

SEPTEMBER 2026



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

- *6 Caleb Hagedorn Family and Bill Jensvold Family
- *13 Chris Jensen Family and Ted & Darla Thompson
- 20 Lorie Bierle and Deb & Mark Landheer
- 27 Mayah Hullstrom Family & Brynlee Engelbarts Family

OCTOBER

- *4 Jace Lawson Family & Aubri Wubben Family
- *11 Joel Boekelman Family and Bailey Newton
- 18 Wyatt Bosma Family and Jen McGrady
- *25 Riley Price Family and Owyn Ostermann Family

Prayers for our Members & Friends

Curtis Vaudt	Carolyn Bartz
Brian Bashans	Karen Buss
Linda Abels	Deloris Steffensen
Dean Swenson	Claire Rustemier-Hinz
Roger Burnside	Emmagene Silber
Nicky Shackleton	Joy Albert
Dawn Jensvold	Harlan Melz
Virginia Cooper	Leroy Weaver
Penny Mitchell	Frances Ostermann
Monica Tyler	Delores Griffin
Ruth Noren	Marge Becker
Jason Christensen	Doug Hofbauer
Randy Holstad	Susan Jensen
Harvey Rossmiller	Tony & Nancy Scalisi
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 September:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 5 - Robin Olson | 13 - Mason Price |
| 5 - Marcella Weaver | 14 - Eloise Lindblom |
| 6 - Julian Hagen | 15 - Bennett Hawkins |
| 6 - Karen Meyering | 16 - Eliza Hagedorn |
| 6 - Colter Sabin | 16 - David Sachs |
| 9 - Heidi Engelbarts | 18 - Brad Kemnitz |
| 9 - Mya Ostermann | 19 - Kevin Johnson |
| 11 - Lisa Berggren | 25 - Aubri Wubben |
| 11 - Mark Landheer | 29 - Joel Price |
| 11 - Derek Olson | 29 - Shelby Thilges |
| 12 - DeWayne Maass | 30 - Norah Blodgett |
| 13 - Mac Wempen | |

We have a few options for 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!



Sunday, Sept. 13
Sunday School Begins

Third Grade
Receives Bibles

Stompin' Grounds
Coffee Truck Here

Bethlehem Lutheran
Guest Night
Wednesday, Sept 9
7:00 pm
See page 4 for details.



During the sermon on August 23, I said, *"To know Jesus is to know the mission."* And that statement is clear through the lives of the disciples in the Gospels. They constantly mess up, using the strategy, *"Send the people away"* to fend for themselves. They say this because they do not know Jesus, yet. Imagine if Jesus used that ministry strategy. If we had to fend for ourselves, the wolf would no doubt devour us and we would be consigned to hell. But as it is, Jesus does not send us away, and neither should we adopt that strategy.

The clarity of our mission as a church is directly proportional to our relationship with Jesus. The better you know Jesus, the more you know the mission. And that mission will look different for everyone, but the focus will always be the same: To glorify God as you love people and love Jesus. 1 John 4:20–21 says, ***"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."*** And as the disciples showed this to be true in the Gospels, I see this played out in my life and the lives of others as well. Moments when I feel distant from God are moments when I am distant from people and visa versa. And since this is the case, it just makes sense to do everything I can to maintain my relationship with Jesus and stay close to him through prayer, scripture, worship, serving, etc. And the same goes for you as well. Have you ever wondered what your place is in the mission of God? Have you ever wondered what the church ought to be doing? *To know Jesus is to know the mission.* So, there you have it. It is no big secret, rather the truth of God.

Save the Date!

Reformation Sunday
Confirmation
October 25, 2026

All Saints' Sunday
November 1, 2026

Bethlehem Lutheran Annual Drive-thru
Soup Supper
Sunday, October 11
More details in October Newsletter



Confirmation Class News

Confirmation is finally upon us. The 7th grade class (six students) will meet on Sept 2, 7 PM, for orientation and the 10th grade class (eight students) will meet on Sept 9, 6:30 PM, to prepare for Confirmation Sunday. Then the full class will be off and running on Sept 16 with the annual confirmation bonfire. This year we are expecting twenty-four students, but we may see a couple more. Our small group leaders have been set for the year: Matt Pentico, Jennifer McGrady, Rachel Wubben, Ashley Valvick (from St Paul, Lakota), and Grant and Meggon Jacobs. We are looking forward to another fun year. As always, I will keep you updated here, church announcements, and Facebook posts. Please pray for this upcoming confirmation class and for the adult leaders who have stepped up to mentor these students. To God be the glory!

Blessing of the Backpacks, August 23rd

Prayers for a great school year for students, teachers, admin, and all support staff!



