

Welcome to Worship

Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2026 | 9:30am



Welcoming in *Christ*. Growing in *Faith*. Responding in *Love* and *Service*.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
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Ali Staloch, *Director, Children, Youth and Family Ministry*

Mike Knox, *Audio Visual Tech*
Karl Braun, *Custodian*
Lori Gergen, *Office Administrator*

Today is sometimes called “Good Shepherd Sunday.” Jesus is called the “gate” of the sheep in today’s gospel. The risen Christ opens the way to abundant life. He anoints our heads with oil and guides us beside the still waters of our baptism. Each Sunday he spreads a feast before us amid the world’s violence and war. We go forth to be signs of the resurrection and extend God’s tender care to all creation.

GATHERING

PRELUDE *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing* Jan Bender

CALL TO WORSHIP *He is Risen* *Alan Bullard*
St. Croix Sacred Ensemble

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

P 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.**

P 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. Blessed are you.

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

P 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.**

P 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.**

P 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 SONG *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing!*

ELW 385

1. Good Christian friends, rejoice and sing!
 Now is the triumph of our king!
 To all the world glad news we bring:
 Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

2. The Lord of life is ris'n this day;
death's mighty stone is rolled away;
let all the world rejoice and say:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

3. Praise we in songs of victory
that love, that life, which cannot die,
and sing with hearts uplifted high:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

4. Your name we bless, O risen Lord,
and sing today with one accord,
the life laid down, the life restored:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

GREETING

A 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.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY (*everyone pray*)

P **O God our shepherd, you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety through the valleys of death. Guide us by your voice, that we may walk in confidence and trust to the joyous feast prepared in your house, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD

READING

1 Peter 2:19–25

¹⁹ For it is a commendable thing if, being aware of God, a person endures pain while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do good and suffer for it, this is a commendable thing before God. ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

²² “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”
²³ When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

PSALM

Shepherd Me, O God

based on Psalm 23

(Sung responsively with Choir)

CHOIR: Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

**ALL: Shepherd me, O God,
beyond my wants,
beyond my fears,
from death into life.**

CHOIR: God is my shepherd, so nothing shall I want, I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love, I walk by the quiet waters of peace.

**ALL: Shepherd me, O God,
beyond my wants,
beyond my fears,
from death into life.**

CHOIR: Gently you raise me and heal my weary soul, you lead me by pathways of righteousness and truth, my spirit shall sing the music of your name.

**ALL: Shepherd me, O God,
beyond my wants,
beyond my fears,
from death into life.**

CHOIR: Though I should wander the valley of death, I fear no evil, for you are at my side, your rod and your staff, my comfort and my hope.

**ALL: Shepherd me, O God,
beyond my wants,
beyond my fears,
from death into life.**

CHOIR: You have set me a banquet of love in the face of hatred, crowning me with love beyond my power to hold.

¹ Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷ So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

P The Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

SERMON

Pastor Amy Vigesaa

HYMN OF THE DAY

Lord of All Hopefulness

ELW 765

1. Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy:
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.
2. Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe:
be there at our labors, and give us, we pray,
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.
3. Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace:
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.
4. Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm:
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

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 power of 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 THE PEOPLE

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

Shepherding God, draw all people to yourself and lead them in paths of righteousness. Embolden your church to enter the valleys of the world and guide us beside the still waters of your grace. Merciful God, **C receive our prayer.**

A Creator God, by the resurrection of your Son, show us your steadfast love and instruct our hearts in your ways. Help us to revere and protect the wonders of your creation. Merciful God, **C receive our prayer.**

A Righteous Judge, strengthen and uphold those who work for justice and advocate for human rights. Bring an end to oppression and save us from the temptation of violence or

vengeance. We pray for military and prison chaplains serving near and far. Merciful God, **C receive our prayer.**

A Great Physician, walk with those who are grieving, and anoint those who are ill or injured. Restore them to health of body, mind, and spirit. Merciful God,
C receive our prayer.

A Good Shepherd, continually seek us out as lambs of your flock, and form us into a community where all are honored and cared for. Spread a feast before us and fill our cups to overflowing. Merciful God, **C receive our prayer.**

P Living God, we praise you for the saints who have died in faith and now dwell in your love. At our end, bring us, with them, to our heavenly home. Merciful God,
C Your mercy is great.

P 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.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

P The peace of the Risen Lord be with you always.

C And also with you.

THANKSGIVING

OFFERING MUSIC *Clear Our Heart, O God* Tom Trenney
St. Croix Sacred Ensemble

OFFERING PRAYER

P Let us pray,

G Merciful God,

accept the fruits of our labor, gathered to give you glory.

You have set a table before us, filled with abundant gifts.

Guide us to live generously,

that goodness and mercy may follow us

and bless the world you love.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p. 145

G 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 our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

SENDING

BENEDICTION

SENDING HYMN

Hallelujah! Jesus Lives! (vs 1,2,3,5)

ELW 380

1. Hallelujah! Jesus lives!
He is now the Living One;
from the gloomy halls of death
Christ, the conqueror, has gone,
bright forerunner to the skies
of his people, yet to rise.
2. Jesus lives! Why do you weep?
Why that sad and mournful sigh?
Christ who died our brother here
lives our brother still on high,
lives forever to bestow
blessings on his church below.
3. Jesus lives! And thus, my soul,
life eternal waits for you;
joined to Christ, your living head,
where he is, you shall be too;
with the Lord, at God's right hand,
as a victor you shall stand.

5. Hallelujah! Angels, sing!
Join with us in hymns of praise.
Let your chorus swell the strain
which our feebler voices raise:
Glory to our God above
and on earth his peace and love!

CHOIR SELECTION

I See the Heaven's Glories Shine

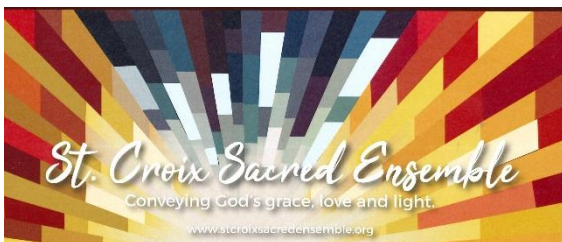
Andrea Ramsey
St. Croix Sacred Ensemble

DISMISSAL **A** Go in peace. Praise the Lord. **C** Alleluia!

POSTLUDE

Prayer from "Renzi"

Richard Wagner



We wish to thank
the St. Croix Sacred Ensemble
for enhancing our worship today
with their special music today!

For over 20 years the SCSE has been committed to singing at churches and senior residences of all denominations in the St. Croix Valley and greater St. Paul and Minneapolis area.

They participate in the worship service offering sacred music from the choral tradition that helps enlighten the scripture of the season and inspire prayer.

The ensemble rehearses right here at Bethlehem on Tuesday evenings, September thru May and are always looking for new members! If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Deborah Fristad at scseconductor@gmail.com.

Acknowledgments

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