

THE MESSENGER January 2025

The Newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church

As forgiven children of God, Bethlehem Lutheran Church shows Christ's love through acts of service so that we can share the hope of the Gospel with others.

Address: 3705 S. Anthony Blvd. Fort Wayne, IN 46806

Phone: 260-744-3228 Fax: 260-744-3229

Email: bethfw@yahoo.com Web: www.bethlehmlcms.org



From the Pastor's Desk



The Light That Cannot Be Hidden

*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
Isaiah 60:1*

Dear Saints of Bethlehem,

As we turn the calendar to a new year, the glow of Christmas still lingers in our hearts. The joy of Christ's birth—the Word made flesh—fills us with hope and peace. He is the answer to every longing heart, the deep desire of every nation. It was such a joy to celebrate the Advent and Christmas season with you! But the season of Epiphany comes quickly, as wise men arrive from the East, and it calls us to something more. The light of Christ that shone in Bethlehem is not meant to stay tucked away in a manger or confined to the walls of our sanctuary. It is a light for the whole world.

Epiphany is the season of spreading light. It's the season that reminds us Jesus is the Savior not just for a select few but for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. The Magi traveled from far-off lands to worship Him, and their journey reflects the call for Christ's light to spread into the darkest corners of the earth. The light that shone over Bethlehem now shines in us, His Church.

Isaiah's words call us to "arise" and "shine" because God's light has dawned upon us. But how do we shine? Not by our own strength or effort, but by reflecting the light of Christ. Think about the moon—it has no light of its own but shines brightly in the night sky because it reflects the light of the sun. In the same way, we reflect the light of Jesus in a dark world through our words, actions, and love for others.

This new year brings fresh opportunities to live as bearers of Christ's light. Perhaps it's reaching out to a neighbor, serving in a new way, or sharing the hope we have in Jesus with someone who feels lost or forgotten. Even small acts of kindness—like a word of encouragement or a prayer for someone in need—become sparks of Christ's love that spread far beyond what we can see. You and I know plenty of people who need that. Just like the wise men wandering toward something they didn't quite understand, there are many who are seeking Christ without knowing who He is. Their hearts ache for what Jesus brings but they just don't know where to look to see Him. How can we shine His light so that all may know His goodness and love?

As we begin 2025, let's keep our eyes fixed on the One who is the Light of the world. His light will never fade or fail, no matter how dark the days may seem. And as His people, we are called to carry that light into every place God sends us. We each have our corners of the world where we can shine. May God make those places obvious to you. May He give you the courage to begin reflecting His light in those same places. May the glory of the Lord shine brightly in and through you this Epiphany season and always.

In Christ's light and love,
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)

January 5, 2025 – Second Sunday of Christmas
Filled with Wisdom - Luke 2:40
Rev. Thomas Eggold

God's Wisdom saves you. The teachers in Jerusalem were being taught by the One in whom all wisdom is found. In Christ Jesus, the Passover Lamb was sacrificed for our sins once and for all. In Christ Jesus, the punishment for our foolishness was received. We have been forgiven and heaven is ours.

January 12, 2025 – The Baptism of Our Lord
Baptized into Christ - Luke 3:21-22
Rev. Shayne Jonker

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:5 ESV). Today we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan, God in the flesh, and so also we celebrate our baptism into Christ. What a great comfort in the midst of temptation and trial, sin and death, and every distress that we can say to ourselves, “I am baptized into Christ!”

January 19, 2025 – 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany
Read the Signs - John 2:11
Rev. Paul Shoemaker

Recognizing and understanding signs is an important skill to master when learning to drive. Jesus performed many miraculous signs and wonders so we can see the signs and know He is the Christ, the Son of God.

January 26, 2025 – 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany
Scripture Fulfilled - Luke 4:16-30
Rev. William Mueller

Jesus is invited to choose and read the Scripture reading at a worship service in His hometown of Nazareth. He reads a powerful section from Isaiah the Prophet about the work of the Messiah. He startles the worshipers with the statement, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” What? How could this be? But it begs us to examine our own lives and ask ourselves, “Are we offended at what Jesus says?”



START THE NEW YEAR WITH OBADIAH

At only one chapter Obadiah is a very small book of the Bible, yet it has big messages of warning and Good News for us as we start the new year of 2025. Please plan to join the Men's Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, January 25, at 8:30am in the Bethlehem cafeteria as we get together for breakfast, prayer, a devotion by Bill Ihssen, and God's Word in Obadiah.

