



From the Pastor's Desk

A Place Not Forgotten

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." - Isaiah 49:15-16

Earlier this July, I had the opportunity to travel to St. Louis as part of my Doctor of Ministry program. As part of our course on cross-cultural ministry, I visited another congregation that, like ours, is named Bethlehem Lutheran Church. They're in the heart of north St. Louis—a place with deep needs, complex history, and many signs of spiritual and economic hardship. In many ways, it felt familiar.

Their longtime pastor, Rev. John Schmidtke—now with the Lord—served that church faithfully for decades. Right before he passed, he wrote a long and powerful book, providing insights into his ministry there titled *A Place Not Forgotten*. It's his story of loving a neighborhood others had given up on. It's a testimony to God's enduring work in places the world overlooks. But more than that, it's a reminder that no place—and no person—is ever beyond the reach of God's redeeming love.

That phrase stayed with me: *A Place Not Forgotten*. Because it doesn't just describe north St. Louis. It describes southeast Fort Wayne. It describes our Bethlehem too. We are not forgotten. Not by God. Not by those He's called us to serve. And not by the story He is still writing here.

In Isaiah 49, God's people fear they've been abandoned. "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me," they cry. And God responds with something astonishingly tender: "Can a mother forget her nursing child?" Even if she could, He says, "I will not forget you. I have engraved you on the palms of My hands." That's the kind of God we serve—a God who remembers His people, who carves our names into His very body, who never stops pursuing those the world has given up on.

When I walked through that other Bethlehem, I saw what happens when a congregation chooses to believe that truth. They refused to accept the lie that their best days were behind them. They leaned into the needs of their neighborhood. They opened their doors wide to the community and trusted that God was still present and at work. And they found themselves part of a resurrection story. Their neighborhood is transforming around them because of their surrender to that story.

And as I toured it all, heard it all it made me think of you. Of us. Of the quiet, steady faithfulness that defines our little church. We may not have all the resources, but what we give is real. What we offer reflects Jesus—sacrificial, beautiful, and full of hope. We are not forgotten. We never have been and that's so comforting, especially on the tough days.

But friends, it's not enough for us to remember that we are not forgotten. Our neighbors need to know it too. There are people just a few blocks away who wonder if anyone sees them. If anyone cares. If God has anything good left for them. And that's where we come in—not as saviors, but as servants. As people who have been remembered by God and now go out to remind others of that same love.

So let's take the next step. Let's not just celebrate that we're still here—by God's grace we are. Let's not just thank God that He hasn't given up on us—through His promises He hasn't. Let's also join the mission to show our community that they matter too. That they are not forgotten by us. And they are certainly not forgotten by Him. Every time we offer a prayer, lend a hand, share a meal, or speak a word of grace, we're participating in that remembering love. That's what Bethlehem is about. That's who we are. That's who each of us are called to be and maybe you are one that hasn't stepped into that yet. But you are part of our family. You are part of this mission going forward and God has things for you to contribute. Consider this the nudge you've been looking for to enter into this work, to push it to the next level. There's more to be done. And God is not done writing this story. In Christ, no one is forgotten. Including you!

In Christ,
Pastor Ben



Ways to watch WORSHIP ANEW:

Online - <https://worshipanew.org/>

Sunday at 6:30am on (WISE-TV Channel 33)

Sunday at 7:00am on (EPTA channel 21.2)

Sunday at 11:30am on TCT (WINM channel 12)

August 3, 2025 – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Regarding Possessions

Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III - Luke 12:13-21

Our society often seems crazed with the desire to possess: to have some new product, to increase one's earthly possessions, to grow wealthy. Christ frequently encountered this same kind of attitude, and in response, he told the parable of the foolish rich man. This parable leads each one of us to ask, "What is my view regarding possessions?"

August 10, 2025 – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Do Not Be Anxious

Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer - Luke 12:22

Do you feel as if you are being stretched beyond your limits? That your world is breaking apart? God holds the entire world in His hands. He gave His Son for us. Do not be anxious!

August 17, 2025 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Faith Race

Rev. Shayne Jonker - Luke 12:49-50

Run the race of faith with joy and hope. Focus on Jesus. His joy was to save you. Your joy is to receive the salvation He won for you, to be welcomed at the end of your race into the open arms of your Savior, and to have Him put the victor's wreath on your head.

August 24, 2025 – Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

The Time is Coming

Rev. William Mueller - Isaiah 66:18-23

Isaiah prophesies about the last days and the gathering of believers from every nation. Who is at the center of this? How is He described as "the glory of God"? And our hearts are also searched to see if we are ready for the "outsider" to become an "insider."

August 31, 2025 – Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

It's Hard to Be Humble

Rev. Paul Shoemaker - Luke 14:1-14

It's hard to be humble. Our pride encourages us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Our Lord Jesus humbled Himself and became like we are, yet without sin. In His humility He won for us the gift of life eternal. He encourages us to put aside our pride and, like Him, live a life of humble service.



LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES

www.lhm.org

To find airings near you, check the broadcast guide at lhm.org/guide.

The Lutheran Hour is available today in many other ways beyond traditional radio. From the American Forces Network, Sirius XM satellite radio, lutheranhour.org, the Connected by LHM mobile app, Amazon Alexa, Spotify, iHeartRadio, YouTube, dialing in on your phone, and more, listeners can hear the weekly sermons whenever and wherever they are.

For more information about Lutheran Hour Ministries, visit lhm.org.



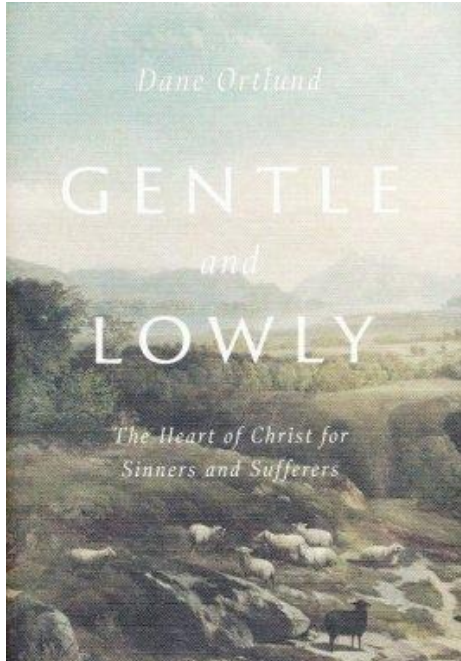
www.myfwl.org

AND JESUS ANSWERED HIM,
"IT IS WRITTEN,



SWEET TO THE SOUL

small GROUPS



**We have a
Church-wide Bible
Study starting
9/21/25 thru
10/26/25.**

Groups are to meet on a weekly basis thru the course of the study to discuss the assigned chapters for each week.

The books cost \$10 and will need to be purchased by those who want to participate and don't already have a copy.

The study guides will be provided.

To get an idea as to how many books we'll need to purchase and when people can meet, look for **sign-up sheets at both Church entrances.**

Watch for further information in the next few weeks.



We appreciate our volunteers for the Rescue Mission.
Thank You!

Food Bank Report

By Sharon Shediack

June

We provided food to 319 individuals. They included 150 children under the age of 18, and 39 individuals over the age of 60.

Our congregation provided 760# of food. We went to Community Harvest five times this month to purchase 2499# of food in the amount of \$1012.

Our 16 volunteers gave 114 hours of their time.

We could use soup, peanut butter, boxed baking mixes, pasta sauce and tomato products.

Thanks to ALL of you for all your many volunteer hours, dedication and the financial support you give to help provide this mission at Bethlehem.

HELP KEEP THE FOOD BANK SHELVES STOCKED

Scour your pantries, include them on your shopping list. Bring a grocery bag of a few non-perishable items to the Saturday and Sunday services to the front pews during the Offering.



Every
Donation
Makes A
Difference

URGENT NEEDS

**Soup, peanut butter,
boxed baking mixes, pasta
sauce and tomato
products.**

Bethlehem Mission News and Prayers

By Jane Miller

On Sunday, August 3, after the 9:00 service, Joe Schlie, Executive Director of Cru Arts and Culture, will with his wife Suzy bring Bethlehem up to date on their work with Cru. Joe and Suzy, an accomplished artist in her own right, will share about their ministry in France with artists and musicians. They were able to share the Gospel with young people and officials. Since returning to the United States, they share the Gospel with musicians and all over the United States. Suzy was also able to travel to Cuba to give water filters to people in rural villages along with sharing the Gospel with them! Joe says the Arts has the power to move people “forward and upward.” Please join us Sunday, August 3 as Joe and Suzy share their ministry with us!

On Sunday, August 17th, Teachers and Students of our Lutheran, other Christian, and Public Schools are invited to receive a blessing and be prayed for during the 9:00 Worship service ahead of the beginning of the first day of school. Wherever they attend, assist or teach school, they can be lights shining for Jesus in our broken, hurting world! As many people saw in the recent passing and funeral of our dear former school secretary, Nancy Kruger, she was a shining light for Jesus for many years in our midst at Bethlehem! I know I personally will miss Nancy very much; she and I worked right across the hall from one another for many years at our Bethlehem School, and then I had the privilege of having her in my little Cross Connections group here at Lutheran Life Villages until she and Earl moved to Bryan, Ohio, where they could be together in a 2-room suite. What an encouragement she often was to me, with her smiling face and helpful ways - even in her dementia she continued to be a light shining for Jesus!

