

Benton & Willow Creek Lutheran Churches
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July Newsletter 2026



God Bless America!

Benton & Willow Creek Lutheran Churches Newsletter—July 2026

Note from Vicar Kendra Kappler

As we enter July, our nation prepares to celebrate a significant milestone: the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Anniversaries like this invite us to pause and give thanks. We feel gratitude for the freedoms we enjoy, and we have so much appreciation for service members, neighbors, civic leaders, and all who have worked for the common good in ways large and seemingly small. However, as I write this newsletter, I find this topic somewhat hard to talk about because it sits right at the intersection of strong convictions, our country's history, personal history, and our own lived experiences. I know for some, national identity is closely tied to gratitude, pride, and a sense of belonging; I know for others, it is tied to some pain, exclusion, division, or disappointment. There is so much diversity of opinions and emotions, and for many of us, it is not one or the other, but a complicated mixture that can shift depending on the day or the memory we are carrying. There is pride about some aspects of U.S. history and achievement, and grief and shame over others. I think it is important to affirm that all these emotions exist and create a welcoming space for everyone. These conversations are not simple, and they are not meant to be. But the church is one of the places where we are invited to bring our whole selves and trust that God is present with us in all of it. We also know that Scripture gives us language for holding all of this together: gratitude and lament are not opposites in the life of faith, but they are really companions in prayer.

One of the particular blessings often lifted up during Independence Day celebrations is the freedom to worship openly and live out one's faith without fear. This is no small gift. Many of our siblings in Christ throughout history and around the world have not known this freedom, and for it, we give thanks to God. Yet as Christians, we also remember that our ultimate identity is not defined by nationality or political ideology. The apostle Paul reminds us, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). This does not diminish our life in this nation or our responsibility as neighbors and citizens. Instead, it reorients it. We belong first to Christ, and that belonging shapes how we live in every other sphere.

Paul also writes, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and we are no longer strangers and aliens, but members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). In Christ, we are given a deeper belonging than any earthly identity can provide. We are placed into a different kind of unity that holds our differences together in love rather than erases them. This is part of the gift and challenge of living as Christians in a civic moment like this. We can love our country without needing to make it into something it is not. We can give thanks for what is good and true and life-giving within it, while also naming what falls short of God's justice and mercy. We can pray for our leaders, participate in civic life, and seek the good of our communities, all while remembering that no nation is the source of our salvation. We are freed for a different kind of life: a life of loving all people, service, humility, and courage. As Galatians reminds us, "For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith... there is no longer Jew or Greek... for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26, 28).

As we move through this month of July, may we do so with gratitude for the blessings we have received, honesty about the complexity of our shared history, and prayer for the healing and flourishing of our communities. And above all, may we remember the center of our faith: that we are saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The good news of the Gospel is that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. In his death and resurrection, God has reconciled the world to God's self, forgiving our sins, breaking the power of death, and making us new people. So as we give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy, we also proclaim a deeper freedom: that in Jesus Christ, we are set free from sin and death, and set free for life in him. Our hope and freedom is ultimately in the Lord who has claimed us, redeemed us, and will hold us together forever.

God bless you!! 😊

Vicar Kendra Kappler

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“PARISH NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS”



SUMMER HOURS FOR WORSHIP
Sunday, May 31st to Sunday, September 6th
Willow Creek – 8:30am worship, no Sunday School
Benton – 10am Worship, no Sunday School
Communion – every Sunday



Thank you to all the teachers and helpers who planned and worked at VBS 2026. All the kids seemed to really enjoy it. Next year – same place and time, the week after the Crooks Community Days.

Some pictures from VBS



A Good Time was had by all !!!!!



**Mark Your Calendars!!!! Tuesday, July 7th, “Banquet West”
Benton, Willow Creek and West Nidaros will be serving the Banquet.**

REMINDER!!! ANNOUNCEMENTS/NEWS: All Willow Creek & Benton Announcements for the weekly bulletin should be **emailed by Tuesday at Noon** each week
Newsletter Announcements by the **15th of each month**. Thank you! (bentonwillowoffice@gmail.com)



OFFERINGS - WAYS TO GIVE:

If you are unable to attend services but would like to give, we have made some convenient ways to continue your offerings. We appreciate your faithfulness, Thank you.

MAIL : Benton PO Box 706 Crooks, SD 57020

Willow Creek 24795 470th Ave Dell Rapids, SD 57022

ELECTRONIC GIVING Check the websites giving image.

www.wclcdellrapids.org & www.bentonelca.org

BENTON'S 'TEXT TO GIVE'

1: Text “give” to the number **1-605-205-7789**. The automated response will direct you to the webpage. Once the system has your number stored, this will be a simple way to give right during the offering time!

