

Welcome to
Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Loving God, Serving Others
7th Sunday after Epiphany
February 23, 2025



Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Joseph lives it in Egypt. Jesus preaches it in the gospel. The Spirit guides us into merciful lives with the power of forgiveness to reconcile what is fractured and divided. Such merciful living is the baptismal blessing of having put on Christ. It is the gift of the life-giving Spirit. It is a reflection of God's glory revealed in Christ.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
our creator,
our protector,
our wellspring of life.

Amen.

Trusting that God receives our words and the meditations of our hearts, let us confess our sin.

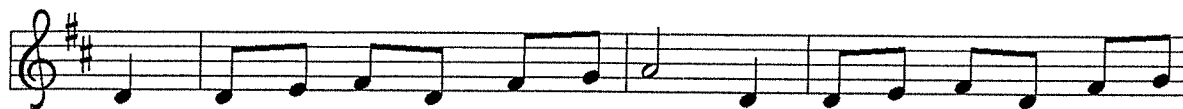
Silence is kept for reflection.

Merciful God,
you speak blessing and compassion into the world.
Forgive us for the ways we act
with judgment, cruelty, or indifference.
We ignore the needs of our neighbors;
we resist your call to oppose injustice;
we give in to scarcity and fear;
we assume the worst about one another.
Cleanse us from our faults
and release us from their grasp.
Show us your lovingkindness.
Restore our hearts and repair your world,
that we may live in Christ's ways.
Amen.

God proclaims these words of assurance:
"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by name. You are mine."

In † Christ, you are forgiven.
In the Spirit, you are made free.
Refreshed by the waters of mercy,
live anew as beloved children of God.
Amen.

All Creatures, Worship God Most High!



- 1 All crea-tures, wor-ship God most high! Sound ev - 'ry voice in earth and
- 2 Sing, broth - er wind; with clouds and rain you grow the gifts of fruit and
- 3 Sing, broth - er fire, so mirth-ful, strong; drive far the shad-ows, join the
- 4 All who for love of God for-give, all who in pain or sor-row



sky: Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia! Sing, broth - er sun, in splen-dor
 grain: Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia! Dear sis - ter wa - ter, use - ful,
 throng: Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia! Dear moth - er earth, so rich in
 grieve: Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia! Christ bears your bur-dens and your



bright; sing, sis - ter moon and stars of night:
 clear, make mu - sic for your Lord to hear: Al-le - lu - ia, al-le -
 care, praise God in col - ors bright and rare:
 fears; still make your song a - mid the tears:



lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia!

5 And you, most gentle sister death,
 waiting to hush our final breath:
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 Since Christ our light has pierced your gloom,
 fair is the night that leads us home.
 Alleluia.

6 O sisters, brothers, take your part,
 and worship God with humble heart:
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 All creatures, bless the Father, Son,
 and Holy Spirit, Three in One:
 Alleluia.

Text: Francis of Assisi, 1182-1226; tr. composite
 Music: LASST UNS ERFREUEN, *Geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Köln, 1623
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The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
 And the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Refrain

Ky-ri - e e - lei - son, on our world and on our way.

Ky-ri - e e - lei - son, ev-'ry day.

- 1 For peace in the world, for the health of the church, for the
- 2 That we may live out your im - passioned re - sponse to the
- 3 For peace in our hearts, . . . for peace in our homes, . . for
- 4 For your Spir - it to guide; that you cen - ter our lives in the

u - ni - ty of all; for
 hun - gry and the poor; that
 friends and fam - i - ly; for
 wa - ter and the word; that you

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

let us pray to the Lord, let us pray to the Lord.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

God speaks to us in Scripture reading, preaching, and song.

