



Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Buffalo Center, IA 50424

# Oh, Bethlehem!

Faith, hope, and love make us available  
for our neighbors near and far

## GREETERS & USHERS

### DECEMBER

- \*7 Aubri Wubben Family and Amelia Price Family
- \*14 Elsa Adams Family and Tracy & Jodi Adams
- 21 Deegan Schroeder Family and Grant Jacobs Family
- \*24 Julian Ernster Family & Brayden Berggren Family
- 28 Julie Weaver, Colin Weaver, and Tanner & Anne Weaver

### JANUARY

- \*4 Derek Thilges Family & Joe Angstman Family
- \*11 Aurora and Lily Pentico Family
- 18 Logan Willmert Family & Dawn and Denny Meinders
- 25 Bailey Newton Family & Mark and Kim Ostermann

## Prayers for our Members & Friends

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Jaya Fever                                  | Carolyn Bartz         |
| Brian Bashans                               | Karen Buss            |
| Christina Coughlin                          | Deloris Steffensen    |
| Emily Schulz                                | Claire Rustemier-Hinz |
| Roger Burnside                              | Joy Albert            |
| Emmagine Silber                             | Harlan Melz           |
| Virginia Cooper                             | Leroy Weaver          |
| Penny Mitchell                              | Curtis Vaudt          |
| Charlie Schaefer                            | Shirley Hagenson      |
| Dawn Jensvold                               | Jason Christensen     |
| Joan Sunde                                  |                       |
| Pastor Mark Neumann (BLC's deployed pastor) |                       |

## CALENDAR of EVENTS

Please see the monthly calendar on **page 7** for all church activities this month.



Birthdays for the month of December:

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1– Chris Berggren   | 9 - Iva Ernst        |
| 1 - Darla Thompson  | 13 - Davie Mathahs   |
| 2 - Jackson Holland | 15 - Henry Schaefer  |
| 3 - Denny Murra     | 19 - Logan Willmert  |
| 4 - Marge Becker    | 23 - Brandon Thilges |
| 6 - Owyn Ostermann  | 25 - Jesus           |
| 6 - Aurora Pentico  | 25 - Mary Ann Olsen  |
| 8 - Tracy Adams     | 29 - Caleb Willmert  |

Christmas will be here before we know it—and with that, comes The Giving Tree! We will be taking donations for hats, mittens, and scarves again this year. We have a tote set up in the narthex. The deadline for donations will be Dec 15.



We're looking forward to Abram Neumann coming to preach on December 7. He is from Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and he is also Pastor Mark Neumann's son.

## Fellowship Serving Rotation:

- Dec 7 - Church Council**
- Dec 14 - Work Group #1**
- Dec 21 - Work Group #2**
- Dec 28 - Work Group #3**

## PROJECT FUND UPDATE

Our project fund is now mostly depleted due to necessary projects that needed to be completed. Next time God is calling you to give a little extra offering, we'd appreciate it going to this fund. Thank you!



Growing up, I never imagined that I would be a pastor someday. The first time it was suggested to me was soon after I graduated high school. Pastor Karen planted the seed, but I laughed off the notion of such a career choice. She also suggested I work at Bible camp which I hesitantly did and ended up loving it. I spent four summers at Green Lake Bible Camp, and it was there when someone else suggested seminary to me. Again, I laughed it off, but I did discern a call to full-time camping ministry. I then spent a summer at a Bible camp in northern Wisconsin on leadership staff before returning to college to complete my accounting degree. Following graduation, I was hired as the full-time, year-round program director at Camp Onomia near Mille Lacs Lake, but after two and a half years I was totally burned out of ministry. I resigned to return home to work for my dad. Pastoral ministry could not have been further from my thoughts.

While working for my dad, trying to learn the craft of car sales, I discovered that I was an awful salesman. My dad is gifted but that trait did not pass on to me. And so, after two and a half years working for my dad, God was ready for the big announcement. It was Tuesday, February 22, 2000, at 8:30 AM. I remember that day very well. I was sitting at my dad's desk filling out paperwork from the three car sales that he (not me) made the day before. I was preparing to head downtown to transfer titles when I looked up from my work and noticed my dad standing in the doorway. He rarely came in that early. He stood there wearing his blue Hullstrom Motors coat and said, "Your mother and I have been talking. We believe it is time for you to go to seminary." I was absolutely floored, and I did not laugh this time. I am not sure what other words were said next, but I do remember being washed in goose bumps. I went downtown to take care of my paperwork and then headed to the church. I spoke with my two pastors and they both affirmed the call, and thus I started the process and, as they say, the rest is history.

