SEPTEMBER 2025

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  Buffalo Center, IA  50424

# Oh, Bethlehem!

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

## GREETERS & USHERS

**SEPTEMBER**
*7 Derek Thilges Family and Deb & Mark Landheer
*14 Doug & Kim Ostermann and Tate Engelbarts Family
21 Lori Bierle and Ted & Darla Thompson
28 Norah Blodgett Family & Thomas & Amanda Blodgett

**OCTOBER**
*5 Jackson Holland Family & Jen McGrady
*12 Patty & Travis Hassebroek & Henry Schaefer Family
19 Mariah Roth Family and Wyatt Bosma Family
26 Riley Price Family and Owyn Ostermann Family

Birthdays for the month of September:

5 - Robin Olson
5 - Mike Weaver
6 - Karen Meyering
6 - Colter Sabin
9 - Heidi Engelbarts
9 - Mya Ostermann
11 - Lisa Berggren
11 - Mark Landheer
11 - Derek Olson
12 - DeWayne Maass
13 - Mason Price
16 - David Sachs
18 - Brad Kemnitz
19 - Kevin Johnson
25 - Aubri Wubben
29 - Shelby Thilges
30 - Norah Blodgett

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

## Prayers for our Members & Friends

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

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

We've started a "Make a Difference" Campaign. See more details on **page 6**!

Bethlehem—Thank you for the quilt and all the support you've given me all these years.

- Brendan Price

You have probably heard by now, if not, allow me to break the news to you: The Buffalo Center food shelf has closed. I understand why Louise is stepping down, and I thank God for her many years of ministry. What I can not and will not accept is Buffalo Center not having a food shelf. Many of us do not worry about food insecurity. Our refrigerators and cupboards are full. We know where our next meal is coming from. And, if you are like my family, your only frustration is trying to decide, among many choices, what to eat. But not everyone has this luxury. Not everyone has a sense of food security. In Acts chapter four, we read about the church caring for the poor, saying there was not a needy person among them (vs 34). The church has had a long history (since it's inception actually) of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, and caring for the orphan, widow and traveler. The church does this because it displays their love of the Lord and for one another. And so, I write this not because I have everything figured out, rather, I want to appeal to your intellect and heart, your faith and love of the Lord. What is next? How do we address this lack in our community. Maybe the Spirit is nudging you to take an active role in a feeding ministry. Maybe the Lord is leading you to get involved in your community in a new way. Maybe this is a call for us to be more available to our neighbors. So, what say you? Let me hear your thoughts and questions. Let us not turn a blind eye or a deaf ear. Let us not just sit here and think, "Someone else will step up". Pray and consider if it is you who is called to step up.

## Confirmation Class News

Our new confirmation year will begin soon. Orientation for 7th graders (nine new students) is Wednesday, Sept 10 at 7 PM and the full class (twenty-five students) meets on the 17th for a bonfire at the parsonage beginning at 6:45 PM. Each week will contain large and small group time and other activities. The topics we are covering this year include: The Church, Lord's Prayer, various New Testament texts, worship which includes planning a youth service again, and Confession. We will again be ending our year with our annual retreat at Okoboji Bible Camp. I am looking forward to a fun-filled and Spirit-filled year with these students. To God be the glory!

# Council Committee Reports

## PRESIDENT

Hello Bethlehem, I hope everyone had a great summer. It sure has been a busy one it seems. Now that the busyness of summer is winding down, I'm hoping to see more familiar faces on Sunday mornings, especially with Sunday school kicking off again.
Over the summer we've been able to complete some property and technology projects, all through projects savings plus some generous donors. For the first time in a long time it appears we're going to make it through the summer slump without dipping into our line of credit.
We're looking forward to all the upcoming events, like guest night and the soup supper, with more being discussed and planned.
I hope everyone has a great end of summer and start of fall. Please feel free to contact me anytime with thoughts or concerns.
God bless, Derek

## EDUCATION

We had a very nice turnout for the Blessing of the Backpacks service, and we're looking forward to a fun filled Sunday School year!

VBS was a success last month with approximately 60 kids, and the date for next year is already set:
August 3-7, 2026.

Rally Sunday is coming up quick: Sept 7. Join us for a great morning after worship!

Also, we are still looking for a Sunday School superintendent. If you want to know more about what your responsibilities would be, please talk to Kelsey or me.

- Grant

Blessing of the Backpacks on August 24

Rally SUNDAY

**Sunday**
**September 7**
**10:45 am**

**Join us, after worship, to kick-off the Sunday School year. We'll have a fun day with the theme "Fruit of the Spirit"!**

### Our 2025 Church Council

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

### Fellowship Serving Rotation:

**Sept 7 - Work Group #2**

**Sept 14 - Work Group #3**

**Sept 21 - Sunday School**

**Sept 28 - Church Council**

### General Fund Giving (As of 08.26.25)

**Actual YTD:**
**$88,108**

**Budgeted YTD:**
**$104,142**

**YTD Deficit:**
**- $16,034**

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 the Vanco giving page. Thank you!

