Benton & Willow Creek Lutheran Churches
46784 257th Street**, PO Box 706**
Crooks, SD 57020
B & W Office- (605)-**543-5384**
bentonwillowoffice@gmail.com
Address Service Requested

December Newsletter 2026



“Merry Christmas”

Benton & Willow Creek Lutheran Churches
Newsletter—December 2026



Note from Vicar Kendra Kappler

Where do you expect to find God? Honestly, many of us probably have a few places that come to mind right away. Maybe in a beautiful sanctuary. Maybe in the familiar words of a favorite hymn. Maybe we think of those particularly meaningful moments we spend in prayer. Maybe we think we will find God during joyful seasons of life. I think we often feel like God is present in the places that feel peaceful and familiar, places where we talk about God often. And yes, God is certainly in those places. But the Christmas story reminds us that God has a way of showing up in places we might never even think to look.

The first Christmas didn't happen in a palace or a grand temple, and Jesus wasn't born into comfort or power. Instead, God came into the world as a baby, born to an ordinary family, in a borrowed place, and laid in a manger. The first people to hear the news were not kings or religious leaders; rather, they were shepherds keeping watch over their flocks in the middle of an ordinary night. Nothing about the setting looked particularly extraordinary. And yet, that was where God chose to be.

I was reminded of this recently when I thought back to a Sunday morning during my time as a youth director. That Sunday, we had a youth-led worship service that we had been planning and thinking about and practicing for months. But, just a few days earlier, my grandpa had passed away quite suddenly. I was grieving and felt pretty overwhelmed, but I was trying to hold everything together so that the morning could go as we had planned. And at one point before the service, one of the youth group students came up to ask me a question. I was busy and distracted, and I was talking to some other students about the logistics of the service. In general, I was probably more irritable than I wanted to be anyway. So, I snapped at this student a little, even though he had not done anything wrong. I remember feeling bad about it, but I was also trying to get through everything that needed to happen that morning.

But, what happened next is something I still think about. Later on that morning, that same student came and sat next to me. He did not bring up the earlier interaction or make a big deal out of it. He simply sat with me and talked. He also did not try to fix anything or offer some profound words of wisdom. He was just there. And of course, I have no idea whether he knew what I was going through or that my grandpa had passed away, or whether he had any idea how much that small interaction would mean to me. But, I definitely needed it more than I realized. In the middle of a difficult week, when I was carrying grief that did not simply disappear because it was Sunday morning, a student showed me a little kindness and grace even when I felt like I did not deserve it.

I think sometimes we expect God's presence to look like something extraordinary. We expect to recognize it in the big moments, the answered prayers, the beautiful worship services, or the times when everything seems to fall into place. But sometimes God's goodness reaches us through something as simple as a person choosing to sit beside us. A small act of kindness. A conversation we didn't know we needed. Someone showing up when we are not quite ourselves. And that brings us back to Christmas, because God did not wait for the world to be ready, for circumstances to be perfect, or for everything to fall into place. God came into the middle of the messiness of human life. God showed up in a stable, among ordinary people, in a world that was far from perfect. And God continues to do that today. As we move through December, with all its celebrations, preparations, traditions, and perhaps a little chaos, I wonder what it might look like to pay attention to the unexpected places where God is showing up. Not just in the beautiful moments of the Christmas season, but in the ordinary ones, too. Not just in the places we have always looked, but in the places we might have overlooked.

The good news of Christmas is that God has come near. And God continues to come near, sometimes through the people we least expect, in moments we might otherwise forget, and in places we never thought to look. May we have eyes to notice, hearts to receive, and the willingness to discover God's unexpected address in the middle of our everyday lives.

Merry Christmas!
Vicar Kendra Kappler 😊
605-951-8841
kappler2002@gmail.com

"PARISH NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS"



Willow Creek Worship, 9am, followed by Sunday School, Treats and Coffee

Benton Sunday School, 9:30am, Treats/Coffee served during Sunday School Worship 10:45am

Communion is offered every Sunday at both churches.

You can follow us on Facebook.

"Dates to Remember"

Dec. 2nd, Wednesday, 7:30pm, Youth Group, Benton
Dec. 8th, Tuesday, Church Council, Benton, 6:30pm
Dec. 11th, Friday – Child Care evening at Benton, 5pm-8:30pm
Dec. 13th, **Sunday School Christmas Programs** – both churches during worship
Dec. 16th, **Wednesday**, 7:30pm Youth Group at Benton
Dec. 20th, Sunday – No Sunday School
Dec. 24th, Thursday, Christmas Eve Worship at Benton, 5:00pm
Dec. 25th, Friday – Christmas Day Worship at Willow Creek, 10:00am
Dec. 27th, Sunday - No Sunday School



Mark your calendars!!! Sunday December 13th, 2026 during worship, both churches.

