

Bethlehem Lutheran &  
St. Stephen's Episcopal



Fifth Sunday of Easter

## **Announcements**

**Welcome to all who came to Bethlehem & St. Stephen's today!**

Holy Communion may be received at the altar with individual cups of wine/juice and bread; or if you choose to remain seated, individual cups of wine/juice and wafer are available in the narthex. Those at home, we welcome you to the table with your own bread and wine/juice.

**Our service today is lead by Father Stephen Day**

Please remember in your prayers: Laura, Barb, Kay, Rob, Lyle, Lisa & Lindsey, Pastor Kim & Terri, Eva, Josh, Joyce, Howard & Donna.  
Please email [bethlehembillings@gmail.com](mailto:bethlehembillings@gmail.com) to be added to the list.

If you are in need of pastoral leadership or spiritual counsel, please leave a message at the church (406)248-6427 or email [bethlehembillings@gmail.com](mailto:bethlehembillings@gmail.com).

**Flowers today are given by Darlene in honor of her son Jason's birthday.  
Flowers on May 10 & 17<sup>th</sup> will be given by Sharon U. in honor of all mothers and in honor of her granddaughter's college graduation.  
Flowers on May 24 & 31 will be given by Kevin and Joan in honor of the birthdays of their twins' Ben and Robyn's birthdays.**

Special Offering for May is 406 Pride

**Upcoming Dates to Remember:**

14<sup>th</sup> - Women's Bible Study

17<sup>th</sup> - Congregational Council Meeting

**A big thank you to everyone who came out to help on our Outside Cleanup Day!**

The online service is available at <https://www.youtube.com/@saintstephensbillings>

**Showers for our unhoused neighbors** – We at Bethlehem and St. Stephen's, in cooperation with St Vincent DePaul and the Salvation Army, provide showers for our unhoused neighbors on Mondays and Wednesdays. If you are willing to help, call Chelsea Meisner at 360-915-2762 or Terri Wilker at 406-425-3713

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church  
St Stephen's Episcopal Church

40 10<sup>th</sup> Street West  
5th Sunday of Easter  
9:30 Worship

Billings, MT 59102  
May 3, 2026  
Tree of Life

## Introduction

*As we continue to celebrate the fifty days of Easter, today's gospel includes Jesus' promise that he goes to prepare a place for his followers in his Father's house. Our baptism commissions us to share Jesus' mission in the world. As 1 Peter reminds us, we are a holy people, called to proclaim the one who called us out of darkness into light. In words and deeds we bear witness to the risen Christ—our way, our truth, our life.*

## Thanksgiving for Baptism

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**C: Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne  
and to the Lamb!

**C: Amen.**

Let us give thanks for the gifts of baptism.

Merciful God,

you are the one who was, who is, and who is to come.

You lead us beside still waters.

We thank you for the waters of creation:  
morning dew, gentle rain, roaring waves.

We thank you for the waters that nourish us (*local waters may be named*).

Blessed are you.

**C: You guide us to springs of the water of life.**

Jesus Christ, you are the faithful witness  
who accompanies us on our journeys.

We give you thanks for your life-giving death and resurrection.

We praise you for joining us in joy and sorrow.

Blessed are you.

**C: You guide us to springs of the water of life.**

Holy Spirit, you anoint our head with oil and our cup overflows.  
Break down barriers that divide us.

Fill us with the breath of peace.

Blessed are you.

**C: You guide us to springs of the water of life.**

Holy One, we thank you for the gifts and grace of baptism,  
and for making us a new creation.

We join with saints and angels, giving you honor and praise,  
now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

# Gathering Hymn: Beneath the Tree of Life

## Refrain

Come and gath-er be - neath the tree of life.  
Come and gath-er be - neath the tree of  
life— root of wis - dom, branch of peace, fruit of  
heal - ing and re - lease. Come and  
gath-er be - neath the tree of life.

## Verses

1. Here we raise the sav - ing cross of  
4. Here be - neath the branch - es of your  
5. Root - ed in the rich earth of your  
Je - sus, sing - ing praise to him who  
mer - cy, we in - voke your name, re -  
Gos - pel, may we bear the fruits your  
*To Refrain*  
leads us on from death in - to new life.  
mem - ber how your love has set us free.  
Word has plant - ed deep with - in our hearts.

# Greeting

P. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also with you.**

# Kyrie



In peace, let us pray to the Lord:



☐ Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.



Lord, have mer - cy, mer-cy on us all. ☐ 1. For the  
☐ 2. For your



reign of God, and for peace through-out the  
peo - ple here who have come to give you



world, for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the  
thanks, for the strength to live your word, let us pray to the



Lord:  
Lord: ☐ Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.



