

JANUARY 2026



Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Buffalo Center, IA 50424

## Oh, Bethlehem! Faith, hope, and love make us available for our neighbors near and far

### GREETERS & USHERS

#### 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

#### FEBRUARY

\*1 Josh Mathahs Family & Henry Schaefer Family  
\*8 Confirmation Students  
15 Aubri Wubben Family & Doug and Kim Ostermann  
22 Julian Ernster Family & Brad Kemnitz Family

### CALENDAR of EVENTS

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



### Birthdays for the month of January:

1– Denny Meinders	11– Julian Ernster
2 - Christina Blodgett	18– Amy Schaefer
2 - Ray Bosma	21 - Mitch Engelbarts
4 - Kim Ostermann	29 - Alex Olson
8 - Helen Rossmiller	31 - Rita Ellsworth
10 - Jay Angstman	

Please consider joining church council in January. This is a vital ministry that helps guide our congregation, support our pastor, and ensure we're faithfully living out our mission. We're looking for 3 members who feel called to lead. All you need is a heart for Jesus and being willing to serve. Please speak with Council President Derek Thilges, Pastor Eric, or any of our current council members.

### 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
Emmagene Silber	Harlan Melz
Virginia Cooper	Leroy Weaver
Penny Mitchell	Curtis Vaudt
Charlie Schaefer	Dean Swenson
Dawn Jensvold	Jason Christensen
Marge Becker	Cheryl Baumann
Pastor Mark Neumann (BLC's deployed pastor)	



Thank you to the Sunday School kids and teachers for their hard work on the Christmas program. They did a wonderful job! Also, a big thank you to those who organized and helped with the pancake breakfast after worship. It was delicious!

Annual Congregational Meeting, January 18, 2026, after worship. Please mark it on your calendar and plan to attend!

### Fellowship Serving Rotation:

Jan 4 - Work Group #3
Jan 11 - Sunday School
Jan 18 - Church Council
Jan 25 - Work Group #1



The following is a poem that I have shared in the Buffalo Center Tribune. And I share it with you again because, at least for me, it serves as a reminder that Christ is more than things but rather, the promises of God through Jesus Christ. So here you go, again. Enjoy and to God be the glory ☺

My true Love doesn't give me things like partridges or turtle doves, French hens or pipers piping, dancing ladies or egg-laying geese. My true Love does not give me silly things like these.

But my true Love gave to me...

- (1) Instead of a partridge in a pear tree, I have a Savior who died for me.
- (2) Instead of two turtle doves, I have His love that came down from above.
- (3) Instead of three French hens, I have the faith to boldly pray my amens.
- (4) Instead of four calling birds, I have His inspired, infallible, inerrant holy Word.
- (5) Instead of five golden rings, I have a Spirit-renewed heart that sings.
- (6) Instead of six geese a-laying, I have confidence that with Him I will be staying.
- (7) Instead of seven swans a-swimming, I have a joy that is more than brimming.
- (8) Instead of eight maids a-milking, I have His promises fulfilled that He's not bilking (yes, that's a word - and used correctly).
- (9) Instead of nine ladies dancing, I have a place in His holy court, at whom I won't be just glancing.
- (10) Instead of ten lords a-leaping, I have security in His hands in which I have safekeeping.
- (11) Instead of eleven pipers piping, I have the sure and certain hope that my tears He will be wiping.
- (12) Instead of twelve drummers drumming, I have excitement that my Lord Jesus will soon be coming.

My true Love gave me everything I need, for all that I need is Him through Christ Jesus my Lord. Amen.

## Church Council Minutes

December 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, Kelsey Bosma, Thomas Blodgett, Katie Mathahs, Susan Jensen, Pastor Eric

Absent: Darla Thompson

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm

Pastor Eric -- council devotions based on Isaiah 9:2-7. Pastor challenged us with the following questions:

- How or when have you suffered from “soul amnesia,” forgetting who God is and what He has done for you?
- Contemplate the names of Jesus from verse 6. Spend time in prayer meditating on those names.
- What other names of Jesus/God come to mind – ones that are particularly meaningful for you?

