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## From the Pastor's Desk

### Citizens of Two Kingdoms

This month, our nation begins celebrating a remarkable milestone. In 2026, America will mark 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Whether you are a student of history or not, that anniversary invites us to pause and reflect on the blessings God has given through our nation. As Christians, we have good reason to be thankful. We enjoy freedoms that many throughout history could scarcely imagine. We gather openly for worship. We teach our children the faith. We serve our neighbors, participate in our communities, and have opportunities to contribute to the common good. At the same time, anniversaries like this remind us of an important truth: while we are citizens of our nation, our ultimate citizenship belongs elsewhere. The Apostle Paul writes, "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20).

One of the great gifts of Lutheran theology is the understanding that God works through what Luther called the Two Kingdoms. Through His right-hand kingdom, God creates and sustains faith through His Word and Sacraments. Through His left-hand kingdom, He preserves order and provides for His creation through families, governments, schools, workplaces, and communities. This means Christians do not have to choose between being faithful citizens and faithful disciples. We can be both. We give thanks for our country without placing our hope in it. We participate in civic life without expecting politics to accomplish what only Christ can do. We serve our communities because God has placed us there as His people.

In fact, much of our Christian life is lived not in extraordinary moments, but in ordinary vocations. God works through parents raising children, teachers educating students, business owners serving customers, neighbors helping neighbors, and citizens seeking the welfare of their communities. These are not distractions from God's work. They are often the very means through which God carries out His work in the world.

This truth is especially meaningful as we reflect on our own life together at Bethlehem. While our nation approaches its 250th birthday, we are celebrating 100 years of ministry in southeast Fort Wayne. For a century, God has gathered His people here around His Word and Sacraments. Week after week He has forgiven sins, strengthened faith, and proclaimed the hope of Christ. Then He has sent His people back into the world. Back into homes and workplaces. Back into schools and neighborhoods. Back into everyday relationships where His love can be shared through countless acts of service and kindness.

As we celebrate both our nation's history and our congregation's anniversary, we do so with grateful hearts. We thank God for the blessings He has given through our country. We thank Him for the generations who have gone before us at Bethlehem. Most of all, we thank Him for Christ, whose kingdom will never end. Nations rise and fall. Communities change. Generations come and go. But Jesus remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so we continue the work He has given us: proclaiming Christ, nurturing faith, and restoring hope right here in the place where God has planted us.

In Christ, Pastor Ben



# BETHLEHEM FAMILY LIFE MINISTRY

## The Chosen Bible Study for Women

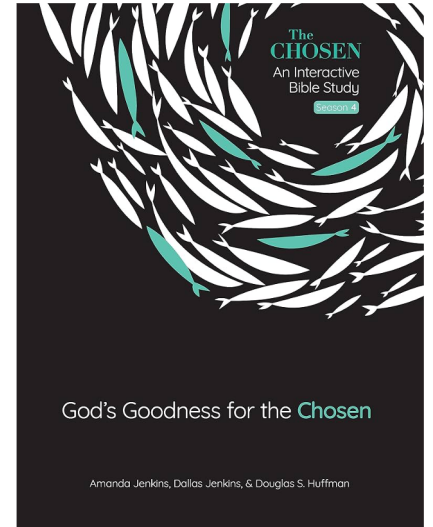
The Women of Bethlehem have studied God's Word together on Saturday mornings for MANY years using video-based Bible studies. This group is open to all women, not just Bethlehem members, and is currently comprised of women from several different churches.

This fall we are watching Season 4 of the Chosen and using a study guide created for this video series. Our time together includes small group discussion and prayer time. This 8-week study will meet on Saturday mornings at 9:30am at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 3705 South Anthony Blvd. The cost of the study guide will be about \$11.00.

This group does not meet over the holidays, but resumes in the new year. Stay tuned for our official start date!

If you'd like to join this study group, call Laurie Hapner 745-7477, or email [hapners6@gmail.com](mailto:hapners6@gmail.com).

If we're on Messenger together, you can let me know that way too. Invite a friend! Drop-ins are welcome.



**EDUCATION  
HOUR  
10:30am-11:30am**



Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book *Life Together* writes, "In Christian brotherhood everything depends upon its being clear right from the beginning . . . that Christian brotherhood is a spiritual and not a psychic [human] reality."

