

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH
Pastor Lori Bonkoski
Sunday, March 1, 2026
2nd Sunday in Lent



Music: Glenda McGaffee
Lay Reader: Mike Sandager
Deacon: Charlie Sandager

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS
SILENT PRAYER

***Please stand as you are able**

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt and blots out all offenses.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For failing to recognize your coming reign, and for hindering the work of the Spirit:

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdain the living water

Christ offers: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For disregarding voices from the margin, and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent, and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound. Through faith, the free gift of God, you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ. In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts, and gives you life and peace.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN #335 “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross”

1. Jesus, keep me near the cross, there's a precious fountain; free to all, a healing stream flows from Calv'ry's mountain.

Refrain

In the cross, in the cross be my glory ever; till my ransomed soul shall find rest beyond the river.

2. Near the cross, a trembling soul, love and mercy found me; there the bright and morning star sheds its beams around me.

Refrain

In the cross, in the cross be my glory ever; till my ransomed soul shall find rest beyond the river.

3. Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes before me; help me walk from day to day with its shadow o'er me.

Refrain

In the cross, in the cross be my glory ever; till my ransomed soul shall find rest beyond the river.

4. Near the cross I'll watch and wait, hoping, trusting ever, till I reach the golden strand just beyond the river.

Refrain

In the cross, in the cross be my glory ever; till my ransomed soul shall find rest beyond the river.

***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 – Have Mercy on Us, Lord**

1. Have mercy on us, Lord, and hear our solemn prayer. We come to hear your living Word; it saves us from despair.
2. Have mercy on us, Christ, and wash away our sin. Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may begin.
3. Have mercy on us, Lord; make sin and shame depart. Renew us with your saving pow'r; create in us new hearts!

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

O God, our leader and guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

FIRST READING: Genesis 12:1-4a

¹ The LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

^{4a} So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him.

R: The Word of the Lord **C: Thanks be to God**

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 121

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?

² **My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth.**

³ The LORD will not let your foot be moved nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.

⁴ **Behold, the keeper of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep;**

⁵ the LORD watches over you; the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ **the sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

⁷ The LORD will preserve you from all evil and will keep your life.

⁸ **The LORD will watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth forevermore.**

SECOND READING: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

¹ What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵ But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"), in the presence of the God in

whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

R: The Word of the Lord **C: Thanks be to God**

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION, p. 205 ELW:**

We are turning, Lord, to hear you; you are merciful and kind—slow to anger, rich in blessing, and with love to us inclined.

***GOSPEL READING: John 3:1-17**

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

P: This is, the Gospel of our Lord **C: Thanks be to God**

MESSAGE – Pastor Lori

*** HYMN OF THE DAY ELW#323 “God Loved the World”**

1. God loved the world so that he gave his only Son the lost to save, that all who would in him believe should everlasting life receive.
2. Christ Jesus is the ground of faith, who was made flesh and suffered death; all who confide in Christ alone are built on this chief cornerstone.
3. If you are ill, if death draws near, this truth your troubled heart can cheer: Christ Jesus rescues us from death; that is the firmest ground of faith.

4. Be of good cheer, for God's own Son forgives all sins that you have done, and justified by Jesus' blood, your baptism grants the highest good.
5. All glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Three in One! To you, O blessed Trinity, be praise now and eternally!

***APOSTLES' CREED**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Hear us, O God, C: your mercy is great.

***PEACE**

The peace of the Lord be with you always. C: And also with you.

***OFFERING**

****OFFERING SONG #811 "On My Heart Imprint Your Image"**

On my heart imprint your image, blessed Jesus, king of grace, that life's troubles nor its pleasures ever may your work erase. Let the clear inscription be: Jesus, crucified for me, is my life, my hope's foundation, all my glory and salvation!

***OFFERING PRAYER**

O God, maker of heaven and earth, your steadfast love embraces all creation. You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth and bring forth its bounty. Through these gifts of bread and wine, draw us into the death and life of your Son, who calls us to bear witness to his saving work. We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

***GREAT THANKSGIVING**

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 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. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with your church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, Holy, (to tune of ELW #325)

God of power, O God of might, your great glory fills heav'n and earth. In your name, Lord, our Savior comes now, comes to save us and walk with us.

***WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

During supper, our Lord took bread, blest and broke it, while giving thanks. To his friend said, "Take and eat it, this is my body, I give to you". After supper, he took the cup, then with thanks, he gave it to them. "Take and drink my blood shed for you, when you do this remember me".

***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 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.

COMMUNION

***BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you now and forever. **Amen.**

***POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

God of our salvation, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

***BENEDICTION**

Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity: God, who calls all things into existence, Jesus Christ, who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation, ✚ bless you now and always.
Amen.

***SENDING HYMN #638 "Blessed Assurance"**

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior, all the day long: this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

2. Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight; angels descending bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Refrain

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior, all the day long: this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

3. Perfect submission, all is at rest; I in my Savior am happy and blest, watching and waiting, looking above, filled with his goodness, lost in his love

Refrain

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior, all the day long: this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

***DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Believe the good news.

Thanks be to God.

Prayer Concerns:

Sympathy is extended to the Doug Boeve family following Doug's passing on Saturday, February 21st at Ava's House in Sioux Falls. The service took place Wednesday, February 25th.

Sympathy is extended to the family of Starla Scholten who passed away on February 23, 2026 at the Dougherty House in Sioux Falls. Funeral arrangements will be forthcoming. Blessed be her memory.

Addison Swenson is thriving, now weighing 7 lb 6 oz, and has successfully passed all her tests to be discharged from the NICU. Please continue to keep her family in your thoughts as she continues to develop and grow.

Peggy Goettsch has had a significant amount of fluid drained from her body. She continues to be tired and unable to get out much. Please hold her in your prayers.

Doug McGuire had a clear scan, he will continue on immunotherapy for the next year.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lent service Wednesday, March 4th. Dinner (baked potato bar served by the Executive Board) beginning at 5:30; service follows at 6:30. Full council meeting following service.

Interested in **dramatic reading**? Join a 10-minute soliloquy at the Lent service. Contact Pastor Lori to sign up—2 men are still needed.

Women's Gathering Saturday, March 14, 10-noon. All ages welcome. Come with your ideas and suggestions! See newsletter for more details.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered as an **usher**. A few spots remain open, if you haven't signed up yet, please consider helping with this important part of worship.

Generations Senior Meal Site is looking for volunteers to assist with serving their scheduled noon meals. If you enjoy visiting with people and serving others, consider becoming a volunteer. There are needs for dishwasher and dining room volunteers...on a regular and/or intermittent basis. Please call Pam at Generations: 507-283-9846 to volunteer or for additional information! Volunteer schedules allow people to select the days they can serve!

Tuff Home Country Store is seeking donations of various items. A collection box can be found in the narthex. Requested items include: lip balm, lipstick, nail polish, body sprays, hair detangler/brush, socks, toothpaste, toothbrushes, hard candies, lotion, large print word searches, and seasonal room decorations.

Assistance is needed with **servicing communion**. Anyone who feels comfortable holding a tray of wine or grape juice is welcome to participate, regardless of age. Sign-up sheet on the bulletin board.

Shetek camp brochures available in the narthex.

Help Wanted: Need someone to help with power point on Sunday morning worship. If interested, please contact Dawn Leenderts. Will train! (507-962-3560)