2: The donations webpage through your browser is

<https://bentonchurch.breezechms.com/give/online>

Benton, Vanco - Here is the site link for your online giving tiles.

<https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZEX9>

Vanco users- you may have to create a new account. If you don't want to do that, you may email Dennis Aker with your changes, daker@alliancecom.net



Upcoming Campfires are Sunday, July 12th and 26th at 6pm, every 2 weeks. We have a potluck for supper. The host will furnish the meat and bottled water. We have witched from Wednesday evening to Sunday evening. We have had many people say they would like to attend but have too many activities during the week. There is a signup sheet at Benton if you want to host a Campfire. Willow Creek – if any of you would like to host a campfire, please call Becky Schmidt (605-360-1697).

Dates are – July 12th, July 26th, August 9th and August 23rd.

Thank you to Roger & Linda Person and Doug & Sandy Larson for hosting the June Campfires.

Baltic Food Bank Needs List: updated 6-1-2026

Hearty soups, crackers, sugar (white, brown, powdered), oil, juice, tea or coffee, cereal, breakfast bars, canned fruit, ramen, chicken/tuna helper, condiments (mayo or miracle whip, ketchup, barbeque sauce), salad dressings, pancake mix and syrup, pasta or rice sides, spaghetti sauce, pasta, jell-o and pudding, cake/brownie/muffin mixes, dish soap, laundry soap, personal hygiene products (tissues, bar soap or body wash, toothpaste, toothbrushes, dental picks or floss).

The Baltic Food Bank, 550 3rd Street, is open to all residents of Baltic and Crooks. It is open the second Wednesday of every month from 6:00-7:00 p.m., as well as the fourth Sunday of every month from 10:30-11:30 a.m., as well as by emergency appointment by calling 605-529-5032.

Food donations can be dropped off at: Baltic School Commons, Baltic City Hall, Baltic Lutheran Church, East Nidaros Lutheran Church, or West Nidaros Lutheran Church.

Monetary donations can be sent to: PO Box 244, Baltic, SD 57003.

Thank you for supporting families in your community!



The series is entitled "Grounded in Connection" and it focuses on how relationships are the cornerstone of who we are as people of faith. We learn and grow through relationships. Looking at the following stories, we'll explore the joys and complexities of relationships and be reminded how God shows us the way of connection, mercy and grace.

Week One: July 12 - Adam and Eve - Genesis 2:4-22

Week Two: July 19 - Ten Commandments - Exodus 20:1-21

Week Three: July 26 - Widow at Zarepath - 1 Kings 17:8-16

Week Four: Aug 2 - Esther and Mordecai - Esther 4

Week Five: Aug 9 - Peter's Betrayal and re-entry - John 18 and 21



If you are out and about and would like to visit with some great people, the following Church Members would love to have a call, visitors or both!

Bernie Opland & Bonnie Pinnerud
24635 470th Ave
Dell Rapids, SD 57022
605-310-0329

Keith & Caroline Halverson
26026 469th Ave
Sioux Falls, SD 57107
605-332-6201

Russ & Irene Middlen
#302 Bernadine Place
Hartford, SD 57033
605-370-7368

Maureen Eide
Orchard Hills
200 W 10th St
Dell Rapids, SD 57022
605-940-0315

“WILLOW CREEK NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS”

Willow Creek Church Council Members – 2026

President – Katie Hoekman
Secretary-Mary Mesner
Trustee-Jarod Deters, Sandy Zwart
Education Committee-Kim Bazata, Lyndsey Koepp
Worship & Music Committee- Paul Mesner, Courtney Hansen
Mission Committee- Steve Schmidt, Phyllis Koepp, Pat Nytroe
Cemetery Committee- Craig Dybedahl, Keith Warne, Matt Dybedahl Paul Sunderman
Auditing Committee- Kris Smart, Linda Linge, Ann Sunderman

Willow Creek - WORSHIP TEAMS

Duties are listed at the church - this includes helping throughout the service, coffee, cleaning up.