Make a Difference Campaign

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Council has come up with a wish list of items that would be beneficial to our church. 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
Confirmation Retreat Sponsorship	variable
Contemporary Music	\$20 average
Cradle Roll	\$100 per child
Landscape upkeep around church	variable
Scholarships for Bethlehem HS Graduates	\$200 per student
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
Baseboard heater in kitchen bathroom	\$800
Church windows update-clear windows only	\$52,000
Labor for window installation	\$50,000?
Parsonage windows update	\$8,000--\$9,000
Labor for window installation	??

Council Committee Reports

PRESIDENT

Hello Bethlehem,

It's been a very busy summer. We're looking forward to getting back in the swing of things with Sunday school. We have a lot of kids on the roster and are still looking for some Sunday school teachers. Please reach out to Megan if you are looking for more information on signing up as a teach

er, or even as a substitute. As busy as summer has been, it's been a slow summer for our bank account. Account balances are down and our line of credit is up.

I've had some questions regarding the new program held at the church - "Jump Start With Jess". This is an exercise class hosted by Jess Robin son twice a week in

the fellowship hall. If anybody has thoughts, questions, or concerns please feel free to reach out to me. We're looking forward to utilizing this space to help the community.

Please continue to keep our finances in your thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,
Derek Thilges

EDUCATION

Oh Bethlehem!

We are Building Blocks of Faith
The 26/27 school year is here!
Which means our Sunday School and Confirmation classes will soon begin. Pastor Eric will begin Confirmation on September 2, with an informational class for 7th graders. Sunday School will kick off with Rally Sunday on September 13.

I'm EXCITED! God is using Bethlehem- "Building Blocks of Faith". HE has planted creative, energetic teachers & leaders who are ready to love, encourage & build on the faith of our kiddos! And God continues to send all these little ones our way, who are ready to build on their blocks of faith.

Have you stopped...and taken a look at our Sunday school kids & Confirmation students? WOW! It is vibrant, strong & growing! Again, this year we will have 50ish kids in Sunday School (3 year old to 6th grade). Not to mention the strong number of 24 young adults we have in Confirmation. You will soon begin to see our youth reading the lessons, helping with offering, serving, singing or lighting the candles. Stop, give them a smile & let them know what a great job they did! :)

So...how can one not get excited for the Sunday School and Confirmation year?! Seeing all these little humans hungry for God's word...singing HIS praises...coming together...being involved...just eager to absorb it all- EXCITING!

Would you like to be part of it all? Help the youth build on their faith? Contact me-I'm happy to listen, answer any questions or maybe direct you to an area where you can help:)

Please continue to pray for our youth (of all ages). The world is loud, tempting & tough. It's easy to get lost in it. Simple prayers, are a wonderful way our Bethlehem Church family can "Build Blocks of Faith"!

Megan Holland-Education

*REMEMBER: join us-help build on blocks of faith—SEPTEMBER 13 for FUN & FELLOWSHIP! And yummy goodness from Stompin' Grounds Coffee Truck (8 am-12 pm)

GUEST NIGHT at Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Buffalo Center, Iowa

Wednesday, September 9, 2026 7:00pm

BEYOND THE VISIBLE

Science, Faith & the Evidence
We Cannot See

BRIAN
BLODGETT

WITH
CHRISTINA
&
NORAH

EVERYONE WELCOME!

Join us for refreshments
after the presentation



EVERYONE is invited to the 2026 Guest Night at Bethlehem. This is for ladies and gentlemen, young, and young at heart!

What happens when you let Brian Blodgett give the Wednesday night sermon. . . and he mistakes the sanctuary for an experimental physics lecture hall? Expect less lecturing, more experimenting, and perhaps a few things you wouldn't normally expect to encounter in church!

What do you believe strongly enough to act on. . . when you cannot see it, when standing for it means standing apart, and when believing it asks something of you?

Invite a friend to spend Wednesday, September 9th at an experimental physics lecture turned into an exploration of faith. . . with fewer equations, more experiments, and questions much bigger than the laboratory.

Safety goggles will be provided if needed. 😊

Church Council Minutes

August 10, 2026

Meeting Room

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

Members present: Derek Thilges, Darla Thompson, Amy Walk, Megan Holland, Katie Mathahs, Kim Ostermann, Pastor Eric

Absent: Jen McGrady, Larry Lawson, Thomas Blodgett, Susan Jensen

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

Pastor Eric lead us with devotions based on Matthew 14:13-21 (Feeding of the 5000)

Pastor challenged us with the following questions:

- The disciples suggest sending the people away, but Jesus says, "YOU give them something to eat." What overwhelms you as you serve in the church and/or try to live your faith? Where do you feel deficient? In what ways do you feel you fall short?
- When are you more apt to "send people away"?
- What are you trying to do (or afraid to do) that you need to turn over to Jesus?
- When has Jesus performed a miracle through you?

