

Bethlehem Lutheran & St. Stephen's Episcopal



7th Sunday after Pentecost

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.

Johnna Voto, a Lay Ministry Associate, has been authorized by the Bishop of the Montana Synod to provide pastoral services in this congregation this Sunday.

Please remember in your prayers: Doug & Nick, Dennis, Laura, Barb, Kay, Sylvia & family, Lyle, Lisa & Lindsey, Pastor Kim & Terri, Eva, Josh, Joyce, Howard & Donna. If you are in need of pastoral leadership or spiritual counsel, or want to add a name to the prayer list, please email bethlehembillings@gmail.com or office@ststephensbillings.org or call Father Stephen at (307)633-6454.

Flowers today are given by Kevin and Joan in celebration of their wedding anniversary on July 9.

**The next Congregational Council Meeting will be July 19.
July 19 is also National Ice Cream Day so there will be
ice cream sandwiches served at the meeting!**

Special Offering for July is ELCA World Hunger

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 10th Street West

Billings, MT 59102

7th Sunday after Pentecost

July 12, 2026

9:30 Worship

Chosen People

INTRODUCTION

God's word is like the rain that waters the earth and brings forth vegetation. It is also like the sower who scatters seed indiscriminately. Our lives are like seeds sown in the earth. Even from what appears to be little, dormant, or dead, God promises a harvest. At the Lord's table we are fed with the bread of life, that we may bear fruit in the world.

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.**

GATHERING

P: The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God. Welcome! Let us join together in the Gathering Song "We are Gathered Here" in your bulletin.

WE ARE GATHERED HERE

Larry Olson
Karol Baer
David Lee Brown

We are gath-ered here in the name (of the Maker).
(of the Savior).
(of the Spirit)

We are gath-ered here to sing God's praise.

We are gath-ered here in the name (of the Maker).
(of the Savior).
(of the Spirit)

Cho - sen by God's grace.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Please rise if it is comfortable.

P: Merciful God,

C: We have not lived as your chosen people
We have not loved your daughters and sons.
We have not walked in the footsteps of others.
We have not followed the Servant your Son.

Sometimes I hate, sometimes I lie,
Sometimes I waste, sometimes I cheat.

We have not lived as your chosen people
We have not loved your daughters and sons.
We have not walked in the footsteps of others.
We have not followed the Servant your Son.

Sometimes I am selfish, sometimes I am prejudiced,
Sometimes I am uncaring, sometimes I am destructive.

We have not lived as your chosen people
We have not loved your daughters and sons.
We have not walked in the footsteps of others.
We have not followed the Servant your Son.



KYRIE ELEISON

Larry Olson

Kyr-i - e E-lei - son on our wor-ld and on our way.

Kyr-i - e E-lei - son ev - 'ry day. For
That
For
For your

peace in the world, for the health of the church, for the u - ni - ty of all.
we may live out your im - passionate re - sponse to the hun - gry and the poor.
peace in our hearts, for peace in our homes, for friends and fam - i - ly.
spir - it to guide, that you cen - ter our lives in the wa - ter and the word.

For this ho - ly house, for all who wor - ship and praise,
That we may live out truth and jus - tice and grace,
For life and for love, for our work and our play,
That you nour - ish our souls with your bod - y and blood,

let us pray to the Lord! — let us pray to the Lord! —

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

C: Even though we are in bondage to sin, there is hope for freedom.
Not by our own doing but because we are chosen by God to receive the gift
of forgiveness. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we
know this is true.

C: Amen.

JOURNEY OF PRAISE

Larry Olson
David Lee Brown
Karol Baer

We are all on a jour - ney from the
We can feel suf - fer - ing. There is

cra - dle to the grave. We are
some - one near in need. We are

giv - en life through the price our
giv - en choice, heart, hands, voice. They

Sav - ior with - had in to our pay. Oh let our
are with in our reach.

hearts praise the Lord. Oh let our hands praise the Lord. Oh let our

voices praise the Lord. Oh let our lives praise the Lord.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

P: Almighty and ever-living God,

C: Most holy God, the earth is filled with your glory, and before you angels and saints stand in awe. Enlarge our vision to see your power at work in the world, and by your grace make us heralds of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

WORD

*God Speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.
(Congregation May be Seated)*

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-13

God's word to Israel's exiles is as sure and effective as never-failing precipitation. Their return to the Holy Land in a new exodus is cheered on by singing mountains and by trees that clap their hands.

¹⁰ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹² For you shall go out in joy
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle,
and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

P: Word of God, word of life.

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 65:[1-8] 9-13

Your paths overflow with plenty. (Ps. 65:11)

[¹ You are to be praised, O God, in Zion;
to you shall vows be fulfilled.

² **To you, the one who answers prayer,
to you all flesh shall come.**

³ Our sins are stronger than we are,
but you blot out our transgressions.

⁴ **Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there!
They will be satisfied by the beauty of your house, by the holiness of
your temple.**

- ⁵ Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation,
O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the oceans far away.
- ⁶ **You make firm the mountains by your power;
you are girded about with might.**
- ⁷ You still the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves, and the clamor of the peoples.
- ⁸ **Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvelous signs;
you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.**
- ⁹ You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; the river of God is full of water.
You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth.
- ¹⁰ **You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges;
with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.**
- ¹¹ You crown the year with your goodness,
and your paths overflow with plenty.
- ¹² **May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing,
and the hills be clothed with joy.**
- ¹³ May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with grain;
let them shout for joy and sing.

