

1875-2025



TO GOD BE THE GLORY

September 13th and 14th, 2025

**Willow Creek Lutheran Church
24795 470th Ave
Dell Rapids, South Dakota 57022**

Presiding Minister – Vicar Kendra Kappler

Assisting Pastors – Pastor Renae Boehmer, Pastor Tom Stadem,
Pastor Randall Questad, Pastor Doug Olson

Organist/Pianist – Paul Mesner and David Olson

Choir Director – Paul Mesner

Choir Accompanist – Kari Vosburg

Video Reflections - compiled and edited by Vicar Kendra Kappler, Anna
Hoekman, Katie Hoekman, Kim Bazata

History and Photo Displays- Kevin Hoekman

Sunday Worship

September 14th, 2025, 10am

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Willow Creek President – Katie Hoekman
Vicar Kendra Kappler

Remembering and Honoring Our Heritage and Our Past

OPENING LITANY

Leader: Today we gather to remember and rejoice. We give you thanks and celebrate 150 years of Your faithfulness. We come not as individuals alone, but as a community shaped by Your love, woven together through generations by Your Spirit.

People: *You have bound us together in Christ. Across generations, young and old, past and present, you have united us as one family by your grace.*

Leader: As we gather on this joyful day, our hearts overflow with gratitude. We give thanks for all the blessings, seen and unseen, and for all the stories and many gifts that have shaped our community.

People: *For all that has been, we thank You. For all that is, we praise You. For all that is to come, we trust You.*

Leader: For those who first dreamed of a church here, who gathered to share and live out Your Gospel...

People: *We give You thanks, O God, for the saints who laid our foundation in faith.*

Leader: For all Your people throughout the years: preachers and teachers, musicians and custodians, council members, quilters, ushers, bakers, confirmation mentors, students, youth, and Sunday School leaders. For those who welcomed strangers and planted seeds of faith in children. For every smile and handshake.

People: *We give You thanks, O God, for every hand and heart that built up this body.*

Leader: For baptisms and funerals, weddings and ordinations. For the promises made at the font, healing received at the table, and faith nourished through Your Word.

People: *We give You thanks, O God, for your constant presence in every season of our life together.*

Leader: For the ministry we share today: the laughter filling our fellowship hall, the whispered prayer lifted in quiet moments, the faithful teams of volunteers and leaders, the children who bring joy and remind us of new beginnings.

People: *We give You thanks, O God, for the church that is still being made new.*

Leader: And for the years yet to come: for children not born yet who will one day be baptized here, songs not written yet that will fill these walls with praise, ministries not imagined yet that will shine Your light into the world.

People: *We trust You, O God, who holds our future and leads us forward in hope.*

Leader: So with grateful hearts and open hands, we step into this day of celebration. We remember Your faithfulness, we rejoice in Your presence, and we renew our commitment to be Your church.

People: *To you be all glory, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.*

OPENING HYMN/PROCESSIONAL “Lift High the Cross” ELW #660
(This hymn was the Theme from the 125th Anniversary in 2000)

Refrain

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred name.

- 1 Come, Christians, follow where our captain trod,
our king victorious, Christ, the Son of God. *Refrain*
- 2 All newborn servants of the Crucified
bear on their brows the seal of him who died. *Refrain*
- 3 O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree, as thou hast promised, draw
us all to thee. *Refrain*
- 4 So shall our song of triumph ever be:
Praise to the Crucified for victory! *Refrain*

CHURCH HISTORY: Bell Ringing

We ring the bell 5 times to recognize the first five decades of Willow Creek Lutheran Church. (1875-1925)

Bell Ringing – Bernie Opland (oldest born, baptized and confirmed member)

History – Kevin Hoekman

TRIVIA QUESTION #1

Levi Olson

What Pastor served at Willow Creek for the greatest number of years?

- A. Reverend C.C. Moe
- B. Pastor Henry Thompson
- C. Pastor Earl Johnson
- D. Pastor Tom Stadem

FIRST READING

Psalm 100

Pastor Tom Stadem

L) ¹Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

C) ²*Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing.*

L) ³Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

C) ⁴*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.*

L) ⁵For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

L) Word of God, Word of Life

C) *Thanks be to God!*

SECOND READING

John 3:13-17

Pastor Tom Stadem

¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶For 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.

