

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

December 2022

Oh Bethlehem!



<<<Calendar of Events>>>

December

4-NIB Tour of Lights-Live Nativity here at 5pm
6-Bible Study with Pastor @2pm
12-Council meets @6pm
18-Sunday School Christmas Program at 5pm
-Worship comm. Meets @10:45am
21-Confirmation Caroling and Pizza, 6:30
24-Christmas Eve service @4pm/ 10pm
25-Christmas Day service
of Lessons and Carols-9:30am
26-Jan.2nd office closed
Jan. 1- church with Darla Thompson

<<<Greeters and Ushers>>>

December

4 Carter Wubben(c) Family and Linda Berhow
11 Laurie Buchs Family and Glenda Sapp, Willmert Family
18 Billy Jensvold Family and Maryls Dotseth
24 Tim Weaver Family and Jen McGrady
25 Dana Greensky Family and Shirley Hagenson

January

*1 Genna Baumann(c) Family and Cheryl Baumann
*8 Kevin Hagen(c) Family and
15 Phil Hager Family and Ray & Vonnie Pilgrim
22 Kyle Winter Family and Sabin Family
29 Ted & Darla Thompson and Denny & Dee Murra

Monthly Bible Study

Join Pastor Eric as he continues his study of the book of Philippians.
The next study will be on **Wed. January 4th**
at 2pm in the fellowship hall.
Please join us!

Making ourselves available...

Food Bank for December:

*Juice, Cereal, Cookie Mix, Pancake Mix, Syrup,
Toilet Paper, Large cans of Fruit for our larger families.*

*"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.*

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 our general fund budget. We do budget for Property, but this does not cover bigger expenses that may come about. God is always working in our church body.

When giving to this please designate.
We are so Blessed and Thankful.

Prayers for our Members and friends:

Harlan Melz
Clarice Stonebreaker
Deloris Steffensen Randy Melz
Brian Bashan Marcia Aukes
Christina Coughlin Carolyn Bartz

Coming Up!

ANNUAL MEETING IS SUNDAY, JAN 15

We will have the annual meeting after our service,
please join us for coffee and treats
and the meeting will begin promptly at 10:45.

Direct your
Thrivent Choice
Dollars
Today!



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. If you have any questions, please ask Jen or Brian Blodgett. Thank you!



<<Pastor Eric>>



The lights up 😊

Each year, as I admire my Christmas decorating, I wonder what more I could do or different ways to configure things. That contemplation last year led to some extra extension cords this year; cords that “begged” me to be used, so I obliged. And it is the lights that I enjoy the most. I have some fun inflatables but what I enjoy doing is lighting up my little corner of Buffalo Center (so far, the neighbors have not complained). Actually, there are people who drive by the house slowly to enjoy the lights. One person even told me they like to drive by the house on their way home from work, which is out of their way. So yes, I enjoy doing this, even if it means an extra visit to the chiropractor.

But the center piece of my Christmas display is this...



...my manger scene. Last year it was out on the corner, but the wind broke it, so after some post-Christmas TLC, it is now prominently displayed in a sturdier location. And what is it that highlights my center piece? Light. Imagine that. But that is what light does. It makes visible that which would be concealed by the darkness. As John 1:5 says, **“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”** Jesus is that light and Jesus is the one who overcame the forces of darkness – sin, death, and the power of Satan - through his death and resurrection. Satan would have you to hide your light, but we are to shine that light brightly. The lights on my home are not about showing off my house, but to shine a light on the season at hand, and the Light the came into the world to save you from your sins. My lights remind me of that. And just as I am always thinking of new lights to add to my display, we, as Christians, should always be praying about new ways we can shine our lights brighter and brighter, not to highlight ourselves, but to shine the love of Jesus brighter and brighter.

Let your light shine this Christmas season and beyond. To God be the glory, always and forever, Amen.