Team 1 - Tim & Lisa Rave, Pat Nytroe, Rick & Sandy Zwart, Phyllis Koepp, Chad & Alyssa Warne, Steve & Sherri Tokeim

Team 2 - Kevin & Katie Hoekman, Jarad & Brenda Deters, Shane & Beth Warne, Zach & Jayni Schroeder, Courtney Hanson & Kevin Jackson

Team 3 - Craig & Bonnie Dybedahl, Justin & Lindsey Koepp, Jay & Tina Soderquist, Jordan Schemmel, Melissa Dellman, Linda Linge

Team 4 - Jason & Erin Mitzel, Paul & Mary Mesner, Andy & Laura Berg, Keith & Shiloh Warne, Steve Schmidt, Shawn & Danielle Geigle

Team 5 - Terry & Kris Smart, Ken & Debbie Mader, Steve & Kim Bazata, David Olson, Matt & Sarah Dybedahl

Coffee is not served at Easter or Christmas, but the TEAM still must help guide the worship.

July 5th, Team 5 – Communion

July 19th Team 2, Communion

July 12th Team 1, Communion

July 26th Team 3, Communion



MEN'S COFFEE- Join us Saturdays at 8:30am at Willow Creek for food, coffee, and fellowship.



QUILTING LADIES - Join us on Mondays at 9am as we enjoy quilting and fellowship at Willow Creek.

“BENTON NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS”



*Summer Hours – starting May 31st, please join us for coffee and treats before worship,
Coffee – 9:15am, Worship 10am*

BENTON WORSHIP TEAMS FOR JULY 2026 (team leaders are listed)

July 5th First Team – Doug & Sandy, Communion

July 12th Second Team – Roger & Linda, Communion, No potluck dinner

July 19th Third Team – Cheryl & Connie, Communion

July 26th Fourth Team, Butch & Lori, Communion

BENTON WORSHIP TEAMS – updated 5/2026

Below is a list of the members of each Worship Team. It may look like we always have enough help but due to everyone being so busy, often not enough people show up to help. As you can see each Sunday there is quite a bit of responsibility. Please try to help us out with your assignment. If you are not assigned a Sunday, please call the church office so we can add you. You will never be alone on your Sunday; there is always someone to help.

First Sunday – Leaders – Doug and Sandy Larson: Wade & Angie Mulder, Garrison Mulder, Bryant & Lori Filler, Nate & Kim Strosheim, Shannon Lofswold, Dave Phelps, Dave & Dixie Rogness, Chantel Olson, Dan & Laura Larson (Dawson & Dominick), Joe & Jayna Backus (Boston, & Brystal), Jordan Person, Tammy Person (Justin & Jessalynn), Edna Haase, Rocky & Jackie Foster (Marin, Hadlee, Payson & Conlin)

Second Sunday - Leaders Roger & Linda Person: Jolene Izadaness, Keith & Lisa Johnson (Tyler & Trey), Patty Mork, Gary & Rhonda Jongewaard (Gabrielle, Nash), Dave & Faye Gilderhus, Dennis & Cheryl Aker, Todd & Maria Kendle & Brittany (Braylynn & Nora), Lynda Fonder, Kari Vosburg, Bob & Sandi Schuette, Eric & Amanda Schuette (Ethan & Audrey), Lee & Julie Person (Connor), Gwyn & Joyce Reiners

Third Sunday- Leaders Connie Foster & Cheryl Schoer: Jim & Jackie Johnson, Ashton Benson (Riley), Kenny & Linda Benson, Judy Bernards, Susie Schmidt (Nolan, Blake & Logan), Scott & Bonnie Mews, Tom & Barb Lanning, Pat & Noel Ahl, Darryll & Jan Lason, Ryan McNamara & Lacie Foster (Bridger, Sutton & Leighton), Kay Peterson, Evan & Lenae Schnaidt (Elliot, Elizabeth), Jim Leines

Fourth Sunday –Leaders Butch & Lori Oseby: Larry Person, Dale & Pat Benson, Derry & Jan Benson, Tyler & Melissa Klein (Blakeley, Cooper, & Shiloh), Ron & Judi Person, Ronae Foster (Dalton & Tori), Jamen & Jackie Benson (Trevor & Brady), John & Jenny Mohr (Landon, Lilli, Jaxton & Jace), Trevor & Annie Freudenthal (Jace, Rhett & Liam), Christopher & Sara Rokeh (Kipton, London), Mike & Holly Ralston (Sam and Will)

Fifth Sunday – Leaders Russ & Becky Schmidt, Matt & Amy Schmidt (Emmitt), Scott & Natalie Lind, Cam & Sharon Lind, Jeremy & Taylor Hubers (Ava and Liam), Jordan & Megan Dunham (Marshall and Zoey)

Volunteers are needed when we have special services (Lent, Maundy Thursday, Christmas Eve...)