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

L) Word of God, Word of Life. *All) Thanks be to God!*



SPECIAL MUSIC

Choir

“In This Fellowship of Faith” arr. Don Besig

Flute Soloist - Anna Hoekman

THIRD READING Ephesians 3:14-21 Vicar Kendra Kappler

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

L) Word of God, Word of Life. *All) Thanks be to God!*

**Celebrating the Present Time and How We have
Grown as a Congregation**

SERMON “To God Be the Glory” Vicar Kendra Kappler

HYMN OF THE DAY “To God Be the Glory” 150th Theme

1 To God be the glory, great things he has done;
so loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he has done.

2 Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to ev'ry believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender by grace may believe,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receive. *Refrain*

3 Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our vict'ry, when Jesus we see. *Refrain*



CHURCH HISTORY: Bell Ringing

We ring the bell five times to recognize five more decades of Willow Creek Lutheran Church (1925-1975).

Bell Ringing – Katie Hoekman – President of WC Council
History – Kevin Hoekman

TRIVIA QUESTION #2

Faith Koeppe

How many Lefse recipes are printed in the 1994 Willow Creek Cookbook?

- A. 3
- B. 5
- C. 9
- D. 11

VIDEO

“Willow Creek Reflections”

ELCA SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD REPRESENTATION

Pastor Renae Boehmer

HYMN

“Behold the Host Arrayed in White”

ELW #425

Behold the host arrayed in white
like thousand snow-clad mountains bright,
that stands with palms and sings its psalms
before the throne of light!

These are the saints who kept God's word;
they are the honored of the Lord.

He is their prince who drowned their sins,
so they were cleansed, restored.

They now serve God both day and night;
they sing their songs in endless light.

Their anthems ring when they all sing
with angels shining bright.

NICENE CREED –

We believe in one God, The Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth, Of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, The only Son of God,
Eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light,
True God from true God, Begotten, not made,
Of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;
Was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the son.
Who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
And the life of the world to come. Amen.

SHARING THE PEACE

OFFERING

OFFERING SONG “We Give Thee but Thine Own” ELW #686

We give thee but thine own, what-e'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord. From thee.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Pastor Doug Olson

L) Lord in your mercy,

C) *Hear our Prayer.*



HOLY COMMUNION

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Pastor Randall Questad

THE LORD'S PRAYER

spoken in Norwegian by Craig Dybedahl and Judy Stadem

Fader Vår

Fader var, du som er i himmelen!

La ditt navn holdes hellig.

La ditt rike komme.

La din vilje skje på jorden

som i himmelen.

Gi oss i dag vårt daglige brød.

Forlat oss vår skyld,

som vi og forlater våre skyldnere.

Led oss ikke inn i fristelse,

men frels oss fra det onde.

For riket er ditt,

Og makten og aeren i evighet. Amen.

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 forever. Amen

DISTRIBUTION OF SACREMENTS

Communion Hymns

One Bread, One Body

ELW #496

Christ, Be Our Light

ELW #715

Blest Are They

ELW #728

Shout to the Lord

ELW #821

God of the Harvest

(next page)

GOD OF THE HARVEST

Chorus:

You are God of the seed, God of the soil, God of the hope, God of the toil. You are God of the rain, God of the sun God of the harvest with blessings for everyone

From the fields and the gardens come your blessed gifts of life. Colors blossom, vines are dancing, roots uplifted with our thanks (*Chorus*)

From the womb of all creation springs the fruit, the living light. Grace abundant, mercy flowing nourishing and bringing life (*Chorus*)

Bridge:

Where there is hunger, where there is need,
may we share your bounty, may we always see (*Chorus*)

COMMUNION BLESSING

**Hope and Excitement for Our Future as a Church
Dedicated to Spreading the Gospel**

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

"Future of the Church"

Vicar Kendra Kappler

CHURCH HISTORY: Bell Ringing

We ring the bell five times to recognize the next five decades of Willow
Creek Lutheran Church (1975-2025)

Bell Ringing – Ben Berg – Sunday School representative
History- Kevin Hoekman

TRIVIA QUESTION #3

Esther Hoekman

What language was spoken during the first church services?

- A. English
- B. Norwegian
- C. Swedish
- D. Latin

TRIVIA QUESTION #4

Anna Hoekman

What was so unique about the 2004 church year?

- A. It was the only year in church history with no Christmas Day Service.
- B. Willow Creek changed worship time to 9:00am.
- C. There were no funerals, weddings, baptisms or new members.
- D. There were 25 Confirmation students.