<<December Confirmation Corner>>

Here's our upcoming class schedule. Once again, you are always welcome to attend a class and sit on our large group time. Class begins at 7:15 with large group beginning at 7:45.

| | |
|--------|---|
| 11-Nov | Lord's Prayer - 4 th Petition |
| 7-Dec | Lord's Prayer - 5 th Petition |
| 14-Dec | Lord's Prayer - 6 th Petition |
| 21-Dec | Christmas story |
| 28-Dec | NO CLASS |
| 4-Jan | Lord's Prayer - 7 th Petition and Doxology |

<<Devotional opportunities>>

As you have heard, we have a Bible reading Facebook group that has been going since February. I continue to write daily devotions as we are working our way through the New Testament. Currently there are 75 people in this group from Bethlehem and beyond. This is open to anyone. Let me know if you have questions and/or want to join.

Also, there is now another devotional opportunity. On the church website there is a new tab called "Devotions". I am posting short devotional thoughts on scripture that I am reading. This page will be updated a couple times a week. Feel free to share the link or the devotions however you see fit to glorify God.

<<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>>

Our Cradle Roll roster is growing! We currently have 5 children enrolled with more coming in the near future. If you would like to help with Cradle Roll or sponsor a child please contact Cassie Willmert. A \$100 donation sponsors a child in the program for 3 years.

<<1G update and request>>

God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. Amen? God has been and is on the move here in Buffalo Center. We started the One God Network (1G) in February of this year and averaged 38 to 42 kids. I remember getting excited when we hit the 40 mark. Just recently, on Sept 19 we had 57 kids and then on Sept 26 we had 62 kids. God has brought the increase. And with that increase I have two requests,

(1) Pray, pray and pray some more (but you are probably already doing that, so please keep it up), and

(2) You. We are in need of people to BE WITH KIDS. We are not asking you to plan a lesson or a craft, we need adults who love kids to love on kids. Plain and simple. We need you to be present and show them Jesus. Will you answer the call? Just show up on a Monday at 3:15 PM and we will get you started. It's that easy and that important. God is doing a thing here. ***Praise be to God!***

1G Senior High

We are off to a great start and hope to see this continue to grow. We start out with a hot breakfast and then go into a short time of devotions and conversations. This is offered every Tue. Morning to all high schoolers, starting at 7:15.



<<fellowship & evangelism>>



Thank you to everyone who came and supported the Fall Luncheon. We served about 120 people and were blessed with a \$250 Thrivent Visa Card to assist with expenses. We also had many others step up with donations of salads or money. The profit from the day of \$1645.00 was added to the Special Projects Fund to help cover repairs needed for the roof. Your generous donations are truly appreciated!

<<treasurer>>

Giving as of 12.2.22

\$119,845.77

Budgeted giving for 2022

\$160,000.00

We are at 75% in meeting the budget.

“God is doing a thing at Bethlehem” as we are blessed greatly by your generous giving.

We ask that you continue to give so we can meet our 2022 budget and continue with our progress.

<<property>>

We are happy to see that the project fund is being maintained with contributions. Because we are in an older building and the upkeep is always at the forefront, our roof over the Sunday School rooms is now need of replacement because of leaks. We have a bid in for replacing it, and with donations coming in, we will be able to get it taken care of. **Please consider giving to the project fund.** As we move into winter, we will continue to take care of the physical needs of our building.

Brandon and Derek

<<worship>>

*The Hanging of the Greens service went very well, and we Thank all of you who participated and attended. We hear over and over what a wonderful service this is. We are blessed to have such a beautiful church building. Just a reminder that we will have two Candlelight Christmas Eve services this year. The traditional one will be at 4pm and a contemporary at 10pm. These are going to be very special and we invite you to bring your families, invite a friend and neighbor. **JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON.***

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN
CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES

Traditional Communion Service at 4:00pm
Contemporary Communion Service at 10:00pm

Come and See...the Angels are calling...A baby to be born...Jesus Christ our newborn King!



<<stewardship>>

Greetings, Bethlehem Lutheran!

As we move into the season of Advent, we reflect on the greatest gift God gave us. The gift of Hope, Love, Joy, Peace and eternal life through his one and only son: Jesus. A priceless gift, indeed.

But this season, I ask that you also reflect on all of the amazing gifts God has bestowed upon you. He created us all differently, with our own unique, individual gifts and talents. Christian Stewardship refers to the responsibility we have to maintain and utilize these gifts, both financially, and through our spiritual gifts, time and talents. As we move into the new year, it is my hope that we can all focus on how we can use our gifts and allow God's light to shine through us.