We last week received a very thorough update from Tim and Michelle Miller in their “Miller Mailer!” They have received encouragement in recent months from friends in distant provinces of their country in Southeast Asia! They share with us: “Over the last few months, out of the blue we’ll hear from new friends. At least one Sunday morning each month an elderly couple who helped us record a list of about 800 words in their language - PN- will call to greet us and ask God’s blessing on our worship that morning. Additionally, every other week or so in the evening we get a voice message asking us how to spell a certain word in the B language. We happily listen carefully and respond to text back its spelling according to the system of characters we had agreed upon together. We had worked with both groups back in March to help develop writing systems for their previously unwritten languages. Both groups are being funded and trained by a separate organization to translate the Gospels of Mark and Luke into PN and B, but have had much difficulty coming up with writing systems that capture the nuances of their sound patterns. (The B speakers have a sound system very similar to the Khon language which we know well). After making several important decisions, the B translators had big smiles on their faces. “Oh! We had so much difficulty writing these sounds, but now our community thinks these solutions fit well, and we can write out our translation work with much more confidence!”

Tim and Michelle also commented that during this season of Pentecost they are reflecting on the unity that Jesus, our Anointed King has brought among the nations and tribes of this world in the midst of its God-pleasing diversity. The Holy Spirit miraculously used many languages on their day of Pentecost to speak about the “wonders of God” to people from nations far and wide (Acts 2:38). Please pray for the B and PN translation teams to help them translate the Gospel accounts into their languages.

Tim and Michelle also ask us to pray for wisdom for them as they take on an expanded role to provide leadership for their country team, as they also continue their own project work. They also ask us to pray for Sarah and Zack as they settle into life in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Zack will be starting a masters in Linguistics program at Payap University this August! “Thank you again for Bethlehem’s Partnership! With love in Christ, Tim and Michelle”

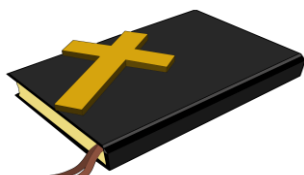
The work of our missionaries
is a magnificent expression
of the Lord’s redeeming love.

BETHLEHEM FAMILY LIFE MINISTRY

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commands that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

EDUCATION HOUR

10:30am-11:30am



*Fix these words of mine
in your hearts
and minds;
tie them as symbols
on your hands and
bind them on your foreheads.*

Deuteronomy 11:18

lynnandev.com

JOIN US for BIBLE STUDY on AUGUST 3

Joe Schlie, Executive Director of Cru Arts and Culture, will bring us up to date on his work with Cru on Sunday, August 3 after the 9:00am service.

Joe and his wife Suzy, and accomplished artist in her own right, will share about their ministry in France with other artists and musicians. They were able to share the Gospel with many young people and officials.

Since returning to the United States, they share the Gospel with musicians and artists all over the United States. Suzy was also able to travel to Cuba to give water filters to people in rural villages along with the Gospel.

Joe says the arts has the power to move people "forward and upward".

Join us Sunday, August 3 as Joe and Suzy Schlie share their ministry with us.



The Bethlehem Men's Prayer Breakfast will be held Saturday, August 30, in the cafeteria starting at 8:30am. Our focus is on the Edomites about whom much of the book of Obadiah is focused. By 841 B.C. the Edomites revolted against Judah and restored its own monarchy but had an unsteady course thereafter. Please plan to join us for breakfast, a devotion by Bill Ihssen, prayer, and our study of God's Word. *"In the time of [King] Jehoram [of Judah], Edom rebelled against Judah and set up its own king. . . . To this day Edom has been in rebellion against Judah."* II Chronicles 21:8, 10a.



LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR



The Mental Health Initiative at Bethlehem is under the direction of Joyce Knipstein. **Bethlehem seeks to be a caring community and to provide hope.**

August 30 is National Grief Awareness Day

If you have experienced the death of a family member or friend, you are invited and encouraged to register for the GriefShare program.



What Is GriefShare?

GriefShare is a supportive, compassionate group designed to help individuals navigate the difficult journey of grief. It offers a safe and welcoming environment where participants connect with others who understand the deep and often overwhelming emotions that come with loss.

Over the course of 13 weeks, GriefShare provides guidance on what to expect in the days and months ahead. It emphasizes that grief doesn't follow a predictable pattern—and that's okay. Instead of offering a one-size-fits-all approach, the program equips participants with practical tools for coping with the many ups and downs of grief.

Each weekly session begins with a 30-minute video featuring grief recovery experts and heartfelt stories from people who have experienced loss themselves. These videos provide valuable insight, emotional support, and answers to common questions about the grieving process.

Following the video, group members engage in open, respectful conversations about what they've seen and what they're personally facing. This time of sharing helps foster connection, reduce isolation, and create a strong sense of community—reminding each person that they are not alone in their grief.

The newest edition of GriefShare will be held at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 3705 S. Anthony Blvd., Fort Wayne in Room 1 on Tuesdays starting August 19, 2024 from 5:30pm-7:00pm.

BEREAVEMENT MINISTRY

If you feel you would also benefit from the care of our Stephen Ministry Bereavement program, please call Pastor Ben (989-907-9481), or Threasa Lightning (260-417-1450) our Grief Coordinators.

Let's Celebrate Pastor Jeffrey Geisler's Birthday with a Birthday Card Drive!