BENEDICTION

“The Lord Bless and Keep You”

Sung by the Choir

arr. Peter C. Lutkin

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Linda Linge – 150th Committee Member

DINNER PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN

“Lord I Lift Your Name on High”

ELW #857

(sung through twice)

Lord, I lift Your name on high; Lord, I love to sing Your praises.
I'm so glad You're in my life, I'm so glad You came to save us.
You came from heaven to earth to show the way,
from the earth, to the cross, my debt to pay,
from the earth to the cross, my debt to pay,
from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky:
Lord, I lift Your name on high.

THE SENDING

L) Go in peace, serve the Lord and others.

C) *Thanks be to God!*

RECESSIONAL

Special thank you to all of the people who worked diligently over the past year to plan this wonderful and memorable celebration!

Committee - Linda Linge, Bonnie Dybedahl, Kevin Hoekman, Andy Berg, Sandy Zwart, Paul Mesner, Vicar Kendra Kappler

Cemetery Subcommittee- Sandy Zwart, Mary Mesner, Courtney Hanson, Kevin Jackson

Decorating Subcommittee- Bonnie Dybedahl, Pat Nytroe, Phyllis Koepp, Kathy Hanson-Rindels, Nancy Offerman, Roseanne Ruff, Delores Tokheim

Catering Subcommittee - Andy Berg, Erin Mitzel, Kim Bazata, Steve Bazata, Phyllis Koepp, Jordan Schemmel, Melissa Dellman

History Subcommittee - Kevin Hoekman, Craig Dybedahl, Kathy Hanson-Rindels, Lisa Rave

Correspondence & Hospitality Subcommittee- Linda Linge, Beth Warne, Steve Schmidt, Kris Smart

Worship Subcommittee- Paul Mesner, David Olson, Vicar Kendra Kappler

Church Council Members

President: Katie Hoekman

Vice President: David Olson

Treasurer: Kevin Hoekman

Secretary: Mary Mesner

Deacons: Chad Warne and Steve Bazata

Trustees: Jarad Deters and Sandy Zwart

Education Committee: Lindsay Koepp, Kim Bazata

Worship and Music: Courtney Hanson, Paul Mesner Mission Committee:

Steve Schmidt, Phyllis Koepp, Pat Nytroe

Cemetery Committee: Craig Dybedahl, Al Hilmoe, Shane Warne, Paul Sundermann



Cemetery Walk

Please enjoy a self-guided walk through our church cemetery for a glimpse of the church history. Graves of historical significance are marked with a bow or cemetery flag. Lists with all names and a map are available in the entry.

Bows: Red, White, and Blue – Veterans who bravely served our country, including one Purple Heart

White Bows -Shorter stick with bow – Baby/Infant (newborn to about one year old)
-Taller stick with bow – Child approximately one year to eighteen years old

Blue Bows – Charter Members

Cemetery Flags:

Pastors who served at Willow Creek Lutheran Church

People who donated land for the church/cemetery

People who were appointed as first elected officers

People in charge of cemetery/burials/mapping of cemetery

People who have spent “significant” time doing one or more jobs

Presidents of Willow Creek Lutheran

Acknowledgements and Thank You's

- Dells Auto – for use of the drone to take a congregational photo – see this in the history area
- Becky Schmidt – church secretary for all of the extra work
- Steve Schmidt – for ensuring the church upgrade/remodel was finished and beautiful
- Tony's Catering
- Steelberry Ornaments, Bushnell Pottery, Harold's Photo, Christian Begeman – for the souvenirs
- Alpha Graphics for final layout and printing of history booklet
- Willow Creek Quilters for the quilt of the outline of the church used as a backdrop for photos
- SDSU Ice Cream Truck
- All Members and Friends – for faithfulness in carrying on our traditions and making new ones.
- Pastor Randall Questad, Pastor Tom Stadem, Pastor Doug Olson, Pastor Renae Boehner for helping with the service today.
- Always Your Design – for the quilting work

Thank you for joining the 150th anniversary celebration of Willow Creek Lutheran Church.

We always gain insight from our heritage and our memories. We continue to cherish our time together as a church family. We are excited as we look toward the future and have faith in God's plan for us.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers.

We pray that this celebration was for the Glory of God, that the Holy Spirit was present and that the Gospel of Grace and Forgiveness was heard.