President's Report

- "Jumpstart with Jess" will begin using the church for group classes. The church will get 25% of the revenue. Class times are projected for Mondays and Thursdays at 7:00pm. We have a space rental agreement with Jessica Robinson regarding the details.

Secretary's Report

- The July 2026 minutes were approved via email. Motion to approve by Derek; seconded by Katie.
- Currently no changes or additions to the "Make a Difference Campaign."

Treasurer's Report

- Savings Account: \$100
- Checking Account: \$1,771.01
- Youth: \$2,714.04
- Line of Credit: \$7,000
- Special Projects Account: \$13,592.01
- Motion to approve the treasurer's report was made by Amy, seconded by Megan; approved
- We are planning to start showing a QR Code for online giving on the worship PowerPoint during the offering. This might be a good way to show online viewers an easy way to give. **Has this happened??**

Committee Reports

Technology

- Anyone interested in helping with service technology can contact Thomas Blodgett.
- Website update to WordPress would be \$25/month. We are planning to move forward with this.
- The TV in the Social Hall needs to be addressed. The video stream is showing static.

Property

- We received a cost estimate for window replacement in the church and the parsonage. \$52,000 for the windows at church. This does NOT include installation and is for the clear windows only. Parsonage (\$8,000-\$9,000) The windows are in poor condition, but we are struggling with starting a win-

dow campaign and being financially responsible as we are already working to erase our line of credit at the bank. This will be added to the "Make a Difference Campaign."

- A second quote for the windows was received from Garner Lumber & Supply Company. Their quote was \$59,080.57. We are planning to try for a grant and needed two estimates.
- The parsonage basement repairs are being planned for this fall.
- Work was done on a mini split air conditioner to get it to work.
- Need to pick up a new downspout for the south side of the church. The downspouts were painted – it will be next to impossible to find a color match.

Worship

- Music Library for worship music as a backup – Darla's plan is to have this done in August.
- August 9th baptism for Dory Weaver (Tanner & Anne)
- August 23rd will be blessing of backpacks.
- Rally Day is September 13th plus 3rd grade Bibles will be given.
- On our later radar is Oct. 25 - Reformation Sunday with confirmation & Nov. 1st is All Saints Sunday.
- The next worship committee meeting is August 18 at 8:30am.
- Communion helpers needed for September:
 - September 6 (at the rail): Amy
 - September 13 (continuous): Megan & Darla

Stewardship

- August 18 is the last community meal at Farmer's Market. The plan is to continue community meals at the Heritage Center. Dates include September 27, October 18, November 15, and December 20.
- North Iowa Food for Families is going well and receiving donations.
- Possible apple pie fundraiser for September. Stay tuned!

Education

- Rally Sunday is planned for September 13.
- Stompin' Grounds Coffee will be available.
- Theme for Sunday School this year: Building Blocks of Faith
- Registration link was posted on FB page: 26/27 Bethlehem Lutheran Sunday School Registration
- Looking for teachers! Trying to create "teams" of 2-3 people per class. Hope to have 6 classes. But if there is a lack of teachers, we may need to combine. Letter was sent to families, Susan put in bulletin & PowerPoint and possible newsletter. Hoping this helps to recruit.
- Pastor & Megan have been working on finalizing dates for all things "education" for 26/27 year.
- Blessing of Backpacks-August 23. FB event has been made.
- SOLA has been purchased for Sunday School.

Fellowship

- Fellowship time continues in the social hall – Sunday School serves Aug. 30, Council serves Sept. 6
- We are planning for Guest Night on Wednesday, September 9, 2026. Brian Blodgett has it on his calendar for an evening of science and the Bible.
- 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

- Jen reported no updates.

Pastor's Report

♦ Education

Men's Fellowship continues on Saturday, August 15 at 7:00am.

Women's Bible Study continues in the book of Romans. The next meeting is September 1. The October study has been pushed back a week to October 13 because pastor is attending the Annual Gathering.

1G planning continues with classes beginning Wednesday, September 9. Bethlehem serves the supper meal on October 14, January 13, and March 17.

Confirmation planning is moving forward. Pastor will meet with 7th graders and parents on Wed., Sept. 2.

Tenth graders and parents will meet Wed., Sept. 9. Four adult leaders have committed to helping so far this year (Jen, Rachel, Ashley, and Matt). There are 24 students.

Sunday School – pastor is working on the class schedule and curriculum.

♦ Worship

Pastor presided at Andrew James Smith's graveside service – July 10

Dory Jean Weaver's baptism – August 9

Janell Heidecker's funeral – August 15

Teddie Mathahs is scheduled for baptism on September 20

♦ Ministerial Association

Pastor Eric preached at the Bison Days outdoor ecumenical worship service on July 26. There was a good turnout (90-100 people).