Why do I share this? For some, the thought of serving on the council, teaching Sunday school or some other leadership position in the church is laughable, and thus the furthest thing from your mind. But do not dismiss this out of hand. You never know what God has in mind. For me, it took others to identify gifts in me before I would even consider such a call. And once the walls were broken down, I clearly heard God's voice (which, in my case, sounded very much like my dad), leading me into ministry. If someone taps you on the shoulder and suggests ministry leadership in the church, stop and think (and pray). And then listen to what God may be up to in your life. You just never know. I never thought I had the ability to be a pastor, and I still feel that way. But praise be to God that He has never left me alone. And He will never leave you alone. So listen, because you just never know.

## Council Committee Reports

### PROPERTY

It's been a great year at Bethlehem! We have made several property improvements. On the northeast corner of the parsonage, a new window was installed and the landscape grading was done. These updates should solve the water

penetration problems by directing water away from this area.

The new ovens in the church look amazing! Thank you for all the donations to make this transformation possible. The blinds in the pastor's office have been replaced, as they were

broken and could not be opened. The new blinds look great and function as they should. Just this month, the outside church bell underwent some upgrades, so it will now ring every Sunday morning.

- Larry

### TREASURER

We are 88.8% of the way through the year and we are at 88.7% of our budget. That is a huge improvement from my last report. That is all thanks to the members of BLC. We are working on the budget for 2026. We have a lot of great things planned and I am excited to share with the congregation. We still have some work to do on the 2025 budget but we are right on track! I am excited for the future of BLC. I hope everyone has a great holiday season!

- Thomas

**General Fund Giving  
(NOT including fundraisers)  
As of 11.24.25**

**Actual YTD:  
\$117,130**

**Budgeted YTD:  
\$145,491**

**YTD Deficit:  
- \$28,361**

**General Checking  
Balance (11.24.25)  
\$7,336**

**Project Savings  
Balance (11.24.25)  
\$12,722**

**General Savings  
Balance (11.24.25) \$0**

**Amount Borrowed on  
Bank Loan: \$2,000**



We continue to move along, having a great year together. We will finish the Lord's Prayer soon and then have a Christmas party on December 17 which leads into our two-week Christmas break. Soon after we resume in January, we will begin preparing for our youth-led worship service which will be February 8, so mark your calendars. On that Sunday, we are also planning our annual baked potato bar to raise money for our spring retreat. Lots going on, so please keep this group in your prayers.

**This year, our  
Christmas Eve  
services will be  
held at 4:30 pm  
and 9:00 pm.**

**Please join us  
and invite your  
family and  
friends!**



We have a few options for your giving here at Bethlehem. If you are a Thrivent member, you can direct your dollars to the church. We also have a very easy and simple way with our online giving. This QR code will access our website and take you to the Vanco giving page. Thank you!



### Our 2025 Church Council

Derek Thilges - President  
Kelsey Bosma - Vice President/Stewardship  
Thomas Blodgett - Treasurer/Technology  
Kim Ostermann - Secretary/Education  
Darryl Friest - Evangelism  
Katie Mathahs - Fellowship  
Darla Thompson - Worship  
Larry Lawson - Property

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Derek at 641-430-3903.

## Church Council Minutes

November 10, 2025

\*\*\*Meeting Room\*\*\*

Faith, hope, and love make us available for our neighbors near and far.

Members present: Derek Thilges, Larry Lawson, Darryl Friest, Kim Ostermann, Darla Thompson, Thomas Blodgett, Katie Mathahs, Pastor Eric  
Absent: Kelsey Bosma, Susan Jensen

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm

Pastor Eric -- council devotions based on Luke 23:39-43 Pastor challenged us with the following questions:

- We have talked about the "Gospel in a nutshell." How do you see that playing out in these verses?
- What do these verses reveal about you and/or your faith?

### President's Report

- We discussed how to fill three spots on church council coming up in January. An informational brochure has been designed to share what to expect from church council and encourage members to consider serving. We are also considering having a youth representative.
- We reviewed the Strategic Plan.