☐ Help, save, and de -  
Lord, have mer - cy, mer-cy on us all.



fend us, O God: ☐ A - men.

men. \_\_\_\_\_

35 \_\_\_\_\_

Come and gath-er be - neath the tree of

life. \_\_\_\_\_

Come and gath-er be - neath the tree of

life; \_\_\_\_\_

Root of wis - dom, branch of

41 \_\_\_\_\_

peace, fruit of heal - ing and re - lease. \_\_\_\_\_

Come and

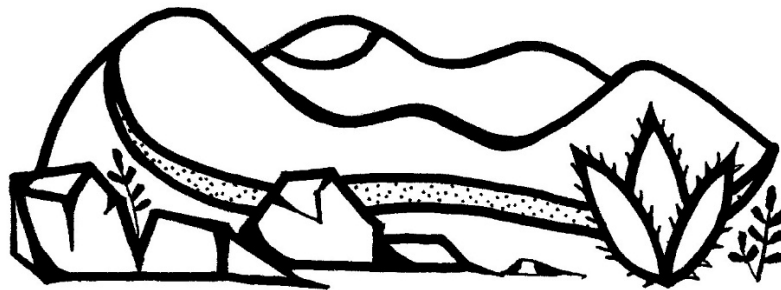
53 *slower* \_\_\_\_\_

gath-er be - neath the tree of life. \_\_\_\_\_

**Prayer of the Day**

**C: Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Give us grace to love one another, to follow in the way of his commandments, and to share his risen life with all the world, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.**

**Amen.**



## Word

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

*(Congregation may be seated)*

### **First Reading: Acts 7:55-60**

*Stephen was one of the seven men chosen by the apostles to serve tables so that the apostles could be free to serve the word (Acts 6:1-6). Stephen does more than distribute food, however. For his preaching of God's word, he becomes the first martyr of the faith.*

<sup>55</sup> Filled with the Holy Spirit, [Stephen] gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" <sup>57</sup> But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. <sup>58</sup> Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him, and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

Word of God, Word of Life

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Psalm: Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16**

*Into your hands, O LORD, I commend my spirit. (Ps. 31:5)*

<sup>1</sup> In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame;  
deliver me in your righteousness.

<sup>2</sup> **Incline your ear to me;  
make haste to deliver me.**

<sup>3</sup> Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you are my crag<sup>l</sup> and my stronghold;  
for the sake of your name, lead me and guide me.

<sup>4</sup> **Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me,  
for you are my tower of strength. R**

<sup>5</sup> Into your hands I commend my spirit,  
for you have redeemed me, O LORD, God of truth.

<sup>15</sup> **My times are in your hand;  
rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.**

<sup>16</sup> Let your face shine upon your servant;  
save me in your<sup>l</sup> steadfast love."

## Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:2-10

*Christ is the cornerstone of God's saving work and the foundation of our lives. We are God's chosen, holy people who continuously celebrate and declare the mercy of God we experience through Jesus Christ.*

<sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

<sup>4</sup> Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and <sup>5</sup> like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

<sup>7</sup> This honor, then, is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the very head of the corner,” <sup>8</sup> and  
“A stone that makes them stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall.”

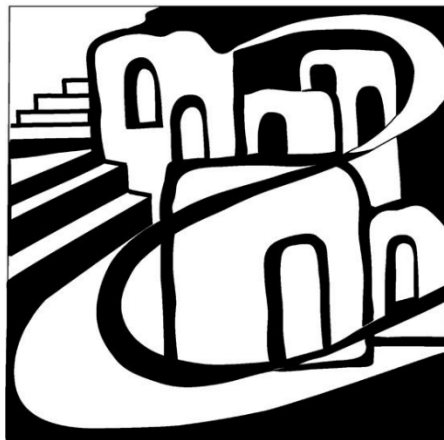
They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God's people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.

Word of God, Word of Life

**C: Thanks be to God.**



(please stand as you are able)

## Gospel Acclamation

*Alleluia.* Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the feast. *Alleluia.* (1 Cor. 5:7, 8)

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia,  
Al - le - lu - ia, Lord, to whom shall we go? For  
you have the words, you have the words, the words of e -  
ter - nal life, Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia.

P. The Gospel according to John, the 14th Chapter

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

### Gospel: John 14:1-14

*On the night that he is to be arrested, Jesus shares final words with his disciples. As the one through whom God is known, he promises to go before them and act on their behalf.* [Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup>“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way to the place where I am going.” <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, but if you do not, then believe because of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to you, Christ.**

## Sermon

**Hymn of the Day:** *ELW #816. Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life*

## Prayers of Intercession

Trusting in the power of Christ’s resurrection to heal and redeem our broken world, let us pray for the needs of all creation.

*A brief silence.*

God of glory, you have built your church on Christ the cornerstone. Inspire lay leaders, deacons, pastors, and bishops to proclaim forgiveness and your steadfast love to all whom they encounter.

Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

God of majesty, you bring forth plants and animals, skies and seas, mountains and valleys. Protect all you have made from the ravages of pollution and climate disaster.

Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

God of mercy, you intend governments and social service agencies to be instruments of peace and justice. Guide political leaders and organizations to be agents of compassion, and raise up advocates for those who seek refuge and assistance.

Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

God of well-being, you soothe those in distress, console all who grieve, provide for any in need, and comfort those who are sick especially: **Laura, Barb, Kay, Rob, Lyle, Lisa & Lindsey, Pastor Kim & Terri, Eva, Josh, Joyce, Howard & Donna.** Instill caregivers with a sense of purpose to be your healing hands in this world.

Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

God of community, you call us together as your people for mutual support and to witness to your love in the world. Make your presence known among those unable to attend worship today. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

God of eternal life, you have prepared dwelling places for your people, so that we are never separated from you. We give you thanks for the faithful departed who witnessed to your mighty acts in word and deed. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

God of resurrection power, use us and these prayers to proclaim the good news of new life to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Savior.

**C: Amen.**

## **Peace**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

**Share a sign of peace with your neighbors.**

## **Offering**

The collection globes are available at the rear of the church. Donations can be sent to Bethlehem Lutheran Church at 40 10<sup>th</sup> St. West, Billings, MT 59102. Thank you for your support of our ministries.

## **Offering Prayer**

P: Merciful God,

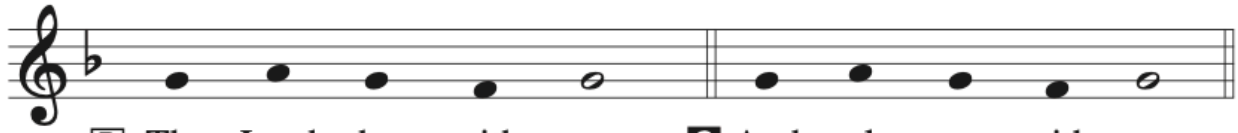
**C: accept the fruits of our labor, gathered to give you glory. You have set a table before us, a glimpse of that great day when we will hunger and thirst no more.**

**Nourish us with the body and blood of Jesus, that goodness and mercy may follow us and bless the world you love.**

**In the name of Jesus,**

**Amen.**

## The GREAT THANKSGIVING



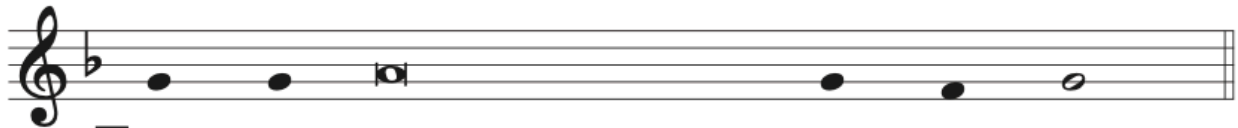
**P** The Lord be with you. **C** And al - so with you.



**P** Lift up your hearts. **C** We lift them to the Lord.



**P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



**C** It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: It is indeed right and good that we should everywhere and always offer thanks and praise to you, Holy God, mighty and immortal, through Christ, our Lord the day of your final Jubilee dawned in your Son, Jesus, your Anointed One who announced good news to the poor, bound up the broken-hearted, and set the captives free. And, so with earth, sky, and sea and all their creatures, with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



## HOLY



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, Lord,  
God of power and might, heav-en and earth are full of your  
glo-ry. Ho-san-na, ho - san-na, ho - san - na in the  
high - est. Bless - ed is he, bless - ed is he who  
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na, ho - san-na, ho -  
san-na in the high - est, ho - san-na in the high - est.

## Words of Institution

In the night in which he was betrayed our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. Do this for the remembrance of me.

## Thanksgiving at the Table

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

### The Lord's Prayer

**C: 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

### Invitation to Communion

Come to the table of new life.  
Receive the risen Lord.

*(congregation may be seated)*

### LAMB OF GOD



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the



world: have mer - cy on us.



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the



world: grant us your peace, grant us your peace.

## **Distribution**

The Body of Christ given for you  
The Blood of Christ shed for you

**Communion Hymn** *ELW #780 Shepherd Me, O God*

## **Prayer after Communion**

P: Holy One,

**C: through this meal you have made your home among us  
and are making all things new.**

**Send us now to speak peace to anxious hearts,  
to love our enemies,  
and to bring your healing to the nations.**

**In the name of Jesus,  
Amen.**

## **Blessing**

God Almighty, who is the beginning and the end,  
Jesus Christ, the firstborn of the dead,  
and the Spirit, our advocate and peace,

✠ bless you now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

**Sending Hymn:** *ELW #469 By Your Hand You Feed Your People*

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Praise the Lord. Alleluia!

**C: Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

## **All Are Welcome**

Christian community should be a place of absolute welcome. Christ has welcomed us, whoever we are. Because of this, we at Bethlehem Lutheran Church are glad to welcome you. None of the distinctions that seem to divide our world apply here!

We welcome you if you are:

- \* young, old or in between;
- \* white, black, native, Hispanic, or whatever your ancestry;
- \* married, single, divorced, a single parent, or whatever your family of choice;
- \* rich, poor, middle class, employed or unemployed;
- \* a lifelong Christian, just now seeking faith, or not really sure;
- \* straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, or any other identity;
- \* healthy of mind and body, living with mental illness, disabled or sick;
- \* struggling with addiction, in recovery, or if you love those who are;
- \* liberal, conservative, or ambivalent;
- \* homeless, a former convict, or in any way someone longing for acceptance.

At Bethlehem, we offer safety, love and the ministry of Word and Sacrament to everyone who seeks it. Come and be part of this welcome, as an equal, as a free and beloved child of God!

### **ALL ARE WELCOME!**

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
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