First Reading: Genesis 43:3-11, 15

³ Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷ God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰ You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.’” ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Psalm: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

- ¹ Do not be provoked by evildoers;
do not be jealous of those who do wrong.
- ² **For they shall soon wither like the grass,
and like the green grass fade away.**
- ³ Put your trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and find safe pasture.
- ⁴ **Take delight in the LORD,
who shall give you your heart’s desire.**

⁵ Commit your way to the LORD; put your trust in the LORD,
and see what God will do.

⁶ **The LORD will make your vindication as clear as the light
and the justice of your case like the noonday sun.**

⁷ Be still before the LORD and wait patiently. Do not be provoked by the one who
prosper, the one who succeeds in evil schemes.

⁸ **Refrain from anger, leave rage alone;
do not be provoked; it leads only to evil.**

⁹ For evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who hope in the LORD shall possess the land.

¹⁰ **In a little while the wicked shall be no more;
even if you search out their place, they will not be there.**

¹¹ But the lowly shall possess the land;
they will delight in abundance of peace.

³⁹ **But the deliverance of the righteous comes from you, O LORD;
you are their stronghold in time of trouble.**

⁴⁰ You, O LORD, will help them and rescue them;
you will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them, because in you they seek
refuge.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

³⁵ But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they
come?” ³⁶ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And as for what
you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of
some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed
its own body.

⁴² So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is
raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in
weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual
body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written,
“The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving
spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷
The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As
was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so
are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we
will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

⁵⁰ What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the
kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Word of God, Word of Life
Thanks be to God!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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

The gospel according to Luke.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

[Jesus said:] ²⁷ “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷ “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

MESSAGE

REV. SHARON ROGERS

Build a Longer Table



1 Build a long - er ta - ble, not a high - er wall,
2 Build a saf - er ref - uge, not a larg - er jail;
3 Build a broad - er door - way, not a long - er fence.
4 When we lived as ex - iles, ref - u - gees a - broad,



feed - ing those who hun - ger, mak - ing room for all.
where the weak find shel - ter, mer - cy will not fail.
Love pro - tects all peo - ple, spar - ing no ex - pense.
Christ be - came our door - way to the reign of God.



Feast - ing to - geth - er, strang - er turns to friend,
For an - y place where jus - tice is de - nied,
When we em - brace com - pas - sion more than fear,
So must our ta - bles wel - come those who roam.



Christ breaks walls to piec - es; false di - vi - sions end.
Christ will breach the jail wall, free - ing all in - side.
Christ tears down our fenc - es: all are wel - come here.
None can be ex - clud - ed; all must find a home.

Text: David Bjorlin, b. 1984

Music: NOËL NOUVELET, French carol

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APOSTLE'S CREED

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

**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,
and 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 the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Surprising God, you call us to love our enemies and to show kindness in the face of cruelty. Let our actions be a shining witness of your overwhelming grace for all. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

As animals hibernate and fields lay dormant, let them be a reminder that life and faith are not static but always changing and growing. May we, with all creation, trust that the ending of one thing promises life in a new way. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for leaders and policymakers who work to reduce violence in our nations, cities, and towns. Give your wisdom and discernment amid heated arguments and differing viewpoints. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the victims of abuse and violence. Provide safe shelter and new beginnings to those experiencing domestic violence and dangerous situations. Enfold with love all who seek your healing care. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Empower our faith communities to be signs of your gracious love. Bless the local ministries of parish nursing and caregiving, that they will be a voice for those in need in our communities. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We give thanks for the enduring witness of those who have died before us. May their lives in you provide a witness of your everlasting grace. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We entrust our prayers to you, O God, in the sure and certain hope that your promise is revealed among the people.
Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING PRAYER

God of grace, your love reaches to the heavens,
and your abundance to the depths of the seas.
Bless what we offer to your service:
our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts.
Let us overflow with gratitude and generosity,
now and always.
Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise.....we praise your name and join their unending hymn.



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry, full of your glo-ry. Ho -
san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high -
est. 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.