Ministerial Association will begin monthly noon meetings Wednesday, August 12 at Bethlehem. We welcome Judy Clark – the new United Methodist pastor.

♦ LCMC

District gathering in November at Badger Lutheran Church.

Pastor Eric is registered for the LCMC Annual Gathering in October.

Registration information for the LCMC Annual Gathering is available. The gathering is scheduled October 4-7, 2026, at Lutheran Church of Hope in West Des Moines. Anyone may attend the gathering for one day or the entire session. Information is available here: <https://lcmc.net/annual-gathering>

Office Report:

Newsletter deadline is August 25. President and Education are up for reports.

Susan is out of the office August 10-13.

New Business:

We intend to be 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. August mission is **global – Lutheran World Relief**. September Mission is **local – Hunter & Owen Blocker Fund**. Motion made by Derek, seconded by Darla; approved

Teacher breakfast will be served by Bethlehem on August 17 at 8:00am. Serving for 50.

The next council meeting is Monday, September 14, at 6:00 pm.

Motion to adjourn made by Megan, seconded by Amy; approved.

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

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.

THE LUNCHBOX LIFT

L.I.F.T.

Learning - Inspiring - Feeding - Thriving



Picture (above left): Jen McGrady, Mayah Hullstrom, Pastor Eric Hullstrom, Malachi Hullstrom, and Kim Ostermann serving the North Iowa teachers breakfast.

Picture (above right): Our church group presenting the Lunchbox LIFT check, **totaling \$679.41**, to Principal Joann Kenny and Food Service Director Laura Sunde. Thank you to all who donated!!

North Iowa Food for Families is open on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month, at the United Methodist Church in Buffalo Center, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm. They are looking for volunteers. If you would like to help, please contact Amy Walk at 641-590-5845. They need help on Monday mornings to bring food in and on Monday afternoons to help distribute food. Thanks!

**General Fund Giving
(NOT including fundraisers)
As of 08.26.26**

**Actual YTD:
\$82,991**

**Budgeted YTD:
\$103,972**

**YTD Deficit:
-\$20,981**

**General Checking
Balance:
\$3,191**

**Project Savings
Balance:
\$13,592**

**General Savings
Balance: \$100**

**Amount Borrowed on
Bank Loan: \$7,000**



Fellowship Serving Rotation:

Sept 6 - Church Council

Sept 13 - Work Group #1

Sept 20 - Work Group #2

Sept 27 - Work Group #3

FOOD BANK NEEDS for September:

**Diced tomatoes, stuffing mixes,
10 oz. canned chicken,
cream of chicken or
mushroom soup**



**Please drop off donations in the church
narthex or the BC Library. Thanks!**

Bethlehem Lutheran,
Thank you to the scholarship committee for choosing me! I will be putting the money towards my future as I begin my next chapter.
I also thank the quilting committee for the most beautiful quilt! The pink details on it were just perfect.
The last thank you goes to the congregation. I really appreciate the love and support through my life!

With love, Genevieve Baumann

Bethlehem Lutheran - SEPTEMBER 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Bible Study with Pastor, 2:00 pm Scouts Meeting, 6:00 pm	2 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am 7th Grade Confirmation Orientation, 7:00 pm	3 Jumpstart with Jess, 7:00 pm	4	5
6 Worship with Communion at 9:30 am	7 Labor Day	8	9 10th Grade Confirmation Meeting, 6:30 pm Guest Night, 7:00 pm	10 Jumpstart with Jess, 7:00 pm	11	12
13 Worship with Communion at 9:30 am Third Grade Receives Bibles RALLY SUNDAY!! SS starts, 10:45 am	14 MOMS2MOMS, 3:30-5:00 pm Church Council Meeting, 6:00 pm Jumpstart with Jess, 7:00 pm	15 Worship Committee Meeting, 8:30 am Scouts, 6:00 pm	16 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am Confirmation Bonfire, 6:45 pm	17 Jumpstart with Jess, 7:00 pm	18	19 Men's Bible Study, Fellowship Hall, 7:00 am
20 Worship with Baptism at 9:30 am SS at 10:45 am	21 Jumpstart with Jess, 7:00 pm	22 Quilting, 1:00 pm	23 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am Confirmation - 6:45 pm snacks, 7:15 class	24 Jumpstart with Jess, 7:00 pm	25	26
27 Worship at 9:30 am SS at 10:45 am	28 MOMS2MOMS, 3:30-5:00 pm Jumpstart with Jess, 7:00 pm	29	30 Community Bible Study, 10:00 am Confirmation - 6:45 pm snacks, 7:15 class			

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
201 4th St. NE
P.O. Box 385
Buffalo Center, IA 50424

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.