Let's shower Pastor Jeff with love, gratitude, and blessings on his special day. We want to shower him with lots of birthday cards to remind him how much he's cherished. **His Birthday is August 19**

Write a heartfelt message, share a favorite memory, or simply say "Thank you!"

Send or Drop Off To:

Rev. Jeffrey Geisler
6701 S. Anthony Blvd.
Magnolia Lane Rm #326
Fort Wayne, IN 46816

Birthday Blessings

BETHLEHEM'S 100th ANNIVERSARY

"Throughout All Generations"

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations." Psalm 90:1

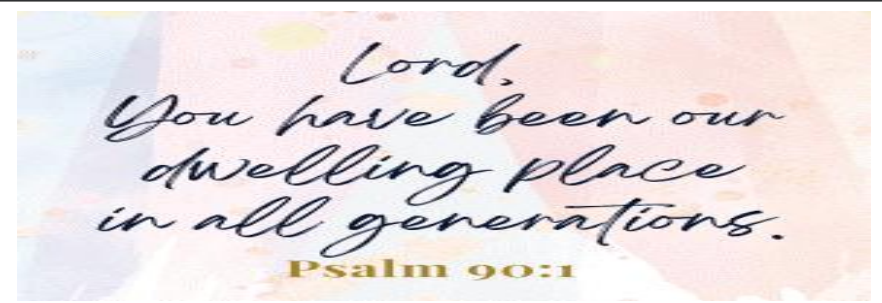
Our theme is **"Throughout All Generations"** Psalm 90:1 *"Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations."*

This is a tentative plan schedule.

- January 11, Sunday: Kick-off with sit-down meal
- February, Sunday: Organ/Piano music
- March 27, Friday: FISH FRY
- April 18, Saturday: Great America Clean Up with the City event
- May 31, Sunday: Church Potluck Picnic
- June 20, Saturday: Neighborhood Walk – including 3205 Alexander Ave.
- July 18, Saturday: Community Fest w/clubhouse
- August: LSUS clean up
- Sept. 13, Sunday: Education & Alumni Celebration with History of Education and recognition of Confirmation classes (a Charcuterie Table)
- October: Missions featured the entire month
- November: Collect food bank items the entire month
- December: Wrap up with a special musical event TBD Organ recital, song fest, etc.

Volunteers are still needed! Please pray and consider using your skills and talents and join one of the following committees: Please contact Rhonda in church office for questions or you may contact a member of the steering committee—Pastor Ben, Rachele Dance or Sharon Dietrich.

The next 100th Anniversary Committee meeting: August 27, at 6:00pm in the Fellowship Hall.
Volunteers are still needed and appreciated!



VIDEO RECORDING SESSIONS HAVE BEEN RESCHEDULED

After some adjustments, we're finally able to reschedule the video recording session for part of Bethlehem's 100th anniversary celebration. The new date is **Sept. 7 from 1-4 p.m.** in the sanctuary.

These 5-minute videos will consist of three questions:

1. When and why did you come to Bethlehem?
2. What are a couple of your favorite memories?
3. What has Bethlehem meant to you?

These recordings will be played before services throughout the anniversary year. Also, those being interviewed do not need to be current members. The main requirement is having some great memories about our church!

If you are interested, please consider emailing Blake Sebring at blakeds@frontier.com so we can get a rough estimate of those wishing to participate. Seating will be available in the Fellowship Hall, and we will not schedule appointments, but we'll start a line and keep going until we are finished. Hopefully this will be a fun time of reminiscing.

National:
lwml.org
State/Local:
lwmlindiana.org



WOMEN of BETHLEHEM

INDIANA DISTRICT LWML TREATSHOP

For \$20 registration, you get a light continental breakfast, a salad bar and Baked Potato Bar Lunch, and materials for the session! Ingatherings go to: Crisis Pregnancy Center, Trinity Lutheran School teacher gift bags, and help in restocking Trinity's Gym Closet.

Break Out Sessions: (may choose 3)

Building on a Firm Foundation

Mission Vision: Living out our Christian faith, sister to sister.

A Guide to being an Effective Leader

Jesus Loves You! How much? Bible study of Psalm 139 with IN District Pastoral Counselors, Pastors Latzke and Becker

Get Them Talking! How to make connections through fun ideas and laughter

Craft, Chat and a Cookie! Young Woman Representatives give ways to bridge generation gap

Registration Forms available at lwmlindiana.org

Dena Schult is attending, and has room for 3 more women.

Rags to Riches to You (Michelle Bauman)

Known: Christian Life Committee

Tag, You're It! President Emily Rogers (IN District)

The Joyful Corner

Laugh at the Future

by dailywisdomforwomen

She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.

Proverbs 31:25 NIV

The only way a woman can be clothed in strength and dignity and laugh at the future is to know the One who longs to hold her future in His hands.

The Lord is the only One who can provide the Proverbs 31 promises mentioned. He is the only One who deserves your faith. Trusting in the Lord with all your heart is the only right way to live. So what does that kind of passionate faith look like? It turns your wringing hands into praising hands—not because you naturally rise every morning feeling perky and carefree, but because deep down you choose to believe worry is worthless and praise is priceless.