"The day of the LORD is near for all nations." Obadiah 15a NIV.



EDUCATION HOUR

10:30am-11:30am
Adults-cafeteria

Hiding God's Word
in our hearts
Sonshine Club 2024 - 2025



Children ages 3yrs + are invited to join us in the Sonshine Club room after Sunday worship from 10:30-11:30. We'll be digging into God's promises for us all throughout the Bible beginning in Genesis!

small GROUPS

Mark your calendars:

Epiphany Brunch: January 5, 2025

Come down to the cafeteria after service, January 5th for Brunch, music and fellowship. We'll see you there!

The Freewill offering will be collected for Our Savior Lutheran Church and School, St Petersburg, Florida. Our Savior Lutheran Church and school families lost everything from the devastation of Hurricane Milton. The collection will help provide needed resources to rebuild and recover.

Kasey Hapner providing the music for the Epiphany Brunch



THE Rescue Mission

CHANGING LIVES FOR GOOD™

There are openings for Rescue Mission Volunteers for both bakers and servers. Look for the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board outside the Book Nook library. Contact either Randy Hapner @ 260-745-7477 or Ruth Bates @ 260-417-0600 if you have further questions.

Food Bank Report

By Sharon Shediack

November

We provided food to 410 individuals. They included 173 children under the age of 18, and 53 individuals over the age of 60. Our congregation provided 1241# of food. We went to Community Harvest four times this month to purchase 2428# of food in the amount of \$1194. The Irwin School donated 1390# of food! Our 15 volunteers gave 118 hours of their time.

We could use soup, 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

Help keep the shelves stocked this winter. 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



Bethlehem Mission News

By Jane Miller

Dear Bethlehem Family,

For the December Messenger, I wrote a fairly impassioned, strongly worded piece expressing personal views on both overseas and local missions. But I should have considered the many ways in which Bethlehem Congregation is truly a light and continuing in many ways to be a presence right where we are in our neighborhood, in spite of the fact that we are fewer in numbers of actual participating members, both because we are an aging congregation and also because over the last number of years we have lost many younger families who have moved to what they have considered safer areas of the city and outlying areas of Fort Wayne. They have also taken their tithes and children with them. This is just a fact of life, and of course has affected the number of children who attend our church and are students in our combined school, Lutheran South Unity School. For many years of its existence, we have been the biggest financial supporter of OUR school, because have considered it an outreach into the south-side community! We also have fewer volunteers to chip in and actively help in many ways. But we still have a big, aging building to maintain, and even many of our attempts to share our beautiful building with many different floor levels are problematic because of its lack of accessibility!

Pastor Ben, whom the Lord sent us almost 5 years ago, has been a strong encouraging leader and spends 4 mornings a week connecting with the students at LSUS; so he has been a great support to our school! It's very obvious he believes strongly in the importance of providing a Christian, grace-based Lutheran presence on the south side of our city! All this is to say that, while I have much passion for all forms of outreach and missions: overseas, local and neighborhood, my body can no longer support those strong passions. So I ask for forgiveness for any of our still active, committed leaders and members who are doing their absolute best to keep our church a vital part of our community, for any hurt or offense I may have caused you! That said, following are the Prayer requests I ask you to consider in your private, family, and small group prayer times!

Mission Prayers for January Updates:

Pray for the many school families who attended the LSUS Christmas program, JOURNEY TO THE MANGER, presented on December 17 at Bethlehem, and continue to pray for all the fine faculty and staff who serve at OUR school! While we weren't able to attend it, we did get to attend the Children's Village one at Lutheran Life Village South Anthony this morning, and it was a real JOY to see all those little ones eagerly participating! It was Chaplain Mike Wakeland's final time to lead this before retiring, and he will be much missed, for sure! Pray also for those children and families touched by this neighboring outreach mission! And while we are at it, Joe Boway has asked us all to be praying for the children in the rural Lutheran schools your gifts started, who were baptized during and after their big Reformation conference, in spite of bad roads and long distances many had to travel!

Praise God the set of "Shi" Bible stories from Exodus has been completed! Pray the Holy Spirit will use this powerful set of stories to deepen faith in the many "Shi" people in Southeast Asia.