Words of Institution

With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's Passover from death to life as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

O God of resurrection and new life:

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Bless this feast.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.
Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world.
Breathe new life into us.
Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.
Come, Holy Spirit.

With your holy ones of all time and place, with the earth and all its creatures, with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God, blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.
Amen.

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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

The joy of the Lord is our strength.
Come, eat this meal of gladness.

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the
world; grant us peace, grant us peace, Lamb of God.

COMMUNION BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

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.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in his mission to the world.

BLESSING

The Spirit of the triune God
✠ bless you with joy,
anoint you with compassion,
and send you in love.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN (see page 14)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Live in hope.
Thanks be to God.

Spirit, Open My Heart

Refrain



Spir-it, o - pen my heart to the joy and pain of



liv-ing. As you love may I love, in re - ceiv - ing



and in giv - ing. Spir - it, o - pen my heart.



1 God, re - place my ston - y heart with a heart that's
2 Write your love up - on my heart as my law, my
3 May I weep with those who weep; share the joy of



kind and ten - der. All my cold - ness and
goal, my sto - ry. In each thought, word, and
friend and neigh - bor. As I live from day to

Refrain



fear to your grace I now sur - ren - der.
deed, may my liv - ing bring you glo - ry.
day, love will be my fin - est la - bor.

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947

Music: WILD MOUNTAIN THYME, Irish melody; adapt. Alfred V. Fedak, b. 1953

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The Week Ahead

February 24-March 2

Monday 2-24	8-1-Office Open 12:30-Cut-Ups
Tuesday 2-25	11:30-1:00—Club 55 Drive-thru Pantry 3-5-Feed My Sheep Food Pantry 7:30-9:00—Harmonessence
Wednesday 2-26	8-1 Office Open 10:30-Pantry Pick up Noon-Vac Lunch Served
Thursday 2-27	8-1-Office Open 8:30-Pantry Pick Up 9:30-11:30-Feed My Sheep Food Pantry 10:30-Martha's Sisters (zoom)
Saturday 3-1	9:30-Pantry Pick up 10:30-Pantry Pick up
Sunday 3-2	9:30-Worship Coffee fellowship after worship

Presiding today:
Rev. Sharon Rogers
Michael Graddy—Musician
Barb Luchsinger—Reader

- ◆ Address—1915 N First Street, DeKalb IL 60115
- ◆ Phone—815-758-3203
- ◆ Email—belcdekalb@comcast.net

*Our offering plate is located at the rear of the sanctuary.
We give thanks to God for all of our gifts!*

Pastor Schedule for February

2—Rev. Sharon Rogers
9—Rev. Bob Hansen
16—Rev. Bob Hansen
23—Rev. Sharon Rogers

If you are in need of pastoral care,
please contact the office at 815-758-3203.

Bethlehem's Church Council Communications

- ◆ Sunday Worship Music Coordinator is Michael Graddy.
- ◆ Thank you to our Volunteers who share their time and talent.
- ◆ Office Hours are Monday, Wednesday & Thursday 8:00am to 1:00pm.
- ◆ Office needs are served by Barb Luchsinger under the supervision of Sue Ann Brown.
- ◆ Sue Ann Brown is our Finance Administrator.
- ◆ Feed My Sheep Pantry Hours are Tuesday 3:00pm to 5:00pm & Thursday 9:30am to 11:30am.
- ◆ The Feed My Sheep Food Pantry coordinator is Karen Maciejewski under the supervision of Sue Ann Brown.
- ◆ Club 55 Senior Services Hours are Monday through Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm.
- ◆ Kate Sullivan is the Club 55 Coordinator with Sue Ann Brown as the Bethlehem liaison.
- ◆ Facility maintenance, key control or other building concerns are managed by Church Council.

- ◆ Church Council Members:
 - Tammie Farley
 - Dawn George
 - Bill Perian
 - Andy Velez.

- ◆ Questions?? Please call the Church Office at 815-758-3203 to leave a message for a Council Member.