If you trust in God, He will indeed work all things for your good (see Romans 8:28). You can count on it. As a Christian, you should count on it! That kind of trust—which is so very counter to what the world preaches—releases you from a life without hope. And it gives you the freedom to know joy—even amid earthly sorrows.

Lord, please lift my head from the mire of my worries so I can have greater faith in You. Let me be clothed in strength and dignity, and let me so trust in You so I can laugh at the future. Amen.

SHE IS CLOTHED IN
Strength & Dignity
and she
Laughs
without fear of the future.

Proverbs 31:25

2025 INDIANA DISTRICT--LCMS CONVENTION REPORT

by Glenn Emley

On June 19 and 20 I attended the Indiana District--LCMS Convention as Bethlehem's lay delegate at the Grand Wayne Convention Center as Bethlehem's lay delegate. The Indiana District includes all LCMS members and congregations in Indiana and the middle third of Kentucky except for several LCMS congregations which are in the non-geographical English and SELC Districts. A total of 285 voting delegates attended of which 148 were pastors and 137 were lay people.

Indiana District President Richard Stuckwisch presided over the convention and stated the purposes of the convention as follows: to attend to the Word of God and prayer; to share reports on and to rejoice in our work together; and to direct the use of gifts for the common good. The theme of the convention was John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches."

Pastor Douglas Punke of Zion, Fort Wayne, served as Chaplain of the convention and on both days led the delegates in a matins service with homily. His themes were Acts 15 and the Nicene Creed.

LCMS First Vice-President Peter Lange gave the Synod report to the delegates. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has 1,675,000 baptized members in 5,800 congregations with 5,500 active pastors and 3,500 emeritus pastors. The LCMS has 1,776 schools--high schools, elementary, and preschools--and 21,500 teachers. There are 674 elementary schools. The LCMS is in good financial shape.

The delegates elected President Richard Stuckwisch, Emmaus, South Bend, to a second three-year term on the first ballot. Delegates also elected and ranked the following pastors as Indiana District Vice-Presidents: 1st VP--Peter Brock, St. John--Bingen, Decatur; 2nd VP--David Mueller, Trinity, Goodland/St. John, Rensselaer (dual); 3rd VP--Douglas Bauman, St. Paul, Columbus; 4th VP--Erich Fickel, St. Paul, Chesterton. The delegates also ratified Circuit Visitors for a three-year term including the Reverend Michael Trombley of Trinity--Decatur Road for the Fort Wayne South Circuit of which Bethlehem is a member.

Delegates voted to support mission work in Tanzania and throughout Africa, to support and encourage congregations in exploring classical education, to encourage congregations to start or grow Lutheran schools, to encourage congregations to establish a Set Apart to Serve committee to encourage and recruit youth and adults to consider full-time church work vocations, to have congregations promote and encourage adoption and fostering needs, to pass technical changes in the Indiana District bylaws as suggested by the Synod, to make the Treasurer an appointment by the Indiana District Board of Directors instead of an elected position by convention delegates, and to realign the Indianapolis area circuits as proposed by the congregations so affected.

Former Bethlehem member Doug Reynolds was the official convention timekeeper. I served on the Polity, Structure, and Governance Floor Committee, which was chaired by the Reverend Doctor Phil Rigdon, a former Bethlehem member, now at St. John, Kendallville.

Display space was set aside in the convention center for Lutheran organizations to have booths to share information about their ministries. Time was also provided during breaks for lunch and dinner to meet and socialize with our very interesting array of gifted pastoral and lay delegates and visitors, which helped us to see the great work the Lord is doing throughout Indiana, Kentucky, the United States, and the world.

LSUS NEWS



Please consider helping LSUS Art Classes with donating some items.

See the display board in the narthex for items needed. (Crayola markers, crayons, Elmer's glue sticks, sharpies, pencils, erasers, scissors) and return the items to the designated box by August 17!

Thank you for your partnership with LSUS!



Bridge of Grace Summer Clubhouse

Bethlehem Lutheran Church hosted Bridge of Grace Summer Clubhouse from June 16-July 18. For 22 days, as many as 70 students who completed grades K-4, spent their summer cruising aboard the S.S. Bethlehem on the Great Jungle Journey into the Wild on their trip through the Bible.

Each day students spent three hours in the morning developing their literacy and math skills. Each afternoon students enjoyed lunch together where they were intentionally taught table manners; rotated through physical education, art, music, STEM and Bible and character classes; and enjoyed guest speakers and field trips. Students were taught about six pillars of character: respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring and citizenship. They were encouraged to memorize five key Bible verses that told God's story from Genesis to Revelation and were presented with how they could have a relationship with Jesus.

Students shared their Bible-based songs with the residents of Lutheran Life Villages just down the road.



This program was one of two Clubhouses sponsored by Bridge of Grace Ministries, in cooperation with The Boys and Girls Club and Ambassador Enterprises, and provided through the generosity of The Mind Trust, Don Wood Foundation and the Waterfield Foundation.



