

BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Sunday, March 22, 2026

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Worship Leader: Bonnie Ziegler

Musician: Polly Jeanty

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

Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord :: My soul waits for the Lord

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: We gather in the presence of the One who forgets former things and releases us from the past.

People: **We come, trusting God to make all things new.**

Leader: Though we have walked through dry and weary places,
God brings streams of mercy and life.

People: Our hearts are open to renewal and hope.

Leader: Like those who sow in tears,
we await the joy that comes in the morning.

**People: Our God turns sorrow into gladness
and leads us into abundant life.**

Leader: Let us press on toward the calling of Christ,
leaving behind all that binds us.

**People: With faith and expectation,
we come to worship the living God.**

*OPENING PRAYER:

**Holy and renewing God,
you are always doing a new thing—
even when we cannot yet see it.
You make rivers in dry places
and bring life out of what feels lost or forgotten.
You call us to release what lies behind
and to press forward in hope and faith.
Meet us here in this time of worship.
Open our eyes to your presence,
our hearts to your grace,
and our lives to your transforming love.
Like Mary, may we pour out our devotion without hesitation.
Like Paul, may we count all things as loss
compared to the surpassing gift of knowing Christ.
Make us new, O God—
that we may be people of resurrection life,
even in this Lenten journey.
We pray in the name of Christ,
who leads us forward. Amen.**

*OPENING HYMN #19

“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

A CALL TO TRANSFORMATION

The story of Lazarus rising from the dead, our gospel reading for today, feels like it has grief written under every line. Under Lazarus' illness and Jesus' absence. Under the disciples' questions and the danger of returning to Judea. Under Martha's believing and Mary's weeping. And it is through this grieving that transformation becomes possible. So, today, let us seek transformation and new life, not through confession or accountability, but through our grieving of the death-dealing forces in our world.

A Time of Silent Reflection

One: For the violence that brings death and death-dealing that brings violence, we grieve,

Many: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: For heartbreaking loss and the loss of hearts soft enough to break, we grieve,

Many: God, have mercy.

Leader: From all that binds us and steals our breaths,

Many: turn us around, Holy One. Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE

One: Let your soul receive this rest: on this road, there will be comfort, there will be companions, and most importantly, there will be Jesus.

Many: Praise God, who weeps with us, and calls us by name back into life, and into the community that unbinds and frees us. Amen!

*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

Romans 8:6-11

⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed, it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Psalm 130

¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

² **Lord, hear my voice!**

**Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!**

³If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴**But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.**

⁵ I wait for the Lord; my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
⁶ **my soul waits for the Lord**
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.
⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.
⁸ **It is he who will redeem Israel**
from all its iniquities.

John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, ^[a] "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having heard that Lazarus ^[b] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them." ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right."^[c] ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, ^[d] said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." ¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus ^[e] had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. ^[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I

believe that you are the Messiah,^[9] the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

²⁸ When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him.

CHILDREN'S TIME

SERMON

*HYMN # 173

“Lord Throughout These Forty Days”

PRAYER CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER...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.

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

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

From these offerings, Holy One, create freedom. From these hearts, Holy One, raise up love. From these hands, Holy One, bring life. From every one of our gifts, in the sharing of our resources, may we be unbound, and called forth into a new day together. Amen.

*CLOSING SONG # 394 "I've got Peace Like a River"

BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

POSTLUDE

Bethlehem Announcements:

□ **Wellness Mini retreat at Bethlehem UCC**

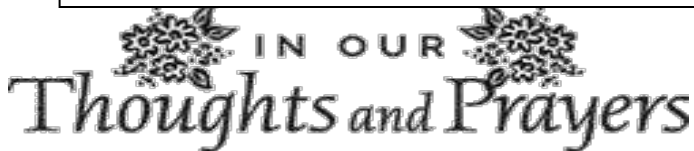
On Saturday, April 25, all are invited to participate in a mini retreat featuring psychologist and author, Dr. Cary Knier-Johannes at Bethlehem. Dr. Johannes' seminar will lead participants to improved spiritual wellness through centering, guided meditation, journaling, and more. The retreat will run 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.

Community Announcements:

- 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
- Thursday, April 16 – 3:30-6:00pm – Smoked Pork Chop Dinner @ Saron UCC – Reservations are required – see flyer in fellowship Hall
- Sat. April 18 – 9a-1pm – “Stewardship of the Body” – A workshop for women – Zion Lutheran Church, New Holstein – see flyer

Pastor Randy will be in Kentucky on the mission trip, today through Saturday. If you have an emergency pastoral need, please contact Rev. Nicole Herda of St. Peters. (920-242-8308)



Those grieving

The family of Jim Markelz
 The family of Richard (Rick) Broetzmann

Those dealing with health concerns:

Judy Brockway
Dayton Horneck
Louie Bowe
Heidi Konen
Jessica Horneck
Sofia
Hubert
Chase Goekes
Molly

Davin Horneck
Jackie Volland
Dawson Horneck
Darlene Horneck
Margaret
Willow
Larry
Tyler Smith
Linda Skinkis (sister of Judy Brockway)

Those unable to worship with us:

Merlin Ninmer Helen Henning

This Week at Bethlehem:

Today, Sunday 3/22: 8am Sunday School; 9:30am Sunday worship followed by PIZZA PARTY!; *Happy Birthday Riley Radder!*

Monday 3/23: *Happy Birthday Pastor Randy!*

Tuesday 3/24:

Wednesday 3/25: 6pm Lenten worship at St. John's - Schwartzwald;

Thursday 3/26: 8:30am BUCC @ Immanuel Food Pantry; *Happy Birthday Doreen Schmidt!*

Friday 3/27:

Saturday 3/28:

Sunday 3/29: 8am Sunday School; 9:30am Palm Sunday worship

Mar/Apr Panty Item: Pasta, Rice or Crackers

