

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

January 2024



Oh Bethlehem!

Making ourselves available...

FOOD BANK

January: Cereal, hot or cold, Canned fruit, Hot Chocolate Mix, Cookie or Cake Mix, Soups, mixes or canned, Jello and Pudding Mixes.

“Our numbers are increasing, so anything you donate will be helpful. Thank You.

All donations can be dropped off in the Narthex of the church. Thank You.

Prayers for our members and friends:

*Brian Bashans
Harlan Melz
Randy Melz
Carolyn Bartz
Clarice Stonebreaker
Deloris Steffensen
Claire Hinz
Logan Sabin
William Jensvold, Sr.
Dawn Jensvold
Lorie Beirle*

Project Fund Update:

Our goal is to keep the project fund ongoing so that we will be able to address and take care of the unexpected and ongoing care of our church building and parsonage. This way we are not dipping into the general fund budget. When giving to this please designate.

We are so Blessed and Thankful.

Greeters and Ushers

January:

- *7 Henry Schaefer(c) Family
Denny & Dawn Meinders
- *14 Aurora Pentico (c) Family and Lori Bierle
21 Ray & Vonnie Pilgrim
Brooklyn Price(c) Family
- 28 Khloe Wubben(c) Family
Ted & Darla Thompson

February:

- *4 Jackson Holland (c) Family
DeWayne & Bernice Mass
- *11 Kevin Hagen(c)Family
Logan Willmert Family
- 18 Carter Wubben(c) Family & Shirley Hagenson
- 25 Brad Kemnitz Family and Kim Thompson

BETHLEHEM QUILTERS

Come and join in the ministry and fellowship of tying quilts. We have a great group that would love to have more hands. They meet mostly every other Tues. @1pm.

See you there!

Upcoming Events and Announcements:

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

January

- 7-Worship/Communion @9:30am/ SS
- 8-ONE G resumes
Council meets @6pm
- 9-Bible Study with Pastor Eric @2pm
- 10-Confirmation @6:45pm
- 14-Worship/Communion @9:30am/SS
- 16-Worship Committee @8:30am
Quilting @1pm
- 17-Confirmation @6:45pm
- 21-Worship/SS and Annual Meeting after services.



Elementary: Monday @3:15pm

High School: Tuesday @7:30am

Middle and High School: Wed @2:15pm

We are in need of volunteers.

Please consider making yourself available to our younger neighbors.

Talk with Pastor Eric about it.

This is a Great Ministry!!!

******Bethlehem Lutheran Church 2024 Annual Meeting******

+Please join us after the service on January 21st.

+This is an important time for ALL MEMBERS to attend.

+All Committee reports are due January 12th.

Please turn them into Jen.

WANTED: Someone to help sew quilt tops for our quilting group. The material is at the church. Please contact Dawn Meinders or Shiley Hagenson. Thank You.

<<Pastor Eric>>

As we enter this new year, 2024, I want to share with you these closing paragraphs from the three sermons I preached on December 24, 2023. I share these as a reminder that even though Christmas is done according to our calendar, the Good News of Christmas is never done. Blessings to you all on this brand new year.

I pray that you know this amazing God of ours, who weaves a beautiful story, one that no human imagination could conjure up. I pray that you know Jesus Christ, and thus, in His perfect timing, be taken up someday to be with Him forever. This is the beginning of the story of Christmas, according to God's Word.

[Closing paragraph of the Advent 4 sermon]

I guarantee you, that in the matter of years, or even months or weeks, that you will forget what you received from under your Christmas tree. But the gift of Jesus, born on Christmas, will never leave your heart, because God is crazy in love with you. I cannot say that enough. If you remember nothing else from tonight, remember that. As a sinner, God loves you.

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

And so, men and women, children of all ages, listen up, the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

[Closing paragraph of the Christmas Eve, 4 PM, sermon]

*This well-known verse from Psalm 46, **Be still and know that I am God**, is not an invitation to calm down and be at peace. It is a command. Settle down. Take it easy. Take a breath. Remember, I AM GOD, not you. When one is not at peace it is because they have forgotten who God is. They have forgotten that God has overcome the world through Jesus. They have forgotten that God already reigns on high and is our sovereign King. And so the psalmist reminds us that God WILL BE exalted among the nations. God WILL BE exalted in the earth. Remember that, always.*

When wars and chaos erupt in your life, you can be at peace. Jesus Christ has been born. Jesus Christ has been crucified for the forgiveness of your sins. Jesus Christ has risen from the grave and now sits at the right hand of God.

Be still.

Be at peace.

