

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

July 12, 2026 *We Are the Church - We are the Love Shack*

We Gather

Call to Worship

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism

Come in from the noise of the world, come in from the storms of life.

We enter the shelter of God's love.

Here, the walls are built with grace, the roof is covered with mercy, and the floor rests on the solid rock of Christ.

We come to be held, to be healed, and to be sent out in love.

The Church is God's Love Shack, a home for the weary, a workshop for the willing, and a launchpad for love.

Let us worship the One who loved us first, and who calls us to love one another!

Opening Song *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

Hymn 631

1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

2 Breathe, oh, breathe thy loving Spirit
into ev'ry troubled breast;
let us all in thee inherit;
let us find thy promised rest.

Take away the love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
end of faith, as its beginning,
set our hearts at liberty.

4 Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee!
Changed from glory into glory,
till in heav'n we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Greeting & Prayer of the Day

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.**

Loving God, **we step into Your house today not as strangers, but as family gathered under one roof.**

Thank You for making this place a shelter for our souls, a workshop where You mend our hearts,

and a launchpad where Your love takes flight into the world. Lord, bind us together with cords of compassion. Seal the cracks in our hearts with forgiveness. Raise the roof of our praise so high

that it reaches the heavens. And when we leave this place, let us carry Your love into every street,

every home, and every heart we meet.

In the name of Jesus, who in love gave himself for us and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

**We Proclaim
God's Word**

First Reading

1 John 4:7-19

God Is Love

⁷⁻¹⁰ My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God *is* love—so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

¹¹⁻¹² My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

¹³⁻¹⁶ This is how we know we're living steadily and deeply in him, and he in us: He's given us life from his life, from his very own Spirit. Also, we've seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that the Father sent his Son as Savior of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love.

¹⁹ We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first.

Word of God; Word of Life. Thanks be to God.

Gospel Verse**Listen Now for the Gospel****2x**

Listen now for the Gospel! Alleluia!

It's God's word that changes us! Alleluia!

The Holy Gospel according to Saint John 15:9-16**Glory to you, O Lord.**

9-10 "I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love.

11-15 "I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.

16 "You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Gospel in SpanishUna lectura según Juan, Capítulo 15. **Gloria a ti, O Señor**

⁹ »Así como el Padre me ha amado a mí, también yo los he amado a ustedes. Permanezcan en mi

amor. ¹⁰ Si obedecen mis mandamientos, permanecerán en mi amor, así como yo he obedecido los mandamientos de mi Padre y permanezco en su amor. ¹¹ Les he dicho esto para que tengan mi alegría y así su alegría sea completa. ¹² Y este es mi mandamiento: que se amen los unos a los otros como yo los he amado. ¹³ Nadie tiene amor más grande que el que da la vida por sus amigos. ¹⁴ Ustedes son mis amigos si hacen lo que yo les mando. ¹⁵ Ya no los llamo siervos, porque el siervo no está al tanto de lo que hace su amo; los he llamado amigos, porque todo lo que a mi Padre le oí decir se lo he dado a conocer a ustedes. ¹⁶ No me escogieron ustedes a mí, sino que yo los escogí a ustedes y los comisioné para que vayan y den fruto, un fruto que perdure. Así el Padre les dará todo lo que pidan en mi nombre.
Esta es la buena nueva de Dios. **Alabanza a ti, Señor Jesucristo.**

Time for All God's Kids

Message We are the Church: We are the Love Shack Baby

Song of the Day – *Hold Us Together*

It don't have a job
Don't pay your bills
Won't buy you a home in Beverly Hills
Won't fix your life in five easy steps
Ain't the law of the land or the government
But it's all you need

It's waiting for you
Knockin' at your door!
In the moment of truth
When your heart hits the floor
And you're on your knees **Chorus**

***And love will hold us together
Make us a shelter to weather the storm
And I'll be my brother's keeper
So the whole world will know that we're not
alone***

This is the first day of the rest of your life
This is the first day of the rest of your life
'Cause even in the dark, you can still see the light
It's gonna be alright, it's gonna be alright 2x
Chorus

Prayers of the People..... God of all, hear our prayer.

The Peace

May the peace of the Lord be with you, now and always. **And also with you.**
(*You are invited to share the Peace of the Lord with those around you, then be seated.*)

We Give Back

Gathering of Gifts

Offering Response

I am the church!
You are the church!
We are the church together!

We Are the Church

All who follow Jesus,
all around the world!
Yes, we're the church together!

Offering Prayer

Generous God, You have given us everything — life, breath, and every good gift.
We return to You what is already Yours, asking that You would bless these offerings and use them for sharing your love in a hurting and broken world. In the name of Christ, our Lord and Healer, we pray. **Amen**

We Are Fed

The Great Thanksgiving

The Holy Living God be with you. **And also with you.**

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

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

Words of Institution for God's Table of Grace..... and bring her to the fullness of charity, as we pray together the prayer Jesus taught us: **The Lord's Prayer**

Invitation to Communion

Like scattered grain, we are gathered into one at this table. Come, eat, be made whole.

Jesus invites everyone to receive Holy Communion.

This is a sacrament of God's grace which comes to us purely as an unearned gift. All are welcome to the Lord's table.

Communion Distribution Notes

Communion will be distributed in continuous fashion. We also will use (gluten free) bread.

All are invited to pray at the rail following consumption of elements. Please use outside aisles to return.

Post Communion Blessing

May this body and blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, strengthen you and keep you always in his love and grace.

Prayer Keep us united, Lord, not just within these walls, but in every act, every word, and every heartbeat. Let this church always be a place where love lives, laughter heals, and Your light never fades. In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**

We Are Sent

Announcements

Final Blessing

Go now, beloved of God, may the foundation of your life be Christ's unshakable love, the roof over your heart be His unending grace, and the door of your spirit always swing wide to welcome the stranger, the seeker, and the friend. Leave this place as living stones in God's Love Shack—built strong in faith, bound together in hope, and overflowing with love that cannot be contained.

Sending Song

1 We are one in the Spirit
We are one in the Lord
We are one in the Spirit
We are one in the Lord
And we pray that all unity
May one day be restored

***And they'll know we are Christians
By our love by our love
Yes they'll know we are Christians
By our love***

2 We will walk with each other
We will walk hand in hand

They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love

We will walk with each other
We will walk hand in hand
And together we'll spread the news
That God is in our land **Chorus**

3 We will work with each other
We will work side by side
We will work with each other
We will work side by side
And we'll guard each man's dignity
And save each man's pride **Chorus**

4 All praise to the Father
From whom all things come

And all praise to Christ Jesus
His only Son

And all praise to the Spirit
Who makes us one ***Chorus***

Dismissal We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, **with thanks to God.**