Pray also for the Lord's protection over the "Slhi" Bible story team as they travel to villages to distribute the new set of stories!

Pray for Christian Believers in Sri Lanka and Nepal who are being strongly persecuted for their faith! In Nepal, Madhesh province has become a persecution hotspot.

Pray for believers' resilience. Pray for Pastor "Mohen" whose church was attacked, the extremists assaulting the pastor, threatening members and seizing Bibles! Pray for peace for the pastor and members, who are becoming fearful!

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.



New Year's Resolutions: Building Good Mental Health Habits

By: Anita Everett, MD, DFAPA, Director, Center for Mental Health Services

Setting New Year's resolutions can be a positive way to focus on self-improvement, but it's important to approach them in a manner that promotes good mental health and well-being and maximizes our chances of sticking with them.

There are strategies to prioritize our mental health during this time as we strive to achieve our resolution goals, but keep in mind that you know yourself better than anyone else. New Taking care of your mental health is key to overall health.

Here are some tips for creating resolutions that prioritize your mental well-being:

- **Pick a Goal that Motivates You**
- **Break Down Your Big Goals into Smaller, More Manageable Goals**
- **Focus on Progress, Not Perfection**
- **Stay Positive Lean on Others for Support and Motivation**
- **Practice Self-Compassion**
- **Set a New Date**
- **Don't Compare Yourself to Others**
- **Know When to Ask for Help**

No matter how big or small your New Year's resolutions are for 2025, remember to show yourself some grace and forgiveness during the times when you may struggle as you work to reach your goals. Please take time over the course of this new year to engage in something meaningful to you, but more importantly, be kind to yourself. You deserve it.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own
understanding. In all your ways
acknowledge him, and he will make
straight your paths.*

Proverbs 3:5-6



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), Thresa Lightning (260-417-1450) or Richard Pierce (260-450-2280), our Grief Coordinators.

WOMEN of BETHLEHEM



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



2024 ADVENT TEA

A total of \$1,911.15 will be sent to
Our Savior Lutheran Church and School in St. Petersburg, FL for hurricane relief.

FOR YOUR 2025 CALENDAR:

Women of Bethlehem Game Day

Saturday, January 11, 2025 starting at 12:00noon in the Fellowship Hall. Lunch provided.

(A brief business meeting followed by games of all kinds (Board games, cards, maybe a little trivia). Prizes!!

Since the men will mostly be watching Football games, we'll be playing some games of our own.



CHOIR AND HANDBELLS RESUMING IN JANUARY

We are excited to announce that both the Choir and the Handbells will be resuming on Wednesday, January 8! We invite all current members as well as new voices and ringers to join us as we begin rehearsals and prepare to sing/ ring once a month in services. Whether you're a seasoned musician or just looking to share your talents, we would love to have you be a part of our Music Ministries. Choir Rehearsals are Wednesdays from 6:00 – 7:00pm in the 1st floor choir room. Handbells are Wednesdays at 7:15- 8:15pm in the balcony.

No prior experience is necessary—just a love for music and a desire to serve through song and sound. For more information or to sign up, please contact Kasey Needham Hapner, kaseyneedham92@gmail.com

The Joyful Corner

Joy to the World in the New Year

WRITTEN BY SHANA SCHUTTE

“Jesus is the source of joy for He is joy.”

You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. Psalm 4:7

One of my favorite Christmas songs is “Joy to the World.” One thing I love about the title of this precious hymn is that the joy God promises us comes *to* the world but is not *from* the world. The joy Christ promises as we enter a new year originates in Him and is from Him. Pondering this today reminds me to reevaluate where I look for joy.

True joy cannot come from anything worldly. It can only come from Him and from loving what—and who—He loves.

It comes from knowing we are deeply and unconditionally loved.

It comes from knowing we are never alone.

It comes from knowing He has our best interest in mind amid uncertainty and worldly chaos.

It comes from sharing the love He has given us with others.

It comes from knowing this world is not our home but that our true home is with Him in heaven.

It comes from knowing He is ultimately in control.

It comes from knowing He is working all things for our good and His glory. In the end, all will be well.

It comes from knowing He will make all things new and remake this world into the perfection He intended from the beginning.