This will be our focus at our Bethlehem Men's Prayer Breakfast on **Saturday, July 25**, starting at 8:30am in the Bethlehem cafeteria. Please plan to join us for breakfast, prayer, and our consideration of God's Word. "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. . . . [I]f we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. . . ." I John 1:5, 7 NIV.

## Food Bank Report

By Sharon Shediack  
**May**

We provided food to 313 individuals. They included 156 children under the age of 18, and 27 individuals over the age of 60.

Our congregation provided 292# of food. We went to Community Harvest 3 times this month to purchase 1286# of food in the amount of \$499.

Our 16 volunteers gave 113 hours of their time. 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.

Community Harvest's donation have been down. This limits what we can purchase from them.

**We are in need of canned vegetables and strawberry jelly.**



Every  
Donation  
Makes A  
Difference



## A GREAT way to study the Bible and to make lifelong friends!

July is here and it's time to start planning for your FALL Small Group Bible Study!

Many of you have experience either leading or participating in a small group study. These studies may take place at church, in your home, or at another convenient location. The frequency can vary and the length of time you spend together generally ranges from 1-2 hours.

Maybe you have never led such a study but would like to give it a try. All you need is a couple other people who are interested and a topic to study. Maybe you've led many such classes but are looking for a book or topic to study this year. We've got you covered!

The Small Groups Library, located near the Fellowship Hall, contains a wide selection of group Bible study materials. Some are solely book based, while others are video based. Some require quite a lot of personal study (homework) in between classes; others require much less.

Here are just a few of the materials we have available in our library:

- **The Battle Plan for Prayer: From Basic Training to Targeted Strategies**, by **Stephen & Alex Kendrick**. This study was inspired by the Kendrick brothers' movie *War Room*, which many of us have seen and loved. Watching the movie together would be a great way to begin or end this class. The book for this study could easily last an entire year.
- If you have ever participated in a **Beth Moore** Bible study, you know that they are worth all the homework. BLC owns quite a few of her video-based studies including **David, Children of the Day, Beloved Disciple, A Woman's Heart, Believing God, Daniel, Breaking Free, The Quest, Entrusted, and A Heart Like His**. These are geared for women in class format, but could be done individually as well.
- **Family Friendly Ideas Your Church Can Do**, is a practical study that you may want to consider. If outreach is important to you, consider this for a small group study.
- **The Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit**, by **Francis Chan**. This study includes 7 weeks of materials and is video based. In it, we are reminded that the true source of the church's power is the Holy Spirit. In addition to the video, there are books and workbooks available in the library, all ready for your use!
- **Lifelight**: If you were a member when Pastor Tom Eggold was our pastor, you probably remember this Bible study series. Each study guide focuses on a different book of the Bible. A great learning opportunity! We have some of this series in our library.
- Some of you will remember participating in a "**LIQUID**" Bible study. These are also video-based studies on a variety of topics. Each contains five 10-minute videos for discussion starters. One is based on living by faith, another utilizes lessons from the Parables, and still another one is based on OT Bible stories. BLC owns 5 different studies in this series.
- **Priscilla Shirer** is another creator of excellent video-based Bible studies for women. We own **Elijah** and **The Voice of God**. Both are excellent!
- **The Prodigal God, Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith** by NY Times Bestseller **Timothy Keller** is another study available in our library. It consists of a book, a study guide and a DVD; it is 6 lessons long. This study invites us to "*discover the amazing depths of God's extravagant love.*"
- If you've been at Bethlehem for many years, you may remember participating in **The Purpose Driven Life** study by **Rick Warren**. The entire church was enthusiastic about this study, and we included the kids as well! We have plenty of materials if you'd like to revisit this study, either as a group, or on your own.
- **Unshakable: Standing on the Rock When Life Quakes Hard** is a study by **Donna Snow** and produced by LWML. Our Saturday morning women's group enjoyed this video-based study several years ago. It contains eight lessons and is geared for women.
- **What Makes a Man? 12 Promises that will Change Your Life**, by **Bill McCartney**, Head Football Coach, Colorado University. This Promise Keepers study was written for men and asks the question, "How does a man become fully Christlike and fully masculine?" It is made up of 12 lessons. We have both the book and the study guide.

Being a part of a small group provides a wonderful opportunity to really get to know people. If you are not already in a small group, consider starting one or joining one. Bible study and fellowship are such a great way to connect with other people in a significant way. We can help you get started!