Financially, our church is roughly around 40000.00 under budget. Through your financial gifts, we are able to maintain our church building, take care of the church grounds and take care of the essentials. But there is so much more to it than that! We also use these gifts to educate our children, to help provide for those in need through missions (both locally and globally), for fellowship, and for opportunities to spread God's word in various ways in our church building, community and our world. We have accomplished some amazing things this year and conquered some big projects that needed to be done. We are so thankful for all of you in helping us achieve those goals. We appreciate your continued giving.

Another facet of Christian Stewardship is using our spiritual gifts through our Time and Talents. Attached is a link to fill out a Time and Talent form or you can use the QR code. Please fill out the form online or print out and drop off in the back Narthex in church, where there will be a designated drop box. Great things can happen when we allow God to work through us! Our hope is that we can bring all of our talents together to be the church we were created to be and glorify God.

I hope this season brings you all of the things that Advent embodies: hope, love, joy and peace.

Merry Christmas and blessings to all!
Patty Hassebroek

***"God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts.
Use them well to serve one another." ~1 Peter 4:10***



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



<<education>>

Happy December everyone!

We are a busy bunch in education this month, with lots of exciting things going on. The Sunday school kids have started their work to “make spirits bright”, as they prepare for their Christmas program later this month! We would like to invite everyone to come and watch on Sunday, December 18th, at 5 pm, as the kids delight in scripture, skit, and song. We will also have a soup dinner following the performance. Please join us!

Parents of SS kids...

- If your kids wanted a speaking part, they do have their lines now, and we ask you to help them practice! Memorization not required but being familiar and fully comfortable with their words is a necessity please!

- We will be having practice every Sunday morning at regular SS time.

-We will provide costumes if needed, or we'll let you know if there is anything specific, they should wear.

-On Friday, the 16th, we will have a snack and dress rehearsal AFTER SCHOOL. We will be done for you to pick them up at 5. (We will not be practicing Saturday morning!)

There is much excitement to look forward to as we wrap up the year. I am blessed to have an amazing team of adult leaders to work alongside in nourishing the lives of our children here at Bethlehem. Please pray for us as we work together with and for your children and lead them in the way of the manger. Let us not forget our ‘**why**’ this season and emphasize that when interacting with these young learners! Blessings of peace and joy to you all, and Merry Christmas!

Kelsey Bosma, education superintendent

Church Council Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2022 @ 6 pm

held in the meeting room

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

Members present: Pastor Eric, Kelsey Bosma, Brian Blodgett, Cassie Willmert, Patty Hassebroek, Susan Jensen, Derek Thilges, Amy Walk, Jen McGrady, Kim Ostermann

Absent: Brandon Thilges

The meeting was called to order @ 6:07pm

1. Pastor Eric opened the meeting with devotion and prayer.
2. Secretary's Report
 - a. October minutes approved via email. Motion to approve by Susan, seconded by Patty.
3. Treasurer's Report – We had discussion about the budget. We looked at a rough draft of where we're at and what we're looking at for next year. We reviewed the checkbook register as well.
 - a. Savings Account: \$584.27
 - b. Checking Account: \$7,450.70
 - c. Line of Credit: --
 - d. Special Projects Account: \$5,529.11
Motion to approve made by Amy, seconded by Kelsey.
4. Committee Reports
 - a. Technology