*And... **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"***
(Luke 2:14)

This is the Good News of Christmas!

[Closing paragraph of the Christmas Eve, 10 PM, sermon]

To God be all glory, praise, honor, worship and thanksgiving throughout this new year, Amen.

<<confirmationcorner>> Confirmation resumes on Wed. January 10th @6:45pm

<<education>>

We thank all our children, teachers, and parents for putting together a great Christmas program this season. We look forward to seeing you in 2024. Classes will resume on January 7th. We will see you then!

Kelsey Bosma & Lisa Berggren

<<stewardship>>

As we enter a new year here at Bethlehem, we look back and see how wonderful our church is. How so many of you have come forward to make things happen. This is what makes us so successful as a church body. We can always use extra hands as we see many needs around volunteering. We ask that you think about our ongoing activities and see where you could be of service. As a church family, it takes all of us to participate to see that it runs smoothly. If you have any questions, ideas, or suggestions for this committee, please reach out. Thank you.

Teresa Cooper and Kelsey Bosma

<<treasurer>>

As of 12/31/2023-final for the year

YTD Offering: **\$132,962.93** (this is weekly Sunday offering and online giving)

Budgeted 2023: **\$150,000.00**

If you drive by Bethlehem on a Sunday AM, you can see the place is alive. We have a great service and dozens of children in and out of the building for Sunday school. As you reflect on this as well as read through the other great things, we are doing to provide faith, hope, and love to our neighbors near and far. Please pray for BLC to continue our success. **Please give when/where you can to our budget.**

Thomas Blodgett

<<technology>>

The tech booth has been cleaned up! Most of the sound equipment has been moved to the rack that is mounted above. Plans are moving forward to upgrade several key pieces of our sound equipment. One of the items being new speakers. This will provide a better experience for the congregation at church and remote. Thank you again to our donor. If you would like to help with upgrades, please reach out to Thomas Blodgett or another member of the council.

We have a familiar member returning to help with tech on Sundays. If you would like to help with Sound and PowerPoint on Sundays, please get in touch with me.

Thomas Blodgett

<<fellowship and evangelism>>

Christmas is over, but upon reflection and leading into the new year, I can't help but think about this verse from Isaiah 40:31. "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

This verse speaks of the renewing power of hope in the Lord. It reminds us that as we place our trust and hope in God, He will give us the strength to face the challenges of the coming year. Christmas has renewed our spirit. The imagery of soaring on wings like eagles conveys a sense of freedom, strength, and endurance. May this verse uplift and encourage you as you move forward into the New Year with hope and faith!

Our hope for the new year is continued fellowship with our Bethlehem church family, and a strengthened evangelism to those outside our doors. Many blessings for the new year!

Fellowship & Evangelism Committee

Daryl Friest & Kim Ostermann

<<communion>>

Communion is now served on the first and second Sunday of the month. If you know of anyone that is homebound and would like a communion visit, please call the church office. 641-562-2552

<<cradle roll>>

Cradle Roll was blessed with a few new names to add to our roster. Cradle Roll now has seven children enrolled in monthly newsletters. We are looking for volunteers to help with this ministry. If you are interested, please contact Cassie Willmert. If you would like to help with Cradle Roll or sponsor a child please contact Lisa Berggren. A \$100 donation sponsors a child in the program for 3 years.

Church Council Minutes

December 11, 2023

Held in the Meeting Room

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

Members present: Amy Walk, Derek Thilges, Lisa Berggren, Daryl Friest, Kim Ostermann, Pastor Eric
Absent: Kelsey Bosma, Thomas Blodgett, Susan Jensen, Teresa Cooper, Jen McGrady

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm

1. Opened with devotion and prayer.
2. Visitor to address the council – Renae Behrends, Director at Ingham Lake Bible Camp. Renae is also on the LCMC board of trustees and a pastor at Trinity Lutheran in Spencer, IA. Renae spoke to us about the vision for a new basketball court at Ingham and their site plan. She also spoke about how the District LCMC is working to be a support to their churches but not being “top heavy” in administration.
3. Secretary’s Report
 - a. November minutes approved via email. Motion to approve by Lisa; seconded by Derek
4. Treasurer’s Report –
 - a. Savings Account: \$100.46
 - b. Checking Account: \$1046.11
 - c. Youth: \$1439.74
 - d. Line of Credit: 0
 - e. Special Projects Account: \$3929.85
 - f. Motion to approve made by Derek, seconded by Lisa; approved.
 - g. Budget planning for the new year. The executive committee will plan to discuss and bring it to the whole group during the next council meeting in January.
5. Committee Reports
 - a. Technology
 - i. Anyone interested in helping with service technology can contact Thomas Blodgett.
 - ii. Sound system update. Thomas has pricing for items that would improve the system. We are waiting for confirmation from the anonymous donor before ordering.
 - iii. A television was purchased to use as a screen for the balcony so it’s easier for anyone presiding in the front to see the PowerPoint.
 - b. Property
 - i. Insurance renewal is coming up. The list of items to address is mostly taken care of.
 - ii. Electrical panels need to be replaced. Derek is waiting for a quote from the electrician.
 - iii. There’s been no word on revising the sexual abuse policy, so we are using what we currently have in place.
 - iv. Derek has tried adjusting the temperature in the sanctuary, but it always seems to get set back to where it was. We’ve removed the mini split heater remotes off the wall and pastor has them in his office. We’ve had issues with others adjusting the temperature to a higher setting than it needs to be.
 - c. Worship
 - i. Hanging of the Greens service went very well. We had a great turnout and so many families were willing to help. There were many compliments on the service.
 - ii. We’re enjoying this advent season. We’ve been asking families to read and light the advent candle - as we have done in the past. This is also going well.
 - iii. Communion Servers for Christmas Eve and January
 - 1 December 24 (Christmas Eve)
4:00pm service – Jen, Susan, Amy
10:00pm service – Jen
 - 2 January 7 – Derek – at the rail

3 January 14 – Amy, Daryl

iv. The next worship committee meeting is December 12 at 8:30am.

d. Stewardship

i. The Stewardship Committee would still like to have the Time & Talents Survey returned.

e. Education

i. Cassie Willmert would like to step down from the lead position with Cradle Roll. We are working to have a couple others step forward to keep the program going.

ii. The Sunday School Christmas Program will be on December 17, 2023, at 4:00pm. Christmas goodies served following the program along with a bake sale. We could still use more donations for the bake sale.

iii. December 17th is the last Sunday School class until the New Year. Classes resume January 7th.

vi. Fellowship/Evangelism

i. Fellowship time in the social hall will continue. We're always looking for volunteers to provide refreshments for adults. Please consider signing up to serve.

ii. The "Thanks Meal" was well attended, and a delicious meal was served. Special thanks to Amy and Jen for planning and to all those who helped serve.

6. Pastor's Report

a. Pastor Eric reported on both the Thanksgiving Eve service and the Hanging of the Greens service – both very beautiful.

b. The giving tree distribution is the middle of December. They are looking to serve about 85 children from 30+ families.

c. 1 God Network wrapped up the first half of the year on December 11. They will resume on January 8, 2024. The need for volunteers continues. The Ministerial Association received a \$500 grant from the Ley Foundation for use with 1G.

d. Confirmation is finishing the Apostles' Creed, and then starting on Old Testament stories in January. The students staffed the live nativity for the Tour of Lights on December 10.

e. Women's Bible Study focused on the Christmas Story and will finish the book of James in January.

f. Pastor is working on three separate services for Christmas Eve. Each one will be unique.

g. Pastor Eric will be registering for an online chaplain training course as a member of the Buffalo Center Volunteer Fire Department. Plans are to begin in January.

h. Pastor is on vacation from December 25-January 3. Darla Thompson will cover the service on December 31.

i. The Lenten Season is just around the corner with Ash Wednesday on February 14.

7. Office Report:

a. Jen and Amy have finished working on a printed copies of a Funeral Guide and a Wedding Guide so people understand expectations and what we have available.

b. We're making a list of kitchen expectations for anyone using the kitchen.

c. Jen's office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday.

d. Pastor's hours are Monday through Thursday beginning about 8:30am-4:00pm.

8. New Business

i. Annual Congregational Meeting date – January 21, 2024

Council members remember to get year-end reports turned in by December 14.

ii. We are looking for 3 council members to replace Amy, Susan, and Kim

We have one person who has agreed to serve so far, and one strongly considering it.

iii. November Mission – local – (Last month was global)

(the regular rotation is LCMC, global, local)

The Giving Tree

Motion by Derek; seconded by Lisa; approved

9. Next meeting: Monday, January 8 @ 6:00pm
Annual Meeting: Sunday January 21
10. January Newsletter deadline: Monday, December 26
Reports deadline for annual meeting packet – Sunday, January 14
11. Motion to Adjourn made by Derek, seconded by Daryl; approved.
12. Meeting adjourned at 7:00pm

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.
Respectfully submitted,
Kim L. Ostermann
Secretary



