terror strikes and innocents fall, we wonder if love can defeat violence.
When truth is twisted by misleading claims,
we doubt love can prevail over lies.
When we face trouble, we wonder if you love us at all.
Forgive us, God, when we lose our trust in your love.
(time of silent reflection)**

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

Friends, remember the words of the Apostle Paul:

“Neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.”

Today, let us trust that, no matter what is happening around us, no matter what we have done,

God’s deep love will never let us go.

*RESPONSE #564 refrain

“All Will be Well”

All will be well, and all will be well, all manner of things will be well

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,^[a]**

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.**

John 9: 1-41

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

⁹ As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

⁸ His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some claimed that he was.

Others said, "No, he only looks like him."

But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

¹⁰ "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked.

¹¹ He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

¹² "Where is this man?" they asked him.

"I don't know," he said.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a

Sabbath. ¹⁵ Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."

But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided.

¹⁷ Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

The man replied, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸ They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. ¹⁹ "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

²⁰ "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. ²¹ But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴ A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

²⁵ He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

²⁶ Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

²⁷ He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"

²⁸ Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

³⁰ The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

³⁴ To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.

Spiritual Blindness

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

³⁶ “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”

³⁷ Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

³⁸ Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

³⁹ Jesus said, ^[a] “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

⁴¹ Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

CHILDREN’S TIME

SKIT

*HYMN #334 vs. 1,2,3,4,6

“Amazing Grace”

PRAYER CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER...THE LORD’S PRAYER

Petitions end with: **Shepherd God**, fill us with your love, lead us on your paths.

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.

SUNG PRAYER RESPONSE

O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer. When I call, answer me. O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and listen to me.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

Leader: As our Shepherd, God calms our fears and tends our needs. We offer our gifts in gratitude for God's goodness, trusting that we can share that goodness in a world often filled with fear and need.

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. March's Jingle Change supports Bethlehem's pledge to OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission)

*OFFERTORY RESPONSE: #438 v. 1 "We Give Thee but Thine Own"
**We give thee but thine own, Whate'er the gift may be:
All that we have is thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from thee. Amen.**

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

One: Gracious God, we offer this money as a way of serving you, and we offer ourselves as willing partners in that service.

All: Bless us as we go to work; bless the use of these gifts by the church, that you may be glorified in worship, that the questioning may receive answers, the suffering may receive help, and the way of Jesus may be honored.

*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

The disciples asked, whose fault is it?
This is not a story about sin, Jesus replies.
It is a story about what is being revealed.
Let this revelation be our blessing.

The neighbors asked if it's really him, if it's really possible?
This is not a story about blindness, the healed one replies.
It is a story about signs and dreams and what the light shines through.
Let these signs be our blessing.

The leaders asked, he can't be the one, can he?
This is not a story about the one we've been waiting for, the healed one replies.
It is a story about how all of us are part of the new day rising.
Let all of us be our blessing.

The teacher asked, do you believe?
This is not a story about creeds, the healed one replies.
It is a story about testifying to the love you witness.
Let this testimony to love be our blessing
And we be the witnesses, to the ends of the earth. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Bethlehem Announcements:

- **MERRY CHRISTIANS PIZZA PARTY:** Who's Invited: All Family and Friends of Bethlehem When: Sunday, March 22, 2026, following the church service What: Pizza with a variety of toppings, Veggie Pizza, Fruit Pizza and Ice Cream Sundaes; Please sign up in the Fellowship Hall.

- **Wellness Mini retreat at Bethlehem UCC**
On Saturday, April 25, all are invited to participate in a mini retreat featuring psychologist and author, Dr. Cary Knier-Johannes at Bethlehem. Dr. Johannes' seminar will lead participants to improved spiritual wellness through centering, guided meditation, journaling, and more. The retreat will run from 9am-12pm. The cost is \$10 and includes a copy of Dr. Johannes' book, *The Missing Peace*. RSVP's are encouraged.

- **Mid-week Lenten Worship:** There will be no mid-week Lenten worship services held at Bethlehem. Members are invited to attend services at St. Peters UCC in Kiel or the "rotating" Lenten services at RCF churches. (location listed each week in our bulletin) Services at both locations begin at 6pm.

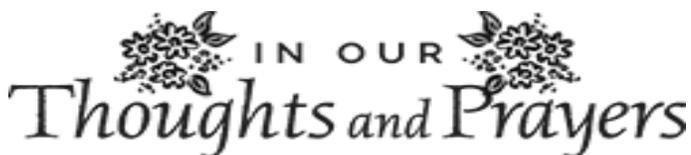
- The Sunday School will be purchasing Easter lilies for the Easter season. We will decorate the sanctuary with the flowers. There will be no sign-up sheet to purchase additional flowers. However, after the service on Easter, you can take one of the flowers home. This will be on a first-come, first-served basis. If you would like to reserve one

before the service, see Kathy Bowe. Any flowers left over will be given to a congregation member that is home bound or needs some sunshine in their life.

- The **annual meeting for the WI conference of the UCC**, will be held April 10 & 11 at the Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake. Bethlehem is allotted two delegates from the membership. It's a time of worship, business meetings, seminars and more. There are funds allocated in the budget to cover your costs. Please contact Pastor Randy if you're interested in attending - even if just for ONE of the days!

Community Announcements:

- Monday, March 16 – 6:30-8pm – at Lakeland University - “Experiencing God’s Love in Anxious Times and Chaos: Community Care & Mental Health” presented by Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund, author of Blessed are the Crazy, which was a book study at Bethlehem during the WISE process.
- Tuesday, April 7 – 11:45a-12:45pm – “An Introduction to Zen Buddhism” Lakeland University
- Saturday, April 11 – Auction supporting Divine Savior Catholic School @ Millhome Supper Club – Raffle tickets available for \$5000 Dream vacation - see flyers
- Sat. April 18 – 9a-1pm – “Stewardship of the Body” – A workshop for women – Zion Lutheran Church, New Holstein – see flyer



Those grieving

The family of Jim Markelz

Those dealing with health concerns:

Judy Brockway	Davin Horneck
Dayton Horneck	Jackie Volland
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 3/15: 8am Sunday School; 9:30am Sunday worship w/ Confirmands leading worship

Monday 3/16:

Tuesday 3/17:

Wednesday 3/18: 6pm Confirmation Class; 6pm Lenten worship at Our Shepherd UCC- Howards Grove; *Happy Birthday Tina Salm!* **Spirit News Due**

Thursday 3/19: *Happy Birthday Hallie Brockway and Brianna Pennell!*

Friday 3/20: *Happy Birthday Ross Westphalen and Jeremy Aschenbach!*

Saturday 3/21: *Happy Birthday Kathy Bowe and Tom Mueller*

Sunday 3/22: 5am Adult Mission Trip leaves for KY; 8am Sunday School; 9:30am Sunday worship followed by pizza party; *Happy Birthday Riley Radder!*

Mar/Apr Panty Item: Pasta, Rice or Crackers