- i. We appreciate the time and talents of Kyle Winter. We're also looking for anyone else who might be interested in stepping in when Kyle isn't available.
- b. Property
 - i. The roofer has been contacted regarding a permanent fix for the roof over the Sunday School rooms. After input from the congregation, the permanent fix was determined as the route to go. A temporary fix would still mean doing the permanent fix in the future. Estimate: \$6,500-\$7,500.
 - ii. It was suggested to consider budgeting for a yearly maintenance check on the parsonage furnace and air conditioner.
 - iii. The trim for the Nursery/Sunday School Rooms is in progress.
- c. Worship
 - i. The Worship Committee met on November 14th.
 - ii. The Hanging of the Greens is being planned for November 27th.
 - iii. We are planning two services on Christmas Eve – a 4:00pm and 10:00pm.
 - iv. There will be a 9:30am service on Sunday, Christmas Day.
- d. Stewardship
 - i. "Time and Talents" update. We plan to do a survey as a bulletin insert with the Hanging of the Greens Service. The survey will be included in the newsletter, and we plan to have an online version. We encourage people to return the survey in December. The church doesn't operate on a handful of people – we need all hands on deck with whatever talents you can share!
 - ii. The drive-thru Soup Supper fundraiser was a huge success! It brought in almost \$4000. Approximately 210 people were served.
- e. Education
 - i. Sunday School is getting ready for the Christmas program December 18 at 5:00pm. They are planning to serve a soup supper following the program for a freewill offering.
 - ii. Sunday School Kids sing during the service on Sunday, November 20.
 - iii. 1G going well. High School 1G started on November 2. Six students showed the first week, and 10 showed the second week. Hot meals are served for breakfast before school. The ministerial association is currently covering the cost of food.
 - iv. Kelsey will be going off council but is willing to stay on as Sunday School Superintendent. We are looking to have a council member serve on education that Kelsey will work with.
- g. Fellowship/Evangelism
 - i. The Fall Luncheon served about 120 people and brought in \$1,643. This will be going to the Projects Fund for the roof repair.
 - ii. The congregation is invited to a Giving Thanks Meal on November 20th at 4:30pm. Pastor Eric will have devotions at 5:30pm. We have MUCH to be thankful for!
 - iii. Other upcoming ideas include:
 - *Renting the Lake Mills Movie Theater when a good film comes out.
 - *Offering a viewing of "The Chosen" at church on a Sunday.
 - *Looking for activities or speakers that might be of interest to the younger families of our church, please contact Amy or Kim. We would love to reach out and serve those members of our congregation in a way that strengthens their Christian commitment.
 - *Looking to get a group together to visit area nursing homes.
 - *We might consider "Adopt a Classroom" for supplying snacks for Sunday School. Let Kim or Amy know if you are interested in supplying one of our classrooms.

5. Pastor Report

- a. Third Graders received their bibles on October 16. Pastor led a class after worship about how to use their Bibles. He wants to have a strong push in Sunday School and Confirmation of using the Bible more and more.
- b. Four students were confirmed on October 30. Brendan, Andy, Alyssa, and Ashlyn
- c. All Saints Sunday was recognized on November 6 with the hanging of the doves and lighting candles in memory of loved ones who have passed.
- d. Carl and Ambre Waugh were married at Bethlehem on November 5.

- e. Henry David Lappe was baptized on November 6, and Ryder Ryan Paul on November 13.
 - f. Pastor has been attending Fire Department meetings as the Chaplain. He plans to schedule some training after the new year.
 - g. Timely Mission reopened to visitors on November 14. Pastor has worship on November 20.
 - h. Pastor reported on the Iowa District Annual Gathering held in Clear Lake on November 12.
 - i. An emphasis is placed on "Leader Care" this year.
 - ii. Pastor Eric was elected to fill a 2-year term on the council. He is eligible for two, 3-year terms following these two years.
 - iii. There will be a Leadership Event at Bethlehem on Saturday, February 18, 2023 from 9:00-3:00 (more details to come).
 - i. Thanksgiving Eve worship is at First Reformed Church Nov. 23 with Pastor Sue preaching – Pastor Eric will help preside.
6. Office Report:
- a. We are interested in having a Funeral Guide and Wedding Guide to assist with expectations.
7. New Business
- a. November Mission: Giving Tree (regular rotation is LCMC, local, global)
Motion made by Brian, seconded by Patty
Pastor Eric and Cassie are on the Giving Tree Committee and Bethlehem is the location for organizing the project along with area churches and community members.
 - b. Church Council has a Strategic Planning meeting on November 27 @ 12:00pm.
- c. Next meeting: December 12 @ 6:00pm
8. Newsletter deadline: November 28th
9. Motion to Adjourn made by Kelsey, seconded by Derek
Meeting adjourned at 8:11pm

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted By
Kim L. Ostermann
Secretary

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