Youth Group is for 6-12th graders.
Please come and join us for fellowship and fun!
Watch the bulletin for times and places.
Wed. Dec. 2nd and Wed. Dec. 16th at Benton





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,
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

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)

"WILLOW CREEK NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS"

Willow Creek Church Council Members – 2026

President – Katie Hoekman
Vice President- David Olson
Secretary-Mary Mesner
Treasurer-Kevin Hoekman
Trustee-Jarod Deters, Sandy Zwart
Deacons-Kevin Jackson, Steve Bazata

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.

December 2026 Willow Creek Worship Teams

Dec. 6th, Team 1 – Communion- rail
Dec. 13th, Team 2 – Communion. Sunday School Christmas Program
Dec. 20th, Team 3, Communion - rail, No Sunday School
Dec. 25th, Christmas Day, Communion around the rail
Dec. 27th, Team 4, Communion – continuous, No Sunday School



Coffee/Treats are served after worship each Sunday.
All are welcome to join us for a great fellowship opportunity.



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.

Willow Creek Lefse Making Party!
Thank you everyone for another great turn out! Fun for all ages.








Baltic Food Bank Needs List: 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, paper towels, 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 first Monday of every month from 10:30-11:30, the second Wednesday of every month from 6:00-7:00 p.m., and the fourth Sunday of every month from 10:30-11:30 a.m

Food or other 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!

BENTON NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

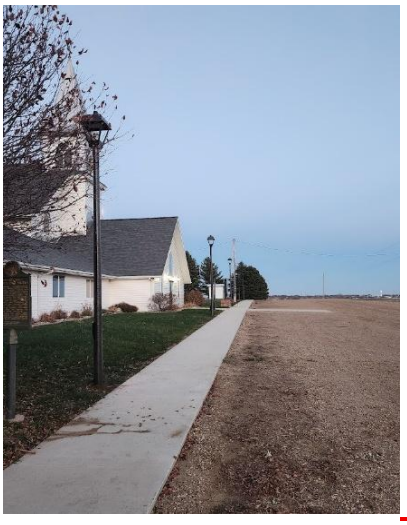
2026 Benton Council Members

President-Wade Mulder
Vice President-Gay Jongewaard
Council Secretary-Julie Person
Treasurer-Dave Vinzant
Mission-Natalie Lind
Worship-Russ Schmidt
Evangelism-Roger Person
Education-Jenny Mohr, Amanda Schuette
Property-Gary Jongewaard, Roger Person, Nate Stroschein



Benton - FREE Child Care for the evening of Friday, Dec. 11th, 5pm-8:30pm
Bring your kiddos to the church so you can go out and get your Christmas shopping done!
A meal, treats, fun and games will be provided for your child.
Please sign up ahead of time if you will be using this service so we can have an idea of how many kids we will have.

Benton Lutheran Church has new outdoor lighting! Five beautiful streetlights were installed this past week. Thank you so much to our Property Committee (Roger, Nate, Amanda, Wade and Gary) and Xcel Energy for bringing this all together.







BENTON WORSHIP TEAMS FOR DECEMBER 2026

(team leaders are listed)

Dec. 6th, First Team – Doug & Sandy, Communion (altar)
Dec. 13th, Second Team – Roger & Linda, Communion, POTLUCK DINNER, SS Program
Dec. 20th, Third Team – Cheryl & Connie, Communion
Nov. 27th, 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.
4. Butch & Lori Oseby 605-359-5537
5. Russ & Becky Schmidt 605-360-1697



Benton-Coffee/Treats are offered during Sunday School (9:30am). Please join us for fellowship.



Please join us for a Potluck Dinner at Benton following worship the second Sunday of every month unless notified of a change.

Happy Birthday Everyone!!!!!!