If we expect to get true joy and fulfillment from the pleasures of the world, we will be sadly disappointed and find ourselves striving and anxious. *Joy* doesn’t come from a change in circumstances and a perfect world, but a change in us as we reorient ourselves to find our joy in Him. Jesus is the source of joy for He is joy.

This year, I want to be more intentional to spend more time with Jesus, the Joy-giver and stay away from the things of the world that destroy my joy (like negative news that breeds anxiety and fear). Joy to the world, and joy to you, friend!

“Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his dwelling place” (1 Chronicles 16:27).

Prayer

Help me stay close to you this year and stay away from the things in the world that take away my joy. Amen.

Application

Ask yourself the following questions: What is true joy? How is it different than being happy? Where or what do I turn to find joy? How can I best be a joy bringer to the world? Using a Bible concordance, look up scriptures that include the word “joy.”

Related Reading

John 15:11; John 16:22; Psalm 5:11



Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church
Board of Directors Regular Monthly Meeting
November 12, 2024

Members present: Pastor Ben Ahlersmeyer, Evans Branigan, Brian Bates, Dan Bates, Rachele Dance, Blake Sebring, Greg Shediack and John Stafford Members absent: none Guests: none

The October 8th regular monthly meeting of the Board was opened at 6:30 PM by President Greg Shediack. Pastor Ben provided an opening devotion based on Psalms 118:14, "The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation." Slow down, take a deep breath, and remember that He is always with us. Allow the Lord to guide our decisions. Pastor closed the devotion with prayer.

The minutes from the Board's October, 2024 regular monthly meeting were unanimously approved as submitted on a motion from John Stafford and a second from Dan Bates.

The Soul Accounting report, as approved by the Board of Elders at its November meeting, was reviewed by the Board. It included the death of Leona Beckmann on October 18, 2024.

Brian Bates presented the October Financial Report. Monthly offerings for October were \$19,434 compared with a budgeted amount of \$26,833. \$30,000 was also transferred from the Endowment Fund to the Operating Fund. Monthly expenses for October totaled \$34,137, compared with monthly budget amounts of \$40,010. The balance in the Endowment Fund at the end of October was \$1,340,759. The balance reflected the September ending balance in the funds held with the Lutheran Foundation as the more recent statement had not yet been received. The month-end balance in the SSMG Fund was \$25,293. Brian also presented a report illustrating actual expenses compared with budgeted amounts for the major categories of the Operating Budget. Through the first ten months of the year, we have expended 84 percent of the budgeted expenses. The monthly Treasurer's Report was unanimously adopted on a motion by Brian Bates and a second by Rachele Dance.

Pastor's report included a presentation of the dates and times for Advent, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services; a discussion of the status of the Music Director position vacancy as it appears our current candidate is not likely to fill the position; and a discussion of the need to upgrade some of the AV equipment. Pastor will further research some options with regard to the latter item.

John Stafford provided an update on the work of the Community Center Committee. Four members of the Committee – Barb Netterville, Mark Blessing, Blake Sebring and John Stafford attended the second day-long Sacred Places workshop on October 26th. Mark Blessing will provide an update of the Committee's activities during the November 17th Voters Assembly. Members of the Committee will also be meeting the Board of Building and Grounds to update them on the Sacred Places program and grant opportunities.

Brian Bates presented a draft of the 2025 Operating Budget for the Board's consideration. Modest increases were made to several line items based on the Board's review and discussion. With those modifications, the 2025 budget includes proposed income from offerings of \$322,000 and an Endowment Fund withdrawal of \$82,019 to support the budgeted expenses. Total proposed expenses are \$404,019. It was noted that the amount proposed to be withdrawn from the Endowment is likely to approximate the Endowment earning anticipated in 2025. The proposed budget, as modified, was recommended to be presented to the Voters Assembly on November 17th on a motion by John Stafford and a second by Dan Bates. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board next reviewed the proposed agenda for the upcoming Voters Assembly. No changes were made from the agenda as had previously been printed in the weekly bulletin.

There were no items considered under new business.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Evans Branigan moved and Dan Bates seconded a motion for adjournment. After closing with prayer, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07 PM.

Submitted in His service,
John Stafford, Secretary

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)

THE BETHLEHEM COMMUNITY CENTER COMMITTEE

Would you like to have some fun talking about Bethlehem's potential future opportunities? Following the Jan. 12 service, the Community Learning Center Committee is asking you to join us in the cafeteria for an exercise examining the church's assets. The committee already has a list of about 75, but we need your help to make sure we include everything. Compiling the list so far made us very optimistic about what we CAN accomplish rather than what we CAN'T, and we can't wait to share what we've learned with you.