### President's Report

- Discussion about how to fill three spots on church council coming up in January. Any possible leads? We are also considering having a youth representative. We would really like to stay with nine council members for a good three-year rotation and to help with items needing to be addressed.
- Date for January Annual Meeting – January 18, 2026
- We discussed increasing benevolence. This is what we currently have in the Strategic Plan. We will discuss this at the annual meeting in January. We would like to be more forthcoming about which mission opportunities we have selected each month. This would allow others to decide if they would like to contribute as well. We discussed the possibility of passing the plate for a second offering a few times per year. This could potentially be quarterly and would probably focus on mission items that are near to the hearts of those at Bethlehem.

Continue to increase our benevolence	Currently giving monthly, update budget and share with congregation during the budget process to have support for this increase. Ensure that congregation has some additional say by creating a benevolence team/committee.	\$3,200	Consider Increasing annually for the next few years. Discuss mid-year 2026.
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### Secretary's Report

- November minutes were approved. Motion by Larry via email; seconded by Darla via text.
- Updates to the “Make a Difference Campaign.” A recent donation was made to cover some items on the list. We will engage a sub-committee of council members and congregational members to decide on the best distribution of this money.

### Treasurer's Report –

- Savings Account: \$0.01
- Checking Account: \$6,672.48
- Youth: \$2,138.67
- Line of Credit: \$2,000.00
- Special Projects Account: \$13,114.29
- Motion to approve made by Darryl; seconded by Larry; approved
- We discussed the proposed budget for 2026.
- Motion to present the proposed budget at the annual meeting made by Kelsey, seconded by Larry; motion carried.

## Committee Reports

### Technology

- Anyone interested in helping with service technology can contact Thomas Blodgett.
- Updates regarding the electronic piano and the lectern microphone ports.
- We are working on adjusting the sound system associated with the electronic piano.

### 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. Also on hold.
- Larry has the bell working so it chimes every Sunday at 9:30am.
- Dryer vent at the parsonage has a hole in the elbow – will be replaced.
- Heat ducts at the parsonage seem to be backwards and not efficiently heating the house. Larry is checking with a heating company to see what can be done.
- We are looking at replacing some windows in the parsonage. This is on hold until we check on duct work.

### Worship

- The Worship Committee reviewed All Saints Sunday with no changes needed.
- Communication with the Decorating Committee regarding “Hanging of the Greens” was very beneficial. There was one from each committee helping in the Fellowship Hall distributing families the items they were designated with. Susan recruited other people/families as needed due to any last-minute changes. Due to the new piano, location of the tree was changed.
- Christmas Eve services will be at 4:30 and 9:00. Music is being lined up for both services.
- Abram Neumann preached on December 7th with a special offering taken to support his ministry. <https://www.iglutheca.org>
- The next worship committee meeting will be December 16th @ 8:30 a.m.
- Communion helpers needed:  
December 14: (continuous) – Larry, Darryl (Derek a backup)  
December 24 @4:30pm – Kim, Derek, Kelsey  
December 24 @ 9:00pm – 1 helper needed

### Stewardship

- A Valentine cake fundraiser is being planned by Kelsey.

### Education

- Sunday School has been practicing for the Christmas program on December 21. We are planning to serve a pancake breakfast following the program. Kim will coordinate – looking for donations, and will probably reach out to work groups.
- Sunday School is down to provide fellowship coffee on January 11.
- 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. Sunday School is scheduled for January 11 Church Council is scheduled for January 18
- 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.

### 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

Hanging of the Greens went very well. A big thank you to Darla Thompson and the rest of the worship and decorating crew for their hard work. Despite winter weather, we had a good turnout.

Abram Neumann was our guest preacher on Sunday, December 7. He did a great job proclaiming the Gospel of peace; that peace is not just the absence of conflict but rather wholeness. The birth of Jesus makes us whole and thus at true peace.

Christmas plans are in full swing. Pastor Eric will be preaching two different sermons for the two Christmas Eve services (4:30 and 9:00pm.)

Ivy Ostermann's baptism will be Sunday, January 11, 2026, during Sunday School. The worshiping community will be invited to stay and be part of that.

### ♦ Ministerial Association

The ministerial association hosted the annual Thanksgiving Eve worship service at First Reformed Church on Wednesday, November 26.

### ♦ Education

Confirmation will finish the Lord's Prayer following Christmas break. They plan to take part in the Tour of Lights on December 14 with a Living Nativity and handing out ornaments. There will be a Christmas party for Confirmation students on December 17 before taking two weeks off for Christmas.