They engaged with interesting animals from Mark's Ark and Indiana Wild.



Younger students spent an afternoon at Jungle George while the older students took a ride on the Sweet Breeze canal boat at Promenade Park.



The staff and families who spent the summer at Bethlehem wish to thank the staff and congregation of Bethlehem for being such gracious hosts and for your prayers and support for this program.

Draft, not yet approved by the Board
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church
Board of Directors Regular Monthly Meeting
July 8, 2025

Members present: Pastor Ben Ahlersmeyer, Evans Branigan, Dan Bates, Rachele Dance, Blake Sebring, Greg Shediack, David Schult and Brian Bates Members absent: John Stafford Guests: Dena Schult

The July regular monthly meeting of the Board was opened at 6:28 PM by President Greg Shediack. Pastor Ben provided an opening prayer asking for God's blessing of our deliberations.

The minutes from the Board's June 2025 regular monthly meeting were unanimously approved as submitted, after being reviewed previously online.

The Soul Accounting report as forwarded from the Board of Elders included the passing May 15 of Kile Pence, June 8 of Vivian Chaney, and June 15 of Richard Pierce. As Greg said, "We lost some great people last month, and hopefully their legacies will live on in us." Amen!

Brian Bates presented the monthly Financial Report. Monthly income for June was \$38,626 compared with a budgeted amount of \$26,833. Income from offerings through the first six months of the year totaled \$179,711 and total income including miscellaneous receipts and extraordinary income totaled \$200,925. Monthly expenses for June totaled \$36,225, compared with a monthly budget amount of \$33,668. Expenses for the year through June totaled \$197,192. The balance in the Endowment Fund at the end of June was \$1,385,484. That portion of the Endowment Fund resting with the Lutheran Foundation was current through May as we had not yet received the June statement. The month-end balance in the SSMG Fund was \$25,846.

Halfway through the year, the church is operating at 55.8% percent income of the annual budget of \$322,000 as far as offerings, and 48.8% of expenses overall.

Part of last month's expenses included getting the organ tuned, and adding an extra security camera on the north end of the building to cover a previous blind spot. We are also dealing with a larger than expected water bill after a new meter was installed. We are asking City Utilities about that. There is also the potential for a larger electricity bill, possibly because of increased recent building usage from LSUS and Summer Clubhouse. Summer Clubhouse has said they are going to make a donation to the church at the end of the summer.

After seven years of faithful service, Dain Christensen has decided to retire as the church custodian. We are thankful that Dan Scheerer, after 4½ years as Dain's assistant, is stepping into the role.

The first-floor drinking fountain, which has not been functioning for a couple of months, will likely be removed because repairs would cost thousands.

In the Pastor's Report, Pastor Ben talked about his recent trip for a week to Detroit's Bethany Lutheran where he shadowed Pastor Christopher Bodley to study their outreach efforts. The church stresses doing things in partnership with the neighborhood, such as joining with a Missouri Synod non-profit which invites mission trips from churches across the country to visit and participate in projects. The director of that organization is scheduled to meet with Bethlehem's Community Center committee in late-July.

Pastor Ben relayed how Bethany is building a garden area, including a patio, in consultation with neighborhood members. We need to set up ways to ask the neighbors for their input on what they would like to see us consider as far as usage of the lot across the street.

He leaves for St. Louis on July 12 for a week at their version of Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

Summer Clubhouse will conclude July 18, with approximately 85 children participating in daily activities.

In the Community Center report, the group met recently with Fletcher Upshaw and Irwin Principal Brandon Foster at their request. Fletcher has run the long-time non profit Neighborhood Mentoring Academy and has operated three youth halfway-houses in the area. He has goals of offering more services such as classes for cooking, fatherhood engagement, parenting inspiration, basic life skills, etc., and would like Bethlehem to consider becoming a host site. Talks will continue.

The bill for the recent building engineering assessment has been paid through a \$23,500 grant from Sacred Places of Indiana. The committee has been told its application for a \$66,000 grant from Sacred Places to pay for those repairs should be ruled upon in July. So far, feedback from the organization continues to be extremely positive and encouraging. If we are successful, we will need raise \$1 dollar in match for every \$2 awarded by Sacred Places, or at least \$33,000. We are prohibited from taking the money from the endowment.

While continuing to meet with interested groups, we are sending select individuals requests for information as we move forward.

In New Business, Greg talked about the recent fellowship and social event Dave and Dena Schult hosted at their home which drew more than 20 members. After thanking the Schults, Greg said the event has inspired him in several ways. He would like to stress a couple of points of emphasis come fall, asking members to step up to fill elected positions; and providing encouragement for a re-invigoration of our small group programs.

August 19 will be the start of the next round of the church's Grief Share program.

After a motion by Evans Branigan and a second from Rachele Dance, Pastor Ben led us in prayer to close the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Aug. 12 at 6:30 p.m.