To God Be the Glory! It is ALL for You, God.

Messages received from former pastors-

From Pastor Mark Docken: (Pastor at WCLC from 1992 – 2000)

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
And blessings upon the 150th Anniversary of your ministry in Christ as
Willow Creek Lutheran Church.

Lois and I so wish we could be with you, but traveling to see our new grandson in Australia will take everything out of us. Hope you understand.

We would have so enjoyed experiencing the unique Willow Creek community that meant so much to us at that time in our lives. When we arrived in 1992, your community surrounded our young family and enfolded us into your church family.

We remember the first Christmas, when our 6 month old Soren was able to play the role of baby Jesus in the tableau taken in a nearby barn. Your Christmas programs epitomized your creativity, attention to detail, and love for the story of God and God's people. We remember how the community rallied around the Eide and Opland families after a tornado ripped through the neighborhood. I'm not sure if I recall this accurately, but when I drove into the Opland home, I saw the sign reading "Bennett Opland Farm" edited to read: "Bennett Opland had a farm," referring to the "Old McDonald had a farm" children's ditty. Humor in the face of suffering, not to minimize the tragedy, but as an expression of hope.

I remember the spring pre-planting prayer breakfasts where the depth of faith of our farmers set the tone and led the way and all I was asked to do and needed to do was add a blessing. Then there was Howard Hovland telling me that "words are ideas with skin on them" and ever since for me, that became an analogy for God's incarnation. We remember Brenda Schmidt as a gifted writer for the Sioux Falls newspaper with insight into the humanity of the news. And so many more.

I also recall the sermon when I mimicked the scene from a Robin Williams movie where he stands on the teacher's desk to illustrate getting a new perspective. I climbed up and stood on the pulpit. My balance was OK, but the pulpit seemed to shift slightly and I was gently but firmly told afterwards, I think by Steve Schmidt, to never do that again. Not because of concern for my safety but for the integrity of the pulpit.

We experienced Willow Creek as a diverse community that practiced being family, the family of God, steeped both in generational families and in the warm embrace and inclusion of new people. Willow Creek had a depth of biblical and theological rootedness and a breadth of ministry

outreach and awareness. Your ministry was marked by commitment, creativity, and joy.

Thank you for how you shaped my faith, ministry, and our family.

Here is an update on our family:

Lois and I retired in 2021 and moved out to the Washington DC area to be close to our daughter Kirstin's family, including our two grandchildren. Here we have enjoyed being a part of their everyday life. We have also enjoyed living in a very racially diverse area. Mark is doing some work with the county Lynching Memorial Committee that seeks to remember and honor lynching victims in the county. Lois has befriended people from Zimbabwe and Iran.

Our children are now quite scattered. Kirstin lives in College Park, MD, married to Daron. She works in human resources at the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation and Daron provides marketing leadership for DC Metro Transit. They stay busy parenting Zak and Noelle who are 9 and 6 years old. Steffen lives in Sydney, Australia, married to Alexandra to whom was born very recently a son, Edward. Steffen is a biology-math researcher and Alex is a neo-natal pediatrician. After living in NYC and Nashville, Soren now lives in Chicago, working in the development department of the University of Chicago. His wife, Sarah, works as a Publicity Manager with HarperCollins Christian Publishing.

Pastor Mark Docken

From Pastor David Lechelt, Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Ramsey, MN. (Pastor at WCLC from 1991 – 1996)

Beloved Willow Creek Lutheran,

Mary and I wish we could be with you at the celebration of Willow Creek's 150th. Truly, there is nothing "little" about you in our hearts. You were a BIG part of my first call as a pastor and I treasure my days and ministry with you. Mary and I always smile at the thought of our learning from you that tossing whipped cream together with Snickers and apples is truly a salad.

I also experienced with you the most heart-rending time with the tragic death of brothers Aaron Opland and Heath Knudsen on July 4, 1994 and most faith sustaining time with the loving embrace of you and the larger community. Throughout my ministry I have often shared the power of prayer that I experienced in those tough, tough days. Heath and Aaron were confirmed in God's promises at Willow Creek like many more over your 150 years. What a blessing to be the dedicated community of Christ proclaiming and living God's promises for all of us.