### 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!**

**Church Council Minutes**
August 11, 2025
***Meeting Room***
Faith, hope, and love make us available for our neighbors near and far.

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:06pm
Pastor Eric led council devotions based on 1 Timothy 1:12-20

- What does God's mercy mean for you?
- As a follower of Jesus, what do you remember about your life before you knew him? How was it different?
- In what ways do you hold back because you do not feel qualified?

**Secretary's Report**

- July minutes were approved by email after one revision. Motion by Derek; seconded by Kelsey.
- Changes suggested for the Make a Difference Campaign. Update with any new estimates. We will be moving forward with this and plan to share in the monthly newsletter, on the Sunday PowerPoint, and on the website.
- Thank you notes were given to those who donated to the electric piano.

**President's Report**
No new communication from the president.

**Treasurer's Report –**
Savings Account: $59.03
Checking Account: $5,109.68
Youth: $2,253.67
Line of Credit: 0
Special Projects Account: $4,119.50
Motion to approve made by Kelsey; seconded by Larry; approved

**Committee Reports**

**Technology**

- Anyone interested in helping with service technology can contact Thomas Blodgett.
- Pastor's microphone was cutting out, but seems better now that he clips it on the outside of his pocket. Will continue to monitor.
- We are exploring possibilities of a timer for ringing the church bell before worship.
- Thomas worked on connecting the new electronic piano to the sound system. He needs to do some tracing and investigating to figure out why some of the mic ports at the altar aren't working.

**Property**

- Sample blinds have been ordered for Pastor's office. Quotes were about $1,000.
  Motion to approve $1,100 worth of new blinds; seconded by Kelsey; approved.
- Parts were ordered to fix the toilet in the Narthex.
- Work was completed for an extra handrail leading to the balcony. (Looks GREAT Larry!)
- Planning to install a small window replacement to stop water leaking into the parsonage.
  This is by a window well on the northeast corner. Looking at pulling the bush out in front of it.
- There was a leak in the main line of water that feeds the church. Rognes Brothers from Lake Mills will be addressing this along with Larry.

- Discussion about replacing the ovens in the kitchen. We have received quotes and will continue to review how to proceed. We are considering the quote for $1,250 per oven for a total of $2,500 with some incidentals to add in to make them fit correctly and look good cosmetically.

**Worship**
- The Worship Committee met on July 22nd. The keyboard/acoustic piano was set to arrive that afternoon so we took some time to look over the area it will sit and prepare.
- An outdoor service is planned for August 24th in conjunction with the blessing of the backpacks service.
- Hunter Thilges baptism on September 14.
- Accompanist's schedules were updated to current - thank you.
- The next worship committee meeting is August 19th at 8:30 a.m.
- Communion helpers needed:
  September 7th: (at the rail) -- Grant
  September 14th: (continuous) – Kelsey, Darryl

**Stewardship**
- The next stewardship project will be the drive-thru soup supper in October. Date to be determined.

**Education**
- We are looking for a Sunday School Superintendent to replace Kelsey.
- Sunday School teacher positions are filled.
- Sunday School is down to provide fellowship coffee on August 17.
- Rally Sunday is planned for September 7, 2025
- Discussion whether to keep the SEED curriculum or use other options. We decided to continue with SEED as there are good resources to pull from this.

**Fellowship**
- Fellowship time in the social hall will continue. The fellowship rotation helps to cover every Sunday. August 17 – Sunday School, August 24 – Council
- Guest Night is planned for September 3 at 7:00pm. Kathy Mathahs, owner of The Corner Pumpkin Patch, will be the speaker. She will share how their vision became a WELL of HOPE. . . . . One Pumpkin at a time. In two years' time, they made enough money through pumpkin sales to build a well serving the village of Bukwala in Uganda, Africa! Hope4Kids International helps to educate the villagers and children on the importance of using the well and drinking from that water source only and often!
  We're planning an informal Guest Night in the social hall with time to decorate pumpkins. This will include fellowship time and refreshments of pumpkin desserts. WELCOME FALL!

**Evangelism**
- Men's Bible Study meets on the third Saturday each month from 7:00-8:00am.

## Pastor's Report

♦ **Worship**

The Genesis summer sermon series continues with Joseph's story.
Pastor continues to lead worship at Timely Mission.
A funeral service was held for Jon Schwartz on August 16.
An outdoor service is planned for August 24th with "Blessing of the Backpacks" before school starts.
Hunter Thilges baptism is scheduled for Sunday, September 14.

♦ **Ministerial Association**

Regular monthly meetings begin in August.
Bison Days ecumenical worship service was held in the Post Office Park on July 27. Estimated 80 attended.
Prayers for Pastor Larry Gruis following his surgery for an aortic aneurysm.