Submitted in His service,
Blake Sebring, fill-in secretary



DRAFT NOT YET APPROVED BY THE VOTERS ASSEMBLY

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Voters Assembly
Sunday, June 1, 2025

The Voters Assembly was called to order by President Greg Shediack at 10:25 AM in the sanctuary. Thirty-seven members were present establishing a quorum.

Secretary John Stafford presented the minutes from the February 9, 2025 Voters Assembly. He moved for their approval as submitted and Rachele Dance provided a second. The motion unanimously passed.

Treasurer Brian Bates next presented a financial update through the month of April. Income year to date was \$126,090 and expenses were \$130,233. The balance in the Endowment Fund as of the end of April was \$1,347,765. It was noted that the portion invested with the Lutheran Foundation was current as of March 31st as we had not yet received the April statement. The balance in the SSMG Scholarship Fund as of April 30th was \$24,598. Brian moved for the acceptance of the financial report. The motion was seconded by Ruth Bates and passed unanimously.

Pastor Ben next presented updated Bethlehem Mission, Vision and Values Statements along with a proposed Ministry Plan for their implementation. A document describing these statements and the plan were included in the meeting packet which was both distributed to members at the meeting and previously made available after Saturday and Sunday Services and distributed to members via e-mail. Pastor noted that these statements and plan arose out of the congregational Mission and Visioning Process over the past year. During discussion, it was suggested that the congregation be provided periodic updates on progress being made in implementing the Ministry Plan. John Stafford subsequently moved to adopt Mission and Vision Statements and the set of Values as presented and further, that the Board of Directors and the Board of Elders be directed to take steps to implement the proposed Ministry Plan. The motion was seconded by Barb Netterville and passed unanimously.

Greg Shediack presented the previously advertised and distributed proposed amendment to the Bethlehem Constitution and Bylaws to remove Chapter III Section A 3 regarding the tenure of members of the Board of Directors, specifically to remove the following provision:

A. 3. Tenure

No Director may serve more than three (3) consecutive terms without a break of at least one (1) year of service, except the Senior Pastor. If a director serves one year or more of and unexpired term, that service shall count as one term. If a director serves less than one year of an unexpired term, that service shall not count as a term.

Greg explained that the Board was offering this proposed amendment in light of the increasing difficulty of finding members of the congregation willing to serve on the Board of Directors. After discussion, John Stafford moved and Steve Bercot seconded a motion to remove this provision from the Constitution and Bylaws. The motion passed by more than the two-thirds of members present as is required by the Bylaws for their amendment.

On behalf of the Community Center Committee, Blake Sebring presented a document outlining attributes desired from organization/s that we might partner with in use of our currently underutilized space. The document also outlines a set of preferences that should be used in selecting such partnering organizations. A document setting forth this set of Attributes and Preferences was included in the meeting packet and had also been previously made available to members as had the two previous items. This document was presented in an effort to keep members as current as possible on the activities of the Community Center Committee and no formal action by the Voters Assembly was required.

John Stafford next presented an update on our grant application to Sacred Places of Indiana, a program of Indiana Landmarks. At this time, we are in the final stages of assembling the application. It was noted that Mark Blessing had been taking the lead in its preparation but that he was presently out of town and thus unable to attend the Assembly meeting. It is anticipated that we will be applying for approximately \$66,000 in grant funds and, if approved, will need to raise approximately \$33,000 in matching funds. We are applying to address several repair items that were identified in the recently completed Building Assessment undertaken by an architectural and engineering team. The Assessment had been totally funded by a previous grant from Sacred Places.

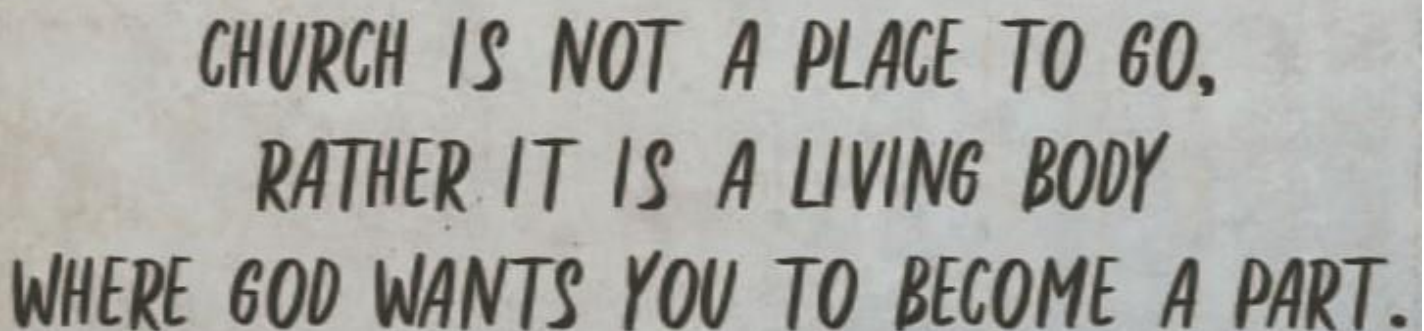
Pastor Ben provided an update on the activities of the 100th Anniversary Committee, including a tentative schedule of planned activities for next year. Blake Sebring noted that many members were volunteering to serve the congregation in numerous ways and that it might be helpful to assemble a listing of who was serving on the various boards and committees. Pastor also provided updates on two activities that will be using Bethlehem this Summer, including the Summer Clubhouse returning after several years absence and that LSUS will be providing some summer break tutoring sessions for its students in the building.