Second Reading: Romans 8:1-11

There is no condemnation for those who live in Christ. God sent Christ to accomplish what the law was unable to do: condemn sin and free us from its death-dealing ways. The Spirit now empowers proper actions and values in our lives and gives us the promise of resurrected life.

¹ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For 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, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But 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. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If 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.

R: Word of God, Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

(please rise if it is comfortable)

LISTEN

David Lee Brown
Larry Olson

Sing eighths with a triplet feel

PART I Lis - ten to the Wo - rd of the Lord.

P: The holy gospel according to Luke the 5th chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

In Matthew's gospel, both Jesus and his disciples "sow the seed" of God's word by proclaiming the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near." Now, in a memorable parable, Jesus explains why this good news produces different results in those who hear.

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶ But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ If you have ears, hear!"

¹⁸ “Hear, then, the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²³ But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon Johnna Voto, LMA

HYMN OF THE DAY *ELW #533 Open Now They Gates of Beauty*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Trusting in God’s steadfast love for all God has made, let us pray for the church,
the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

God our gardener, you scatter grace like seed across the world. Continue to cultivate the garden of your church with your abundant Spirit. God of grace,
C: Hear our prayer.

Romans 8:26

THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR US

Larry Olson



God our joy, your bountiful creation reflects your commitment to life despite our actions disregarding its wonder. We look toward Isaiah's vision, when all creation rejoices, and the trees will clap for joy at your salvation.

God our life, you give us the same Spirit by which you raised Christ from the dead.

Set our minds on that Spirit whenever fear or despair overwhelm us; especially

Doug and Nick, Dennis, Laura, Barb, Kay, Sylvia & family, Lyle, Lisa & Lindsey, Pastor Kim & Terri, Eva, Josh, Joyce, Howard & Donna.

God of grace,

C: Hear our prayer.

Romans 8:26

THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR US

Larry Olson



The Spir-it in-ter-cedes for us with sighs too deep for words to ex-press oh, oh, oh.

Call our faith communities to do marvelous things. Bless the labor and efforts of this congregation, that we may be a sign of your presence in the world. We thank you for those who have courageously gone before us in the faith. May we too show a deep trust in you throughout our lives. God of grace.

C: Hear our prayer.

Romans 8:26

THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR US

Larry Olson



The Spir-it in-ter-cedes for us with sighs too deep for words to ex-press oh, oh, oh.

Grateful for your abundant provision and trusting in your goodness, we cast all our cares upon you, through the abundant grace of Christ Jesus.

C: Amen.

PEACE

P: The Peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you

Please share a sign of Peace with your neighbors!

OFFERING

The collection globe is available at the rear of the church. Online viewers can mail an offering to: Bethlehem Lutheran Church—40 10th Street West, Billings, MT. 59102. Thank you for your support in our ministries!

OFFERATORY PRAYER

**C: Loving God,
we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts.
Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love,
so that all creation can taste your abundance.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever.
Amen.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING

If it is comfortable, please stand.

P: Come and taste the joy of God!

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also 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, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:**

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

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.

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

**C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever.
Amen.**

P: All people are called to Christ's table. Come, eat what is good.

LAMB OF GOD



COMMUNION

The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Communion Hymn

EVERYBODY'S GOT SOMETHING TO OFFER

Larry Olson

Ev - ery - bo - dy's got some - thing to of - fer; young and old the
prince and the pau - per. Ev - ery - bo - dy's got some - thing to of - fer
in the name of the Lord.
To the lost and the low - ly ones here the mes - sage it is
To the be - liev - ers gath - ered here the mes - sage it is
clear;
true; we have all got a gift to give our hands,
we have all got a gift to give in all
our hearts, say our and tears. do. Ev - ery - bo - dy's got
Ev - ery - bo - dy's got

P: The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen

P: Let us pray.

C: Nourishing God, at this table you have refreshed us with holy gifts of food and drink. Strengthen us for service, and send us out to embody your good news of liberation and healing for the sake of the world. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.

BLESSING

P: The God who calls across the cosmos
and speaks in the smallest seed

✝ bless, keep, and sustain you
now and to the end of the age.

C: Amen.

SENDING HYMN

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

David Lee Brown
Larry Olson
Karol Baer



We can make a dif - ference in ev - 'ry - thing we do. —

We can make a dif - ference it's up to me and you.

Chil - dren of the light, the Spir - it shows us how. —

We can make a dif - ference now.

Some say — we should - n't be heard; we've got some - thing to say. —
He needs some - one to lean on; it just takes one shoul - der.

Some say — we are lost; we can find the way. —
She has a lone - ly heart; just takes one to hold her.

Some say — we don't care; we've got love to - day. —
They're a - fraid to take a chance; just takes one who's bold - er.

We can make a dif - ference.
You can make a dif - ference.

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Share the harvest.

C: Thanks be to God.

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!

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