



Oh, Bethlehem!

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

GREETERS & USHERS

MARCH

- *1 Beckett Jensen Family & Patty & Travis Hassebroek
- *8 Lily Winter Family & Mariah Roth Family
- 15 Mike Baumann Family & Cheryl Baumann
- 22 Julian Ernster Family
- 29 Wyatt Bosma Family & Jen McGrady

APRIL

- *2 Mya Ostermann Family and Levi Berggren Family (Maundy Thursday)
- *5 Confirmation Students (7:00 am)
- *5 The Jensvold Family & Caleb Hagedorn Family (9:30 am)
- *12 Khloe & Colson Wubben Family & Wyatt Olson Family
- 19 Rita Ellsworth, Lorie Bierle, and Amy Walk
- 26 Riley Price Family and Mayah Hullstrom Family

Prayers for our Members & Friends

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Jaya Fever | Carolyn Bartz |
| Brian Bashans | Karen Buss |
| Christina Coughlin | Deloris Steffensen |
| Emily Schulz | Claire Rustemier-Hinz |
| Roger Burnside | Emmagene Silber |
| Curtis Vaudt | Joy Albert |
| Dawn Jensvold | Harlan Melz |
| Virginia Cooper | Leroy Weaver |
| Penny Mitchell | Frances Ostermann |
| Charlie Schaefer | Delores Griffin |
| Marge Becker | Jason Christensen |
| Jen McGrady | Juanita Vaudt |
| Dean Swenson | Randy Holstad |
| Nicky Shackleton | Monica Tyler |
| Pastor Mark Neumann (BLC's deployed pastor) | |

CALENDAR of EVENTS

Please see the monthly calendar on [page 9](#) for all church activities this month.



Birthdays for the month of March:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 5 - Linda Berhow | 18 - Jackie Larson |
| 8 - Dean Swenson | 18 - Lydia Lappe |
| 10 - Joel Boekelman | 18 - Hunter Tilges |
| 12 - Casen Tilges | 21 - Hudson Hawkins |
| 14 - Max Schaefer | 23 - Brooklyn Price |
| 17 - Claire Rustemier-Hinz | 29 - Matt Pentico |

**Please let me know if I'm forgetting anyone or if any dates are incorrect. I'm doing this monthly so I want to make sure I have everyone's birthday on file!

Upcoming Dates to Remember:

- March 8 & 22: Fifth graders have First Communion class with Pastor Eric during Sunday School.
- March 29: Fifth graders make wafers for First Communion during Sunday School.
- April 2: Maundy Thursday Worship at 7:00 pm with First Communion for Fifth graders.
- April 3: Good Friday Worship at First Congregational Church at 7:00 pm.
- April 5: Easter Sunrise Worship at 7:00 am
Easter Breakfast Fundraiser 8:00 - 9:00 am
Easter Celebration Worship at 9:30 am



I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. (John 17:14-19)

Jesus' prayer for his disciples and the Church is a reminder of what the Church is not and what we are to be. The Church is not some secret society, private club, or social island. The Church is not to hide, fear, or run from the world. Rather, the Church is called out of the world and then sent into the world, because through Jesus, the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the Church for the glory of God. God is not glorified if the Church turns in upon itself. God is glorified when the Church exists as a city set upon a hill, shining bright for all to see.

But many would rather the Church keep somewhat quiet and not upset the apple cart too much. They may say that you can cause some waves but let's not overturn the boat. Like the Pharisees who secretly followed Jesus for fear of losing their social status, so some try to teeter the Church on the proverbial fence. "Keep the peace" they say, but as Jesus warns the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3), we are not to be lukewarm. Pick a side and deal with the consequences, but know that if the consequences are from the world, then we have a Savior who has our backs.

What kind of church are we? I would like to think we are on fire for the Lord and not some gathering of people lukewarm for Jesus. As for me, I have no interest in fence teetering. Maybe that is why I have been fascinated with the Thessalonian Church. If you have not been to a Lenten service, I urge you to make time on Wednesday at 7 PM. And if that is not possible, read and study Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. The Church then has much to teach and encourage Church today. They were not a church OF the world. Rather, they were called and sent INTO the world. That is the model. Let them be an encouragement to us today.