### Secretary's Report

- October minutes were approved by email. Motion by Darla; seconded by Larry.
- Updates to the "Make a Difference Campaign." Pastor indicated we've had a significant donation for the wish list and have also had some property updates. We will continue to revise and share in the monthly newsletter, on the Sunday PowerPoint, and on the website.

### Treasurer's Report –

- Savings Account: \$0.01
- Checking Account: \$8,036.65
- Youth: \$2,138.67
- Line of Credit: \$7,000.00
- Special Projects Account: \$2,721.76
- Motion to approve made by Darla; seconded by Darryl; approved

### Committee Reports

#### Technology

- Anyone interested in helping with service technology can contact Thomas Blodgett.
- We are exploring possibilities of a timer for ringing the church bell before worship. Looking at parts total-ing about \$200.
- The electronic piano is connected to the sound system, but Thomas will do some tracing and investigating to figure out why some of the mic ports at the altar aren't working. This affects the lectern microphone. Will also work on adjusting sound coming from the speakers while electric piano is playing.

#### Property

- Soffit and fascia by the cross needs to be addressed. On hold for now.
- New lights for the cross. One of the sockets is broken on the south side.
- Kitchen ovens were installed. THANK YOU, Larry! The ladies cashed in a CD, the Schwartz funeral made a donation, and another member donated the remaining balance.
- We are looking at replacing some windows in the parsonage.



## **Worship**

- A few members of the worship committee met with the Decorating Committee on Sunday, November 9th after the church service in order to coordinate plans for the Hanging of the Greens Service Nov. 30th.
- Worship Committee will meet November 12th @ 8:30, note an earlier date, in order to have more discussion time before the Hanging of the Greens service on November 30th.
- When communion is at the rail, we will begin to use the bridge again in order to accommodate more people at one time.
- Abram Neumann will preach on December 7th. The offering plate will be passed twice with advance notice given to the congregation as to an offering for his mission plus regular offering for Bethlehem Church.
- Communion helpers needed:
  - December 7: (at the rail) - Abram
  - December 14: (continuous) – Larry, Darryl

## **Stewardship**

- Nothing currently to report.

## **Education**

- Sunday School students sing during the church service on November 16.
- We are still interested in trying to coordinate a way for our Sunday School to donate to students on the Pine Ridge Reservation. This would hopefully help our students understand what they can do as children to support mission work. They would be able to see their Sunday School offering at work. This is currently on hold as we explore the best mission opportunities.  
Current Donation Drives - Friends of Pine Ridge Reservation
- Sunday School is down to provide fellowship coffee on November 30.
- Preparations are in the works for the Sunday School Christmas Program. The program is planned for December 21st during the worship service at 9:30am.
- Baptism on January 11th will be performed during Sunday School. This is on the liturgical calendar as celebrating “The Baptism of our Lord.” We’re hoping to use it as a teaching moment for students. All church members are invited to stay after the main service as well.

## **Fellowship**

- Fellowship time in the social hall will continue. The fellowship rotation helps to cover every Sunday.
  - November 30 – Sunday School
  - December 7 – Church CouncilHaving the students go through the fellowship line seems to be going well.
- We plan to work on refreshing the work groups. We’ll need to contact potential new people to see if they are willing to participate. It was suggested to contact others on the list as well to make sure they know they are in a work group and it’s okay to contact them help with serving.
- The Turkey Dinner is on November 16th. The sign-up is going well. Expenses should be covered.
- We hope to share “Gratitude Cards” during the next couple of months.

## **Evangelism**

- Men’s Bible Study meets on the third Saturday each month from 7:00-8:00 am. All are welcome.

## **Pastor’s Report**

### **♦ Worship**

Confirmation Sunday: The service went well with three students confirmed (Tate, Norah, and Gabby). There will be eight confirmands next year so we might need to modify the worship service.

All Saints: A big thank you to the Worship Team along with Lily Winter and Mayah Hullstrom for helping make this service meaningful.

Thanksgiving Eve: The Community Worship Service will be held at the First Reformed Church on Wednesday, November 26 at 7:00pm. Pastor Eric will be involved in leading worship.