December Birthdays 2026

1	Tyde Houck
2	Jill Hegge
2	Kelly Opland
2	Irene Middlen
2	Tyler Johnson
3	Max Mitzel
4	Landon Schenkel
6	*Kendra Kappler*
6	Adam Amundson
6	Pat Benson
6	Garrison Mulder
7	Thea Rave
8	Gabrielle Jongwaard
9	Jessalyn Person
9	Bryant Filler
15	Tony Kretzschmar
15	Angie Mulder
16	Amos Snaza
17	Erica Zwart
17	Adrian Krogstad
18	Craig Dybedahl
20	Heidi Adams
20	Noel Ahl
20	Mason Weber
20	Mitchell Rave
21	Delores Tokheim
21	Christopher Rokeh
22	Herb Hoffman
23	Malorie Ellison
24	Elliot Schnaidt
24	Andy Mann
25	***Jesus***
25	Parker Meyerink
25	Erin Kinder
26	Mara Adams
28	Nancy Offerman
29	Cassidy Jo Cleland
30	Caleb Kittleson
30	Robert Snoozy





NATVITY WORD SEARCH

N	G	H	M	T	I	N	A	N	G	E	L	S	L
A	V	A	E	B	T	V	Y	L	S	B	E	T	Y
M	I	E	H	H	T	H	Y	S	N	M	R	M	Y
E	D	I	E	B	I	H	B	V	U	E	S	T	D
S	R	S	L	Y	A	H	M	M	S	S	I	H	R
I	M	I	H	H	R	A	A	S	S	V	E	A	E
W	V	T	T	G	H	A	O	S	I	S	R	J	H
A	I	I	E	E	A	T	M	T	R	I	E	V	P
N	R	A	B	M	H	E	A	M	O	R	H	I	E
I	S	B	T	L	T	N	A	H	I	S	E	E	H
E	S	P	I	H	S	R	O	W	V	I	S	S	S
D	W	M	H	O	H	A	A	N	A	H	R	T	E
R	E	A	P	M	E	S	V	N	S	A	P	A	E
T	W	W	S	W	S	M	S	I	N	I	B	R	M

JESUS
NATIVITY
WISEMAN
MARY
SHEPHERD
WORSHIP
ANGEL
SAVIOR
STAR
BETHLEHEM



DECEMBER 2026 BENTON AND WILLOW CREEK CHURCHES

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
		*Bulletin Announcements due by noon in Church office.*	***Confirmation, 6:30pm at Benton, 7th & 8th graders*** ***Youth Group, 7:30pm at Benton***			8:30am Men's Coffee at Willow
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
COMMUNION-2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT **Willow Creek Worship, 9:00am, Sunday School-Coffee/treats to follow, Team 1** **Benton Sunday School 9:30am Coffee/Treats during SS, Worship 10:45am Group Leaders-Doug & Sandy** ***Benton Committees meet following worship.***	9am Quilting at Willow	***Church Council 6:30pm at Benton*** *Bulletin Announcements due by noon in Church office.*	***Confirmation, 6:30pm at Benton, 7th & 8th graders***		***Benton - Child Care evening, 5pm-8:30pm*** 	8:30am Men's Coffee at Willow
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
COMMUNION-3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT ***SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS-during worshiip*** **Willow Creek Worship, 9:00am, Sunday School-Coffee/treats to follow, Team 2** **Benton Sunday School 9:30am Coffee/Treats during SS, Worship 10:45am Group Leaders- Roger & Linda - Potluck Dinner**	9am Quilting at Willow	*Bulletin Announcements due by noon in Church office.* *Newsletter info due by noon.*	***Confirmation, 6:30pm at Benton, 7th & 8th graders*** ***Youth Group, 7:30pm at Benton***			8:30am Men's Coffee at Willow
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
COMMUNION-4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT **Willow Creek Worship, 9:00am,** **NO Sunday School** **Coffee/treats to follow, Team 3** **Benton - NO School** **10am Coffee/Treats Worship 10:45am** **Group Leaders-Cheryl & Connie**	9am Quiilting at Willow	*Bulletin Announcements due by noon in Church office.*	***NO confirmation for 7th & 8th grade, No Youth Group***	***Christmas Eve Worship, Benton, 5pm*** 	***Christmas Day Worship, Willow Creek, 10am*** 	8:30am Men's Coffee at Willow
27	28	29	30	31		
COMMUNION **Willow Creek Worship, 9:00am,** **NO Sunday School,** **Coffee/treats to follow worship, Team 4** **Benton NO Sunday School Coffee/Treats 10am, Worship 10:45am Group Leaders-Butch & Lori**	9am Quilting at Willow	*Bulletin Announcements due by noon in Church office.*	***NO confirmation for 7th & 8th grade, No Youth Group***	