From individuals, we are looking at the categories Heart (something cared deeply about), Hands (skills), and Head (something we know). As a congregation, the answers will fit into the categories of Associations, Institutions, Economic, Stories, Physical, and Individuals.

What are the physical assets of our congregation?

What are assets/talents unique to us as a group?

What are some talents, experiences, perspectives, and skills of our individuals?

We want this to be a fun exploration so come prepared to discuss, help and laugh.

BETHLEHEM'S 100th ANNIVERSARY "Throughout All Generations"

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



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

*Kick-off: Sunday, January 11, 2026 (same month as the first meeting of the church)

*Education Celebration: Sunday, May 31, 2026 (History of education and recognition of Confirmation classes)

*Main Event - Sunday, September. 27, 2026 Tent service



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 – Thang Dang
Ja'Queisha Raines | 18 – Jared Geisler
Yasmine Owen |
| 2 – Denise DeYampert
Joshua Hapner | 19 – Rey David Magadan
Carole Preston
Robert Snow |
| 6 – Cheryl Poepple | 20 – Dena Schult
David Stocking |
| 7 – Heather Weemes | 21 – Lisa Bratton
Joey Nelson
Katrina Owen
Amber Williams |
| 8 – Stephanie Cheng
Dana Crane
Reggie Tharp | 22 – Tracy Davis-Cannon
Gene Dettmer |
| 9 – Kent Bearman
Gladys Davies | 23 – Jaden Smith (Harris)
Mercedez Tyra-Brooks
Charlee Williams |
| 10 – Cynthia Alexander | 24 – Marissa Johnson |
| 11 – Isaac Nelson | 25 – Shirley Brunson |
| 12 – Lucas Bernabe | 26 – Lisa Pippenger |
| 14 – Matthew Centurion
Ty Smith | 28 – Greg Coleman
Joe Nelson |
| 15 – Jane Miller
Blake Sebring
Suzanne Wright | 31 – Shayna Johnson |
| 16 – Lindsey Finner
Jean Hille | |



www.myfwl.org



**IS YOUR
INFO UP
TO DATE?**

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.



JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 8 – Richard and Kathy Brehm
Steve and Donna Melcher
- 9 – Keith and Amber Hill-Roddy



Offerings may be mailed to the church at
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
3705 South Anthony Boulevard,
Fort Wayne, IN 46806

You can make gifts directly on our website. It's simple and secure. Visit our website to see how easy it is!

www.bethlehemlcms.org



ONLINE WORSHIP

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

JANUARY 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>
4	Sharon Dietrich Suzie Emley	Peter Schlie			Blake Sebring	
5	Amber Herndon	Greg Shediack	Dan Bates	Peter Schlie	Allison Cheng	Dave Volmerding
11	Kim Ellison	Michael Johnson			Carla Johnson	
12	Sharon Shediack	Peter Schlie	Ron Gallmeyer	The Hapner Family	Aaron Brown	Randy Hapner
18	Linda Stafford	Brian Bates			Charlotte Ratliff	
19		John Bates	Evans Branigan	John Stafford Linda Stafford	Josiah Hapner	Joshua Hapner
25	Mary Snow	Ed Ramos			Blake Sebring	
26	Allison Cheng	Greg Shediack	Dan Bates	Glenn Emley	Allison Cheng	Josiah Hapner

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

January 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 8:30am Men's Bible Study 9:30am Women's Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
5 9:00am Worship w/Comm EPIPHANY BRUNCH	6	7 6:30pm - Bd. of Elders	8 6:00pm - Choir 7:15pm - Handbells	9	10	11 8:30am Men's Bible Study 12:00 Women of Bethlehem Game Day 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
12 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour Community Project report	13	14 6:30pm - Bd. of Directors	15 6:00pm - Choir 7:15pm - Handbells	16	17	18 8:30am Men's Bible Study 9:30am Women's Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
19 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour	20	21	22 6:00pm - Choir 7:15pm - Handbells	23	24	25 8:30am Prayer Breakfast 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
26 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour	27	28	29 6:00pm - Choir 7:15pm - Handbells	30	31	