1G is plugging along with a consistent group of kids. They will be singing at Timely Mission on Dec. 17.

Sunday School Christmas Program practice is in full swing. The program is on December 21 during the worship service.

Bible studies continue. Joan Christianson hosted the December women's Bible study at her home as we studied Romans 4. The men's fellowship meets on December 20.

### ♦ LCMC

The LCMC District Gathering was a fantastic event attended by 50+ people. Mark VanderTuig reflected on the faithful foundation of LCMC and where we've come from. Danny Householder pointed us toward where God is leading the church in the years ahead. He also spent time on young adult ministry.

The District council met after the gathering to elect officers. Pastor Eric stepped down as president and nominated Pastor Ben Unseth, Faith Lutheran in Spencer. Pastor Eric still has two more years on his first official term.

### ♦ Giving Tree

The Giving Tree packing and distribution will be in December. Bethlehem will be collecting hats and mittens again. A box will be put out for that. Gifts will be distributed to families after the packing.

**NORTH IOWA FOOD FOR FAMILIES** has moved into the new location at the United Methodist Church. The first distribution will be on Monday, December 15 from 3:00-5:00pm. Pastor Eric is serving on the board as treasurer and Amy Walk is also serving on the board as the volunteer coordinator.

Pastor Eric will be taking vacation after Christmas through January 4. Darla Thompson will cover worship on December 28.

### Office Report:

Deadline for the January newsletter is December 22. No specific council reports will be included in the January newsletter reports for the annual meeting packet are due January 12.

### New Business:

We plan to be more forthcoming in where our monthly mission dollars go and will announce this to the congregation. The intent is to allow others to give to the same mission if their heart leads them to do so. Our regular rotation will be LCMC, global, local.

Motion made by Darryl, seconded by Larry to give to North Iowa Food for Families for December. Motion carried.

The January mission will be LCMC (this keeps it at the beginning of each quarter of the year.)

No January council meeting. The new council will meet after the annual meeting.

Motion to adjourn made by Kelsey, seconded by Derek; motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

### Council Committee Reports

No committee reports this month because each committee will have theirs in the annual report on January 18.



Confirmation has been off for a couple weeks, but now we are ready to resume classes on Wednesday, January 7. The focus now will be preparing for our youth-led worship service, which will be Sunday, February 8, so mark your calendars. Also, that is the day of our baked potato bar to raise money for our year-end confirmation retreat. Happy 2026 to you all.

### Our 2025 Church Council

Derek Thilges - President  
Kelsey Bosma - Vice President/Stewardship  
Thomas Blodgett - Treasurer/Technology  
Kim Ostermann - Secretary/Education  
Darryl Fries - 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.

**General Fund Giving  
(NOT including  
fundraisers)**  
**As of 12.29.25**

**Actual YTD:**  
**\$129,402**

**Budgeted YTD:**  
**\$157,743**

**YTD Deficit:**  
**- \$28,341**

**General Checking  
Balance (12.29.25)**  
**\$7,942**

**Project Savings  
Balance (12.29.25)**  
**\$13,114**

**General Savings  
Balance (12.29.25)** **\$0**

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

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!



# Bethlehem Lutheran - JANUARY 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					2	3
4 Worship with Communion, 9:30 am NO Sunday School	5 6 Bible Study with Pastor, 2:00 pm Scout Den Meeting, 6:00 pm	7 Confirmation: Snacks 6:45 pm Class Begins 7:15	8	9	10	
11 Worship with Communion, 9:30 am Sunday School, 10:45 am	12 MOMS2MOMS 3:30-5:00 pm	13 Quilting at 1:00 pm	14 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am Confirmation: Snacks 6:45 pm Class Begins 7:15	15	16	17 Men's Bible Study with Pastor @ 7:00 am, Fellowship Hall
18 Worship at 9:30 am Annual Meeting after Worship NO Sunday School	19 20 Worship Committee Meeting, 8:30 am Scout Den & Pack Meeting, 6 - 8 pm	21 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am Confirmation: Snacks 6:45 pm Class Begins 7:15	22	23	24	
25 Worship at 9:30 am Sunday School, 10:45 am	26 MOMS2MOMS 3:30-5:00 pm	27 Quilting at 1:00 pm	28 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am Confirmation: Snacks 6:45 pm Class Begins 7:15	29	30	31

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
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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.*