BENTON WORSHIP SERVICE DUTIES EACH SUNDAY

ALL DUTIES FOR THE TEAMS ARE POSTED ON THE FRIDGE DOOR IN THE KITCHEN AND THE BULLETIN BOARD BY THE ENTRANCE TO THE SANCTUARY.

Team Members - Should be the last to leave the church to make sure all lights, computers, screens – everything is off.

Please call your team leader if you are unable to help on your assigned weekend.

Team Leaders-

1. Doug & Sandy Larson 605-360-5912
2. Roger & Linda Person 605-351-0959
3. Cheryl Schoer 605-366-6562, Connie Foster 605-359-7859
4. Butch & Lori Oseby 605-359-5537
5. Russ & Becky Schmidt 605-360-1697



JULY BIRTHDAYS

2026



1 Mercedes Schmidt	18 Steve Bazata
2 Raymond Sondergaard	18 Faye Gilderhus
3 Paul Krogstad	20 Rick Kittleson
4 David Olson	20 Kim Willuweit
4 Jaden Opland	20 Brad Zwart
4 Paul Dybedahl	21 Lisa Rave
5 Anna Hoekman	23 Cameron Nelson
6 Esther Hoekman	23 Brian McGreevy
8 Russ Midden	24 Ava Huber
11 Dwane Erickson	24 Jackie Johnson
11 Denise Anderson	24 Tim Rave
14 Dominick Larson	25 Holly Ralston
14 Ryan Opland	28 Bob Schuette
15 Aurora Hill	28 Logan Schmidt
15 Kipton Rokeh	29 Bridger McNamara
15 Smith Backus	29 Sutton McNamara
16 Brystal Backus	29 Sheri Jo Ruedebusch
16 David Amundson	31 Jace Freudenthal
	31 Beverly Hubers



Pledge of Allegiance

X K T O I T G I C U N I T E D K D
 P M V S I N U B D S H U M X X V T
 M N R A I H F F J B U X L R L J G
 G A Z L U G M M U P O G L I J G H
 J L D H S U M R S R E V Y P R Q L
 O L U W Z Y Z X T E W Y B S T E V
 U E W Y Q B S H I P S G P X D G S
 W G S T A T E S C U S D N M O B D
 D I J L P O E E E B T Y K K M W G
 B A C I F V N Y Y L A R L M N I Q
 M N O B R G A F R I N T P W M F K
 S C O E G O T C V C D J I C Z K R
 O E M R L D I A U V S P L E D G E
 M J M T C M O E D S Q N E D C Q X
 U B C Y J J N E S F L A G Z X U Q
 S I A M E R I C A A V K N T D X E
 M X U J N I N D I V I S I B L E U

INDIVISIBLE	ALLEGIANCE	REPUBLIC	AMERICA
JUSTICE	LIBERTY	NATION	PLEDGE
STANDS	STATES	UNITED	FLAG
GOD			

JULY 2026				BENTON AND WILLOW CREEK CHURCHES		
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
 IN GOD WE TRUST						
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
COMMUNION Willow Creek Worship, 8:30am, Coffee/treats to follow, Team 5 Benton Worship 10:00am, Doug & Sandy, Coffee/Treats at 9:15am Benton Committee Meetings following worship	9am Quilting at Willow	Bulletin Announcements due by noon in Church office. SERVE AT THE BANQUET WEST			Wedding Rehearsal at Benton	8:30am Men's Coffee at Willow Wedding at Benton
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
COMMUNION Willow Creek Worship, 8:30am, Coffee/treats to follow, Team 1 Benton Worship 10:00am, Roger & Linda, Coffee/Treats at 9:15am Campfire, 6pm @ Gary & Rhonda Jongewaard	9am Quilting at Willow	CHURCH COUNCIL, 6:30PM Bulletin Announcements due by noon in Church office.	Newsletter info due to church office by noon			8:30am Men's Coffee at Willow
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
COMMUNION Willow Creek Worship, 8:30am, Coffee/treats to follow, Team 2 Benton Worship 10:00am, Cheryl & Connie, Coffee/Treats at 9:15am	9am Quilting at Willow	Bulletin Announcements due by noon in Church office.				8:30am Men's Coffee at Willow
26	27	28	29	30	31	
COMMUNION Willow Creek Worship, 8:30am, Coffee/treats to follow, Team 3 Benton Worship 10:00am, Butch & Lori, Coffee/Treats at 9:15am CAMPFIRE, 6PM @ TBD	9am Quilting at Willow	Bulletin Announcements due by noon in Church office.				