There being no further business to come before the Assembly, Evans Branigan moved and Rachele Dance seconded for adjournment. After closing with prayer, the meeting adjourned at 11:46 AM.

Respectfully submitted in His service,

John Stafford

Secretary



CHURCH IS NOT A PLACE TO GO,
RATHER IT IS A LIVING BODY
WHERE GOD WANTS YOU TO BECOME A PART.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 – Miracle Perez-Nelson | 13 – Gail Jenkins
Elena Tobin |
| 2 – Jessica Geisler
Elizabeth Hatfield | 15 – Angelita Garcia |
| 3 – Emeka Stanford-Manning | 16 – Logan Bernabe
Elliot Ferguson
Donna Melcher |
| 4 – Tonisha King
Tristan Owen | 19 – Pastor Jeff Geisler |
| 6 – Linda Stafford | 21 – Lashondra DeYampert
Julie Smith
Thomas Tinsley |
| 8 – Robert Crawford
Denise Robinson | 22 – Juliann Davis
Sharon Dietrich |
| 9 – Blake Pettit | 23 – Marquetia Gatewood
Riley Robinson |
| 11 – Judah Ahlersmeyer
Quinton Hunter
Yolanda Linan
Triston Richards | 24 – Erica Dammann |
| 12 – Ruth Bates
Trena Jones
Etta Scott
Mary Snow | 25 – Kathy Brehm |
| | 28 – Stavion Davies |
| | 29 – Jazmyn Martin
Jason Vongphachanh |

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 – Tim and Kim Ellison
3 – Omar and Janine Bernabe
7 – Robert and Mary Snow
8 – Darrell and Sara Robinson
13 – Tim and Michelle Miller
19 – Eddie and Kathy Young
21 – Pastor Ben and Melissa Ahlersmeyer
27 – Greg and Cathy Finner
Greg and Pam Fuller
29 – Karl and Kelly Bernabe



If you have had a change in home address, home or cell phone number or email address, please be sure to let us know so that we can update our database.

If your children have moved out on their own please provide the office with their updated information.

We want to stay in touch, so having accurate contact information is important to us.

Please call, mail, or email the church office with any updates.



Bethlehem
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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of your smartphone
over this code then
click the link
provided.**



online WORSHIP

<https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemfortwayne>

BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING



AUGUST Servant Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Altar Guild</u>	<u>Elder</u>	<u>Head Usher</u>	<u>Lay Readers</u>	<u>Power point</u>	<u>Live Stream</u>
2	Sharon Dietrich Suzie Emley Amber Herndon	Brian Bates			Charlotte Ratliff	
3		Greg Shediack	Evans Branigan	Donna Volmerding Dave Volmerding	Allison Cheng	Randy Hapner
9	Linda Stafford	Ed Ramos			Blake Sebring	
10		Peter Schlie	Dan Bates	The Hapner Family	Aaron Brown	Josiah Hapner
16	Kim Ellison Sharon Shediack	Peter Schlie			Charlotte Ratliff	
17		John Bates	Ron Gallmeyer	John Stafford Linda Stafford	Josiah Hapner	Joshua Hapner
23	Mary Snow Allison Cheng	Michael Johnson			Carla Johnson	
24		Greg Shediack	Evans Branigan	Dena Schult Kim Brooks	Allison Cheng	Dave Volmerding
30	Sharon Dietrich Suzie Emley Amber Herndon	Brian Bates			Blake Sebring	
31		Peter Schlie	Dan Bates	Glenn Emley	Aaron Brown	Randy Hapner

*The greatest joy that I know in this life
is **SERVING** the Lord.*

August²⁰²⁵

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. Isiah 40:30-31</i>					1	2 8:30am Men's Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
3 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour	4	5 6:30pm - Bd. of Elders	6	7	8 LSUS Golf Outing	9 8:30am Men's Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm Indian District Treatshop
10 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour WOB Core Com. – Rm 1	11	12 6:30pm – Bd. of Directors	13	14	15	16 8:30am Men's Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
17 9:00am Worship w/Comm Back to School Blessing 10:30am Education Hour	18	19 5:30pm – GriefShare Pastor Geisler's birthday!	20 LSUS First Day of school	21	22	23 8:30am Men's Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
24 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour Serve at the Rescue Mission	25	26 6:30pm – Bd. Of Property 5:30pm – GriefShare	27 6:00pm 100th Anniversary Committee meeting - FH	28	29	30 8:30am Prayer Breakfast 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
31 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour	