

Hello Bethlehem!

Faith, hope, and love...

make us available for our neighbors near and far.

February 2024



This is my command, "Love one another as I have loved you".....John 15:12

Calendar for February

- 11-Worship @9:30am/SS @10:30am
- 12-NO 1G
- 13-Quilting @1pm
- 14-Ash Distribution time: 12-2pm
Ash Wed Service @7pm/No Confirmation
- 18-Worship @9:30am/SS kids Sing
Baked Potato Bar Fundraiser 11-1pm
(Confirmation Retreat fundraiser)
- 21-Lent Meal @6pm
Service @6:45/Confirmation follows.
- 25-Worship@9:30am/SS
- 27-Quilting @1pm
- 28-Lent Meal @6pm
Service @6:45/Confirmation follows.

March

- 3-Traditional communion service @9:30am
- 5-Bible Study with Pastor @2pm
- 6-Lent Meal @6pm
Service @6:45/Confirmation follows.

Greeters and Ushers: February

- *11 Kevin Hagen(c)Family & Logan Willmert Family
- 18 Carter Wubben(c) Family & Shirley Hagenson
- 25 Brad Kemnitz Family & Kim Thompson

March

- *3 Beckett Jensen(c)Family & Patti & Travis Hassebroek
- *10 Lily Winter(c) Family & Teresa Roth Family
- 17 Braden Ullman(c) Family & Doug & Kim Ostermann

Staying Connected...

Prayers-for our neighbors...Lorie, Harlan, Randy, Brian, Carolyn, Clarice, Claire, Delores, and others we know.
Fellowship Servers-visiting and coffee go hand in hand here after church on Sunday. We are always looking for volunteers to serve. Sign up in the narthex.
Project fund-As building needs arise, we continue to ask for donations to keep our project fund going. Our property budget does not cover the unexpected repairs.
Quilters-We have a great core group of people that gather to tie quilts. They welcome new faces.
Giving-We have a few options for your giving here at Bethlehem. **Thrivent** members can direct your dollars to the church. We also have a very easy and simple way with our online giving. Use this QR code to access our Vanco giving page.



Making ourselves available... **FOOD BANK**

February: Soups, Fresh or Canned Fruit, Juice, Pizza Crust Mix, Pizza Sauce and Parmesan Cheese.

"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.

Pastor Eric

I used to be a runner, but my running days are long gone thanks to arthritis in my back. Now I have many memories that I cherish, which also includes the discipline and hard work it took to competitively run all those various races (5Ks, 10Ks, one 30K, two half marathons, three full marathons, plus other races of various distances). You cannot take short cuts in your training if you want to compete. You need to discipline yourself and work hard. Sometimes that meant going for a run when I did not feel like it. Sometimes it meant going for a run in the rain or when it was cold. But let me tell you something, those times I went running, seemingly being dragged outside kicking and screaming, never did I regret it in the end. Sounds weird, huh? But it is the truth.

I was once told, *“Pray, even when you do not feel like praying. Actually, those are the moments when you need to pray all the more. But whatever you do, just pray.”* And that makes a lot of sense to me. There have been moments when I did not feel like praying. Sometimes I am in a crabby mood. Sometimes I am upset with someone. Sometimes I feel guilty over a particular sin. Sometimes I am just in a funk that I cannot explain. Whatever it is, if Satan can get you down and give you reasons not to pray, and you take the bait, then he has you right where he wants you. Therefore, you need to go to your prayer closet all the more, “kicking and screaming” if need be, and just pray. Sometimes it will feel lifeless, but God is still listening. Sometimes you may feel distant, but God is right there. Sometimes it will feel useless, but it is anything but that. Actually, you will be beating Satan down as you train you heart for battle.

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. 27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. [1 Corinthians 9:24-27]

On Wednesday, February 14, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. Wherever you are in your faith, I encourage you to train your heart. Pick a spiritual discipline (i.e. prayer journal, fasting, meditation, scripture reading, etc) and go at it, and do not listen to the excuses that Satan will whisper in your ear. Just start and keep at it and watch what the Spirit will do in and through you. Discipline your heart and you will never regret it. Discipline your heart and glorify our Lord. *Amen.*

LOADED BAKE POTATO FUNDRAISER

Brought to you
by the Confirmation Class
raising funds for Spring Retreat.

Sunday February 18th, 11-1pm.
Free Will donation.
Invite your family and friends.

Come Hungry!

Pastor's Confirmation Corner

We are continuing our study of Old Testament stories this month. We have studied Isaiah 6 and talked about the holiness of God. We then moved to Genesis 11 and studied the Tower of Babel account; discussing what it means to have a great name and how we are to use that name. Stories coming up are: Psalm 23, Elisha and the horses and chariots of fire, Esther, David and Goliath and then Noah and the flood. During Lent our schedule changes slightly. Lenten worship is considered part of class time. Students will then meet after worship until our normal end time of 8:30 PM. It has been a great year and these students have been a joy to get to know.



God did indeed bless us with all the time in the world.
He also created us each in our own unique way.
But are we reciprocating those wonderful gifts?
We know they look different for everyone.
That's the beauty of it.



Share your time and talents with us here at Bethlehem.
Click below to fill out the survey or use the QR code. Thank You.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfKY9q5IeNsMPvr8B7yxSY7-HqqbG1Hv5v7yrvrETHvcSuuwQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

From our President

Hello! For those of you that don't know me yet, my name is Derek Thilges and I am excited for the opportunity to serve as the council president for Bethlehem Lutheran Church this year. I live here in town with my wife, Shelby, and our one-year-old son, Miles. I consider myself very fortunate that I get to live and work in such a great community. I am excited for the new council members we have coming on this year and look forward to another year of growth for Bethlehem.

2024 Church Council

Derek Thilges ~ President
Lisa Berggren ~ Vice-president/Property
Thomas Blodgett ~ Treasurer/Technology
Courtney Boekelman ~ Secretary
Kelsey Bosma ~ Stewardship
Lisa Berggren ~ Education
Darryl Friest and Teresa Cooper ~ Evangelism & Fellowship
Teresa Cooper ~ Stewardship
Darla Thompson ~ Worship

Thank you all for all your doing to make our church great and mostly to glorify God through our actions.
God is Great!

2024 Budgeted weekly giving: 2,943.00

Year to date Sunday offering: 10,911.25
Year to date Vanco online: 2,656.00
Current Weekly giving: 2,713.45

Thank you for your faithful giving.

Church Council Minutes

January 8, 2024

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, Thomas Blodgett, Kelsey Bosma, Kim Ostermann, Pastor Eric Hullstrom, Jen McGrady

Absent: Susan Jensen, Teresa Cooper

The meeting was called to order at 6:03

1. Pastor Eric opened with devotion and prayer.
2. Secretary's Report
 - a. December minutes approved via email. Motion to approve by Lisa; seconded by Derek
3. Treasurer's Report –
 - a. Savings Account: \$100.07
 - b. Checking Account: \$8,621.22
 - c. Youth: \$1,439.74
 - d. Line of Credit: 0
 - e. Special Projects Account: \$4,430.19
 - f. Motion to approve made by Kelsey, seconded by Lisa; approved
 - g. Discussion regarding the 2024 budgetMotion to approve the budget proposal by Daryl; seconded by Kelsey; approved
The proposed budget will be discussed at the annual congregational meeting.

4. Committee Reports

- a. Technology
 - a. Anyone interested in helping with service technology can contact Thomas Blodgett.
 - b. The TV monitor that was installed in the balcony is greatly appreciated.
 - c. Sound system update. Thomas has pricing for items that would improve the system. We are waiting for confirmation from the anonymous donor before ordering.
- b. Property
 - i. A lighting issue was reported in the fellowship hall. This will be addressed.
 - ii. We are working through insurance renewal quotes. Depending on which way we decide to proceed may mean the difference in what we do with electrical panels.
- c. Worship
 - i. Communion Servers
 - 1 January 14 (continuous) – Derek & Daryl
 - 2 February 4 (at the rail) -
 - 3 February 11 (continuous) -
 - ii. The next worship committee meeting is Tuesday, January 16 at 8:30am. They plan to have a debriefing about the Advent and Christmas season.
 - iii. Ash Wednesday is right around the corner on February 14, 2024.
- d. Stewardship
 - i. The Stewardship Committee still wants the Time & Talents Survey returned.
- e. Education
 - i. Cassie Willmert would like to step down from the lead position with Cradle Roll. Amy Walk has expressed interest in continuing this program.
 - ii. The Sunday School Christmas Program was very nice and well attended. The bake sale brought in about \$552.50
 - iii. Sunday School resumed on January 7, 2024.
 - iv. Sunday School students sing in church on January 21. There will not be Sunday School that day because of the annual meeting. Confirmation students will be available to watch younger students so adults can attend the meeting.

- 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.

5. Pastor's Report
 - a. Pastor Eric shared a Christmas review. Attendance at the 4:00 service was about 180. The 10:00pm service had about 20 and was well received by those in attendance.
 - b. He shared a thank you from Betsy Goetz and the 2023 North Iowa Giving Tree Committee regarding the support from Bethlehem. Eighty-five children were helped in 2023. This was the 25th year for the community Giving Tree.
 - c. Pastor Eric is working on his online chaplain training. This will aid him in ministry with the Buffalo Center Fire Department as well as ministering to Bethlehem and the community.
 - d. Planning for the Lenten season has begun as Ash Wednesday is on February 14, 2024.
 - e. 1G is back in action after the holiday and school break. The year wraps up at the end of April. They are planning a year-end indoor picnic and a summer community-wide picnic. Pastor Eric is working on lesson plans for next year already as they plan to have a three-year lesson rotation for the elementary gathering.
 - f. Confirmation is about halfway through the confirmation year. They are working through a short, two-week unit on worship that will conclude at the end of the year as the students prepare to lead a worship service in April. After the worship unit, they will move on to the Old Testament.
 - g. Women's Bible Study continues with finishing up the book of James and moving on to another book of the Bible.
 - h. February will mark two years for Pastor writing devotions to share on Facebook. He is now beginning a study in the Gospel of Mark (where it all began 2 years ago). The page has evolved over the past two years into devotionals.

6. Office Report:
 - a. Jen and Amy will have printed copies of a Funeral Guide and a Wedding Guide so people understand expectations and what we have available.
 - b. There will be a list of kitchen expectations posted for anyone using the facility.
 - c. Jen's office hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday.
 - d. Pastor's hours are Monday through Thursday beginning about 8:30am-4:00pm.

7. New Business
 - i. Annual Congregational Meeting date – January 21, 2024
Year-end reports should be turned in by January 12.
 - ii. January Mission – LCMC – (Last month was local)
(the regular rotation is LCMC, global, local)
\$200 to Iowa District LCMC and \$200 to National LCMC
Motion by Kelsey; seconded by Lisa; approved.

8. Next meeting: February ____ to be determined by new council.
Annual Meeting: Sunday January 21, 2024

9. February Newsletter deadline: Tuesday, January 23
Reports deadline for annual meeting packet – Friday, January 12

10. Motion to Adjourn made by Lisa, seconded by Kelsey; approved.

11. The meeting adjourned at 7:22pm.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kim L. Ostermann

Secretary