On this occasion of your 150th, I rejoice to speak God's baptismal blessing for you: "Father in heaven, for Jesus' sake, stir up in Willow

Creek Lutheran the gift of your Holy Spirit; confirm their faith, guide their life, empower them in their serving, give them patience in suffering, and bring them to everlasting life. Amen.

Rejoice in the Lord and enjoy the Snickers Salad.
Pastor David Lechelt

From Pastor Don Salberg (Served as Interim pastor 2013-2014)

Congratulations to you all as you gather to celebrate 150 years of ministry. Surely it can be said, and celebrated, that hundreds of individuals and families have been blest and nurtured in faith here...
Thanks Be to God!

I appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity to serve as your pastor. One of my memories is the friendliness and supportive nature of the members. Indeed, we were like family.

I regret that I will not be able to attend your celebration gathering. Challenges with walking and balance have made it difficult to do much traveling.

My wish and prayer is that our Father God will bless each one of you along with your ministry for years to come.

Peace be with all of you,
Pastor Don

Pastor Mark Jensen – (Pastor at WCLC from 1996 – 2000)

Congratulations on your 150 anniversary! What a wonderful milestone for your congregation.

Thank you for inviting us to join in your celebration. Unfortunately, we are not able to attend your festivities the weekend of September 13-14. We're sure it will be a fantastic weekend for you!

God has been with you throughout your rich history blessing your congregation. For many generations your congregation has passed on the faith to its members and friends and their descendants. It has also welcomed new individuals and families to take part in its ministry. My family and I were privileged to take part in Willow Creek's ministry during the 5 years that I served at the Lutheran Church of Dell Rapids. We arrived in Dell Rapids in 1996 with our two boys, Micah and Isaac. In May the following year, our daughter Kamilla was born.

I still remember going out to Willow Creek with Rev. Mark Docken for council meetings and confirmation. Karla and I were always impressed the Family Christmas programs that the church put on every year. We still find ourselves from time to time singing the theme song from one of your Christmas Dramas, "It's a mystery, a mystery, a Christmas mystery!"

All of these things make Willow Creek Lutheran Church special to us.

After leaving the Lutheran Church of Dell Rapids, I served First Lutheran Church in Beaver Dam, WI for 15 years until 2017. For the last 8 years, I've been serving at St. John's Lutheran Church in Hamburg, Pennsylvania. The history and beauty in this state is amazing and has turned out to be an adventure for us empty nesters.

Karla is currently working at an international agriculture business in Hamburg, five minutes from our house. She has published two books, served as a columnist in an arts and culture magazine, edited many other writer's work and together, we've written and published over 20+ plays with Contemporary Christian Drama Service. Our plays have been produced around the United States and even abroad. We have started a couple different drama ministry teams in our churches. We also now sing with the choir.

I have focused my continuing education on grief counseling. Over the last 10 years or so, I've had the opportunity to participate in 5 different trainings in Fort Collins, CO with author and speaker Dr. Alan Wolfelt. I have started and led several grief support groups and our church hosted a special memorial for those who passed during Covid.

Our oldest son, Micah, lives in Colorado and builds trails for the city of Boulder. He is a level one stone mason and also an excellent artist/painter. He majored in Communications/ Videography at Wartburg College, in Waverly, IA. Isaac attended Belmont University in Nashville. He and his wife, Lauren, live near Nashville. They just got married in the fall in October 2024. I was honored to have officiated their wedding. Isaac is the assistant General Manager at an upscale liquor store called, "Red". Lauren is an elementary school guidance counselor. Isaac was an audio engineer major and drummer. Our daughter, Kamilla, lives in Cleveland, OH and is the Box Office and Events Manager of a performing arts center. She majored in Speech/Theatre during college at Wittenberg University in Springfield, OH.

Even though we are unable to attend your celebration on September 13-14, we will be thinking of those saints who have gone before us, those who are still there, and we shall be including you in our prayers of intercession at St. John's Lutheran Church in Hamburg, PA. We still love sharing our stories and photos from our time in South Dakota.

One word that describes Willow Creek is, "Family." You cared about one another the way a family cares about one another. This was exemplified in your worship, meetings, and activities together.

God's Blessings,
Rev. Mark Jensen

**Pastor Alan Blankenfeld, Messiah Lutheran Church, Flandreau, SD
(Served as interim pastor during 2024)**

I am very happy for your congregation and celebrating the 150th!
Blessings to you as you gather and celebrate.
Blessings, Pastor Alan