Hanging of the Greens: Planning is underway for this service. Please mark your calendars and plan to be in attendance as we kick off Advent on November 30. This is a special and powerful service.

Abram Neumann will be visiting and preaching on Sunday, December 7. Pastor Eric will preside at worship and Communion.

Christmas: Planning will be a priority for pastor in the coming weeks.

#### ♦ Ministerial Association

There are plans moving forward for a temporary food pantry in November to provide a Thanksgiving meal for up to twenty-five families. This effort is being spear-headed by First Reformed Church with financial support coming from FTSB and the Ministerial.

We are also hoping to hammer out some details for establishing a permanent food pantry. This is a work in progress.

#### ♦ Education

Confirmation: They continue to work through the Lord's Prayer, completing the 4th Petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Students will also participate in the Buffalo Center Tour of Lights by providing a living nativity scene. Pastor is thankful for the small group leaders who give of their time and for the parents who support the class by providing treats.

1G: Numbers for the elementary have remained steady. The adult leaders continue to be a blessing.

Sunday School: My 5th & 6th grade boys class has been fun. We are studying stories of Jesus following the 1G schedule.

Bible Study: The Women's Bible Study finished the 3rd chapter of Romans. A core group of men continue to meet the third Saturday of the month with good discussion, study, and prayer. We are focusing on Philippians.

#### ♦ LCMC

The Iowa District Gathering is Saturday, November 15 at Waukee, Iowa. Pastor Eric is amid his first full 3-year term. He has served as president of the district council but doesn't plan to continue in that capacity going forward. He plans to continue serving on the council – just not the executive board.

#### ♦ Giving Tree

A planning meeting was held in October. Packing and distribution will be in December. Bethlehem will be collecting hats and mittens again. A box will be put out for that.

#### Office Report:

Deadline for the December newsletter is November 24. The rotation for reports in December includes Treasurer and Property.

#### New Business:

Our regular rotation got mixed up when we gave to Texas Flood Relief. To get back to our usual rotation, we will plan to give to LCMC in November and local in December. We'll give to LCMC again in January, and follow this future rotation: LCMC, global, local. Bookkeeping is easier if LCMC is at the beginning of each quarter of the year. November mission is LCMC Motion made by Larry, seconded by Katie; motion carried.

Next meeting: Monday, November 10 at 6:00 pm. We will plan to review the Strategic Plan at this meeting.

Next meeting: Wednesday, December 10, 5:30 pm

Motion to adjourn made by Darla, seconded by Katie; motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

# Bethlehem Lutheran - DECEMBER 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Bible Study with Pastor, 2:00 pm  Scout Den Meeting, 6:00 pm	3 Confirmation: Snacks 6:45 pm Class Begins 7:15	4	5	6
7 Worship with Com- munion, 9:30 am  Sunday School at 10:45 am  Worship at 1:30 pm, Timely Mission	8 MOMS2MOMS 3:30-5:00 pm	9 Quilting, 1:00 pm	10 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am  Church Council Meeting, 5:30 pm  Confirmation: Snacks 6:45 pm Class Begins 7:15	11	12	13
14 Worship with Com- munion, 9:30 am  Sunday School, 10:45 am  BC Tour of Lights, 5:00 - 6:30 pm	15	16 Worship Committee Meeting, 8:30 am  Scout Den & Pack Meeting, 6 - 8 pm	17 Confirmation: Snacks 6:45 pm Class Begins 7:15	18	19	20 Men's Bible Study with Pastor @ 7:00 am, Fellowship Hall
21 Sunday School Pro- gram at 9:30 am	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Worship with Communion, 4:30 pm & 9:00 pm	25 CHRISTMAS! Happy Birthday, Jesus!	26	27
28 Worship at 9:30 am  No Sunday School	29	30	31			

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
201 4th St. NE  
P.O. Box 385  
Buffalo Center, IA 50424

Phone  
641-562-2552 — office  
641-562-2553 — Pastor Eric



**We're on the web!**

<https://bethlehemlutheranbc.com>



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH  
And  
BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN SUNDAY  
SCHOOL

*Please feel free to reach out to us.*

*If you have any questions or need assistance, don't hesitate to ask. Our church community is here to support you.*

*Our Mission Statement:*

*Faith, hope, and love make us available to our neighbors near and far.*