Confirmation Class News

Thank you, thank you, and thank you for your support of our baked potato bar fundraiser on February 15. Because of your generosity, we raised enough money to pay for our confirmation retreat (May 1-3) with a little leftover for next year's deposit. The retreat is the culmination and a highlight of the year, so thank you, again, for your support.

One other note, our class schedule will change slightly for Lent. Wednesdays, Feb 25, March 4, 11, and 25, class will begin with Lenten worship at 7PM and then resume in the Fellowship Hall after worship, ending at 8:15PM. March 18 is Destination D.C. week. There is still worship but there will be no class afterwards. Keep praying for our students and leaders, that all may have a closer relationship with Jesus.



Top pictures: I caught some of the boys taking their opportunity to eat during the baked potato fundraiser. From left: Riley Price, Owyn Ostermann, Jackson Holland, Beckett Jensen, and Henry Schaefer. (2nd Picture): Brayden Berggren, Julian Ernster, Leighton Lawson, Sawyer Matson, and Tucker Heidecker.



Picture to the left: Deegan Schroeder, Ali Valvick, Khloe Wubben, and Amelia Price talking about the meaning of baptism during the children's message.

Thank you to the kids and parents who helped to make this a success - food and supplies were brought in, and lots of work was done to make sure the fundraiser was successful.



Our March Mission: SMILE

If you would like to support this mission with additional money, contact Susan Jensen.

Founded: January 2016

SMILE (Single Moms In Loving Environment) Biblically based, non-profit ministry, whose goal is to serve families through transitional housing for single moms, community groups for all moms, and parenting conferences for all parents.



When: 2nd and 4th Mondays, 3:30-5:00 PM

Where: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Buffalo Center, IA

Food and childcare are provided.

Our 2026 Church Council

Derek Thilges - President
Darla Thompson - Vice President
Thomas Blodgett - Treasurer/Technology
Kim Ostermann - Secretary
Amy Walk - Stewardship
Megan Holland - Education
Jen McGrady - 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.

Don't forget - our local food bank, North Iowa Food for Families, has reopened! Current needs are canned or dried fruit, cake mixes, large size peanut butter, jelly, syrup, and boxed chicken or hamburger meals. Please drop them off in the narthex. Thanks!

General Fund Giving
(NOT including fundraisers)
As of 02.24.26

Actual YTD:
\$16,061

Budgeted YTD:
\$24,464

YTD Deficit:
-\$8,403

General Checking
Balance (02.24.26):
\$3,002

Project Savings
Balance (02.24.26)
\$13,117

General Savings
Balance (02.24.26) \$0

Amount Borrowed on
Bank Loan: \$3,000

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!



Council Committee Reports

EVANGELISM

Greetings everyone! I am so glad to be sitting on council again. I also am so happy to be taking on the role as Evangelism chairperson. This means you are all on my committee! Oh, so are you thinking "what is she talking about?"

So here goes... ***Evangelism is the act of spreading the "good news" of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, with the aim of gathering around and inviting others into the fold, into our lives as Christians and sharing our faith with them.***

It focuses on personal, everyday conversations, building community in and outside our church walls. Utilizing hospitality to do all the things, such as hosting an Ecumenical service, Vacation Bible School, Men's and Women's Bible studies, joint Confirmation classes with other churches, Quilting, supporting 1G and Moms2Moms.

See? You are already taking part in this committee! I am looking forward to hearing from you and hoping that we can keep a strong presence of Evangelism in our church family and community. I welcome any

body who wants to join me or share ideas or suggestions for making Evangelism at Bethlehem stronger than ever. Please reach out to me and let's have a cup of coffee!

Peace Be with You,

Jen McGrady

***2 Corinthians 5:20
Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.***

STEWARDSHIP

Hello All! I am very excited to be on the council again. Thank you all for your confidence that I will do a good job. To be honest, things have been crazy since I took over so I haven't done as much as I'd hoped to. Kelsey once again had her Valentine fundraiser and did an amazing job. Thank you Kelsey. Kelsey

has also agreed to help me with the fundraiser that we already have in place. I will be trying to come up with other ways for our church to thrive with everyone's talents. If any of you have any ideas, I would love to hear them.

I am still doing cradle roll and

everyone seems to enjoy the new format I've been using. I would also love any feedback concerning cradle roll. Thank you.

God's Blessing to All,

Amy Walk

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Hebrews 12:1-2

Fellowship Serving Rotation:

- Mar 1 - Church Council
- Mar 8 - Work Group #1
- Mar 15 - Work Group #2
- Mar 22 - Work Group #3
- Mar 29 - Sunday School

Church Council Minutes

February 9, 2026

Meeting Room

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

Members present: Derek Thilges, Katie Mathahs, Darla Thompson, Amy Walk, Larry Lawson, Megan Holland, Jen McGrady, Kim Ostermann, Pastor Eric, Susan Jensen

Absent: Thomas Blodgett

The meeting was called to order at 6:07pm.

Pastor Eric -- council devotions based on 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 (focus on verses 7-10)

Pastor challenged us with the following questions:

How do you feel weak in your life right now (or how have you felt weak)?

How does weakness make you feel?

Are you willing to admit weakness or do you just try to power through?

President's Report

- We reviewed the Strategic Plan, so all are aware of the plan for each area in our church. We will be sharing this information with the congregation.
- Reminder to communicate with congregation where our monthly mission dollars will go. We discussed the possibility of passing the plate for a second offering a few times per year. This would allow members of Bethlehem to give a little extra to missions that are near and dear to their hearts. This is what we currently have in our Strategic Plan for benevolence.

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

- The December 2025 minutes were approved. Motion by Derek via email; seconded by Larry.
- We reviewed minutes from the January organizational meeting. Motion to approve by Darla, seconded by Amy; approved.
- Updates to the "Make a Difference Campaign." A generous donation was made to cover some items on the list. We have a sub-committee of council members and congregational members in place to decide on the best distribution of this money. Cassie Willmert, Travis Hassebroek, Kelsey Bosma, Larry Lawson, and Megan Ostermann will try to arrange a time for everyone to meet and decide how to proceed.

Treasurer's Report

- Savings Account: \$00.01
- Checking Account: \$5,521.69
- Youth: \$4,789.67
- Line of Credit: \$3,000
- Special Projects Account: \$13,116.54

Motion to approve the treasurer's report was made by Jen, seconded by Megan; approved

Committee Reports

Technology

- Anyone interested in helping with service technology can contact Thomas Blodgett.
- Some adjustments were made in the gain and compression on 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.
- Dryer vent at the parsonage has a hole in the elbow – will be replaced.
- We are looking at replacing some windows in the parsonage.
- Kitchen outlets are all on their own breaker, but 15 Amp breakers were put in instead of 20 Amp. Replacing them will cost \$100 for 13 breakers and will help reduce the breakers tripping. Also redoing ground wire.

Worship

- Ash Wednesday is February 18 with 7:00pm worship
- February 25 is the start of the five-week Lenten series, *The Church and the World*. Worship at 7:00pm.
- The next worship committee meeting will be February 17 @ 8:30 a.m.
- Communion helpers needed:
Ash Wednesday -- February 18: (continuous) – Jen, Darla
March 1: (at the rail) - Derek
March 8: (continuous) – Kim, Larry

Stewardship

- A Valentine cake truffles fundraiser is being planned by Kelsey.
- Update about how Bethlehem can help meet the needs of North Iowa Food for Families. They are looking for volunteers on the 1st & 3rd Mondays at 10:00am to stock shelves and 2:45-5:00pm for distribution. Contact Amy Walk to sign up. A couple of people are needed for stocking in the morning, and five people are needed to assist with distribution. Updates will be coming as to future supply needs.
- Amy is interested in getting a team to participate in the third annual “Walk for Kindness & ADHA.” She would like to get a team to walk the track at the Wellness Center on February 28 from 5:30-7:00pm and post what they have done as random acts of kindness on the wall at the center.
<https://www.walkforkindness.com/>

Education

- Sunday School students will sing during the church service on February 15.
- Sunday School is down to provide fellowship coffee on February 22.
- Fifth Grade First Communion classes start in March with Pastor Eric.
- Fifth Grade will make communion wafers with Lorie on March 29th in preparation for their First Communion on Maundy Thursday, April 2nd.
- Sixth Grade will serve fellowship on March 29th.

Fellowship

- Fellowship time in the social hall will continue. The fellowship rotation helps to cover every Sunday.
Sunday School is scheduled for February 22
Church Council is scheduled for March 1 – Derek, Amy,
- If anyone has any feedback on the work groups or has had communication with anyone who would like to be added, please let Katie know or any of the work group co-chairs.

Evangelism

- Men’s Bible Study meets on the third Saturday each month from 7:00-8:00am. All are welcome.
- We are considering starting a Women’s Group to focus on journaling with “The Bible in a Year.” Talk to Jen if interested.

Pastor's Report

◆ Education

1G has eight more class sessions left for this school year. They continue working through New Testament stories.

Confirmation has eight more class sessions left for this school year not including the year-end retreat. The students led worship on February 8 and did a great job. The baked potato bar was also a success. Thanks to Jen McGrady for spearheading the meal and also to many of the parents and adults who chipped in to make it a GREAT day!

Men's and Women's Bible studies continue. The men continue in the book of Philippians while the women's Bible study is in Romans 5.

First Communion classes with the 5th graders will take place in March during Sunday School. It looks like we'll have nine students preparing for their First Communion on Maundy Thursday. Bread making will happen on Palm Sunday, March 29.

◆ Worship

Eliza Hagedorn and Eloise Lindblom were baptized on Sunday, February 8.

Ash Wednesday worship will be Wednesday, February 18 at 7:00pm with the imposition of ashes and Holy Communion. The Lenten theme this year will focus on 1 Thessalonians and titled, "The Church and the World."

◆ Ministerial Association

Pastor Sue is doing a great job leading the ministry of North Iowa Food for Families and the board has really stepped up to help with various aspects of this ministry. We have been blessed with generous donors. Ecumenical worship will continue this year with Maundy Thursday worship at Bethlehem at 7:00pm and Good Friday service at First Congregational at 7:00pm.

◆ LCMC

There is another LeaderCare retreat scheduled in May immediately following the Confirmation Retreat.

Pastor Eric will be traveling with the Destination D.C. students the week of March 15. Darla is covering worship on Sunday, March 15. Mike Holstad will cover Lenten worship on Wednesday, March 18. Pastor will be back for worship on March 22.

Office Report:

Deadline for the March newsletter is February 19. Council reports for March will include stewardship and evangelism.

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. February mission is global: Darla made a motion to donate to Strong Missions, Larry seconded; approved. <https://www.strongmissions.org/> Jen is participating in a mission trip with this organization in March. March mission is local: Derek made a motion to donate to SMILE, Jen seconded the motion; approved.

The next council meeting is Monday, March 9th at 6:00pm.

Motion to adjourn made by Amy, seconded by Katie; approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:08pm.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Bethlehem Lutheran - MARCH 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Worship with Communion, 9:30 am Sunday School, 10:45 am TMNH Worship at 1:30 pm with Pastor	2	3 Bible Study with Pastor, 2:00 pm at Marge Becker's home Scout Den Meeting, 6:00 pm	4 Lenten Service, 7:00 pm Confirmation, 7:45 pm	5	6	7
8 Daylight Savings Begins! Worship with Communion, 9:30 am Sunday School, 10:45 am	9 MOMS2MOMS 3:30-5:00 pm Church Council Meeting, 6:00 pm	10 Quilting at 1:00 pm	11 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am Lenten Service, 7:00 pm Confirmation, 7:45 pm	12	13	14
15 Worship at 9:30 am Sunday School, 10:45 am	16	17 Scout Den & Pack Meeting, 6 - 8 pm	18 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am Lenten Service, 7:00 pm	19	20	21 Men's Bible Study with Pastor @ 7:00 am, Fellowship Hall
22 Worship at 9:30 am, Sunday School Kids sing Sunday School, 10:45 am	23 MOMS2MOMS 3:30-5:00 pm	24 Quilting at 1:00 pm	25 Worship Committee Meeting at 8:30 am Community Bible Study, 10:00 am Lenten Service, 7:00 pm Confirmation, 7:45 pm	26	27	28
29 Palm Sunday Worship at 9:30 am Sunday School at 10:45 am	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://bethlehemplutheranbc.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.