♦ **Education**

Pastor Eric helped with Vacation Bible School August 4-8.
The Confirmation schedule has been set. We'll have 25 students this year, and pastor is looking for one more small group leader.
The 1G schedule has been set. Last year focused on the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. This year will concentrate on various Bible stories.
Pastor put together an ongoing "Schedule of Youth Activities." He shared with council.
Men's Fellowship continues to meet on the third Saturday.
Women's Bible Study continues in the book of Romans.

♦ **LCMC**

The District Council meeting was held via ZOOM on July 31. The district gathering is planned for November 15 in Waukee, Iowa.
Pastor Eric registered for the Annual Gathering coming up October 5-8 to get the early bird discount.

**Office Report:**

Deadline for the September newsletter is August 25. The rotation for reports includes president and education.

**New Business:**

The regular mission rotation changed so we could give to Texas Flood Relief in July which is considered global. Our new rotation is: Global, LCMC, Local Our August mission money is designated to LCMC. $200 to district and $200 to national. Motion made by Darla, seconded by Darryl; approved.

Next meeting: Monday, Sept 8 at 6:00 pm

Motion to adjourn made by Kelsey seconded by Darla; approved

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

## Make a Difference Campaign

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Council has come up with a wish list of items that would be beneficial to our church. We're calling it the "Make a Difference Campaign." If you are interested in giving to any of these projects, please reach out to anyone on the church council. You can also let us know if there is a project or item of repair that you think we should include on this list. We very much appreciate your continued regular offering. The items on this list could potentially go over and above to make a difference in our church life. Maybe something is near and dear to your heart, and you would like to give a little extra at one point or another during the year. Thank you for considering any of these items.

| PROJECT or EXPENSE ITEM | Projected Cost |
|---|---|
| Bible Camp Scholarships | $50--$100 |
| Bibles for 3rd Graders | $30/student |
| Blinds for Pastor's Office | $1,000 |
| Confirmation Retreat Sponsorship | variable |
| Contemporary Music | $20 average |
| Cradle Roll | $100 per child |
| Kitchen Oven replacement -- GE 30" self clean | $300 remaining of $2500 cost |
| Landscape upkeep around church | variable |
| Scholarships for Bethlehem HS Graduates | $200 per student |
| Sidewalk Repair | $1,000 |
| Sponsor a church member Movie Event | $100 theater rent |
| Sponsor Youth Fellowship Event | variable |
| Sunday School Curriculum | $120/year |
| Sunday School Supplies | variable |
| Technology needs | variable |
| Timer installed for ringing of the bell | $500 |

# Bethlehem Lutheran - SEPTEMBER 2025

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 LABOR DAY | 2<br>Bible Study with Pastor, 2:00 pm | 3<br>10th graders and parents meet with Pastor, 6:15 pm<br><br>Guest Night, 7:00 pm, Fellowship Hall | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7<br>Worship with Communion, 9:30 am<br><br>**RALLY SUNDAY! 10:45 am**<br><br>Worship at 1:30 pm, Timely Mission | 8<br>Church Council Meeting, 6:00 pm<br><br>MOMS2MOMS 3:30-5:00 pm | 9<br>Quilting, 1:00 pm | 10<br>Community Bible Study, 10:00 am<br><br>Confirmation Orientation for 7th grade students and parents, 7:00 pm | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14<br>Worship with Communion and Baptism, 9:30 am<br><br>Sunday School 10:45 am | 15 | 16<br>Worship Committee Meeting, 8:30 am | 17<br>Confirmation Bonfire at the parsonage, 6:45 pm | 18 | 19 | 20<br>Men's Bible Study with Pastor @ 7:00 am, Fellowship Hall |
| 21<br>Worship at 9:30 am<br>Sunday School 10:45 | 22<br>MOMS2MOMS 3:30-5:00 pm | 23<br>Quilting, 1:00 pm | 24<br>Confirmation:<br>Snacks 6:45 pm<br>Class Begins 7:15 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28<br><br>Worship at 9:30 am<br>Sunday School 10:45<br><br>Worship at 1:30 pm, Timely Mission | 29 | 30 | | | | |

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
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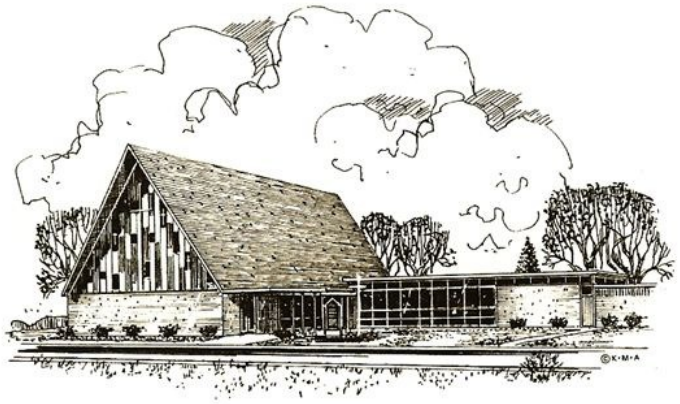
Phone
641-562-2552 — office
641-562-2553 — Pastor Eric

**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.*