Would you like to review a Bible study? Please submit it to [hapners6@gmail.com](mailto:hapners6@gmail.com).



**Ways to watch WORSHIP ANEW:**

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

**Watch Worship Anew locally on**

**WPTA 21.2 (NBC) at 7:00 AM Sundays**

**WPTA 21.3 (MyNet) at 8:00 AM Sundays**

**July 5, 2026 – Sixth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III**

**Jesus Gives You Rest - *Matthew 11:28-30***

Our bodies need rest. Of greater importance is rest for our souls. Only one Person can give this, who says to us, “Come to Me, and you will find rest for your souls.”

*Featured Choirs:*

*Holy Cross Sanctuary Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.;*

*Indiana LWML District Choir*

*Featured Art and Architecture:*

*Welcome Home Soldier Monument, Albia, Iowa*

**July 12, 2026 – Seventh Sunday after Pentecost**

**Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer**

**Now What? - *Matthew 13:23***

You have heard — or read — God’s Word. Now what? The question isn’t “How do we make the Word more life changing?” Instead, how does this life-changing Word shape and guide our lives as we live in response to it?

*Featured Choirs:*

*Indiana LWML District Choir*

*Featured Art and Architecture:*

*St. John Lutheran Church, Sherwood, Ohio*

**July 19, 2026 – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Rev. Shayne Jonker**

**Weeds Among Wheat - *Matthew 13:24-25***

Christians must always contend with false teaching and false Christians. Jesus said so. There is nothing wrong with the good seed that Christ sows. The pure Gospel rightly proclaimed produces faithful Christians, but the devil deliberately sows bad seed where the good seed has been sown.

*Featured Choirs:*

*Holy Cross Sanctuary Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.;*

*St. Paul’s Choristers, Fort Wayne, Ind.;*

*St. Paul Preble Adult Choir, Decatur, Ind.*

*Featured Art and Architecture:*

*Zion (Cicero) Lutheran Church, Edgerton, Ohio*

**July 26, 2026 – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Rev. Paul Shoemaker**

**Priorities - *Matthew 13:44-52***

What is your priority in life? Jesus’ priority was to do the will of His Father. That means that His priority was you. His priority was to pay in full the penalty of your sins so you could be in heaven forever.

*Featured Choir:*

*Valley Lutheran High School Golden Voice Choir,*

*Saginaw, Mich.*

*Featured Art and Architecture:*

*Lake George Lutheran Chapel, Fremont, Ind.*



[www.myfwl.org](http://www.myfwl.org)



# Bethlehem Lutheran Church Celebrating 100 years 1926-2026

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



## BETHLEHEM TRIVIA

1951 The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Projects were:

To retire one year's installment of building debt	\$7000
To redecorate the church interior	\$4000
To complete payment of playground & driveway paving	\$2500
To repair and renovate the organ	\$1000
To equip the new classroom	\$1000
To install radiator deflectors in the church nave	\$500

It's not too late to order your  
100th anniversary shirts!



Use the QR code to  
order shirts.

## 100TH ANNIVERSARY THANK OFFERING

As of April 21<sup>st</sup>, we have raised \$35,762.98 toward our goal of \$100,000. Thank you to all who have already given! If you haven't yet had the opportunity to participate, you can give at upcoming anniversary events, use a special offering envelope, or give online. Thank you for joining in this response to God's goodness "throughout all generations."



As part of Bethlehem Lutheran Church's year-long 100th anniversary celebration, 20 members took a short walk back in time. Under beautiful partly cloudy, comfortable mid-70s weather on June 20, a group ranging in age from 2 to over 90 walked approximately six blocks to the original church and school sites at 3205 and 3206 Alexander St.

The school started first at 3205, followed by the church beginning operation soon after at the home across the street under a backyard tent. Ron Oetting recalls hearing stories of original patrons walking across backyards to attend church behind his grandparents' house. His grandfather, Reinhard Oetting, was one of the organization's early leaders, and his father, Edgar Oetting, was one of the first 33 students enrolled in the school. Ron Oetting presented a poem as a highlight of the June 20 outing.

**Ron Oetting's poem from the June 20, 2026  
visit to Bethlehem Lutheran Church's original site, 3206 Alexander St.**

Can you imagine my surprise  
while reading this month's Messenger?  
An ancient photo caught my eyes –  
and, I must say, it caused a stir!  
Depicted in the photo is something quite discreet.  
It's Bethlehem's first chapel on Alexander Street  
But wait! Am I mistaken? I can't believe my eyes!  
I must admit that the photo is –  
to me – one big surprise!  
It goes against the things I learned  
when I was just a kid.  
Why should that matter what I learned  
or what I said or did?  
I'll tell you why – because this house is where my  
grandparents resided.  
And as a child when I came here,  
I always was excited!  
My grandparents were Christians,  
they read a lot of scripture  
But something doesn't seem quite right  
about that ancient picture.

The photos clearly labeled,  
Bethlehem's portable chapel  
But judging from the photo – and what I think I see  
To my mind it just doesn't look too portable to me!  
The photo shows a structure of wood,  
bricks and cement.  
When I was young, I thought they said  
the chapel was a tent!  
I'd always heard the stories about  
my church and school,  
and how it began back  
when my grandparents were cool.  
How Bethlehem was started in their backyard.  
How neat!  
It all began so humbly here on Alexander Street.  
If you'll indulge this gray old man  
(and let me say I'm sorry)  
I'd really like to tell my long-remembered story.  
So let me take you back – way back – to 1951  
When I was 8 years old  
and life was Cracker Jacks and fun.  
My story might be fractured.  
My memory incomplete  
But I spent lots of time – right here – on where? –  
Alexander Street!

My grandpa and my grandma  
lived here in this home!  
As a young child, I visited – and I was free to roam.  
To me this house was like a mansion  
high up on a hill.  
I've never forgotten it; I doubt I ever will.  
But, nonetheless, I must confess  
my memories are sweet,  
Of all the good times I had here on where? –  
Alexander Street!

Now, Alexander Street is where  
I spent much of my youth,  
and where I learned to never lie  
and always tell the truth.  
So Alexander Street was  
home away from home for me.  
I spent a lot of time there,  
perched on my grandpa's knee.  
So if the church was started here, in 1926,  
then we're all looking at a house, be told  
That's more than one hundred years old!

You wanna go to Grandma's?  
Those were six magic words!  
That means that there'd be ice cream!  
We'd feed the squirrels and birds!  
We'd walk down to the Bon Ton  
for cream puffs and eclairs.  
Or maybe I'd help Grandpa run errands to Adairs.  
If we had time, we'd stop at Meyers  
for vanilla Cokes.  
When we'd get home, we'd both pretend  
we'd had too much to drink.  
It was one of our jokes.  
Grandma never found it funny,  
at least that's what I'd always think.  
Grandma never liked the way  
my Grandpa liked his whiskey.  
I never understood back then;  
she said it made him "frisky."  
But Grandma always had surprises –  
little toys or plastic flowers –  
She bought at 88-cent sales from  
downtown's Wolf & Dessauers.  
We always knew there'd be a treat  
or things to do – On where? – Alexander Street!

Our Grandpa owned a dairy.  
He'd bring home chocolate milk.  
We drank from waxed containers.  
It went down smooth as silk!  
He called it Peoples Dairy,  
his trucks were all dark blue.  
Each morning, they'd deliver milk, and butter, eggs  
and cottage cheese to customers they knew.  
My Grandpa knew who struggled  
and who had fallen on hard times.  
If they did not receive a bill, it was by his design.  
He argued he'd give milk away  
to those who can't afford to pay  
Before he'd let today's milk spoil  
and he'd have to throw it away.  
I'd never know 'til decades later,  
he'd owned a dairy farm.  
That farm was his profession.  
He'd lost his life's work early on,  
in what was called the Great Depression.  
But people helped to rebuild  
and help him start his dairy.  
And, over the years my Grandpa's fortunes  
always seemed to vary.  
But, still he tried to help those  
who had faced misfortune.  
Eventually, his Peoples Dairy became Allen Dairy.  
Today they call it Prairie Farms –  
a large farmers consortium.  
My Grandpa's name was Reinhart.  
My friends all called him Reiny.  
He kept his new DeSotos  
all sparkling clean and shiny.  
When I was born,  
they contemplated giving me his name.  
But, even as a baby,  
I raised objections just the same.  
I squeaked and squealed and hollered –  
and often filled my pants.  
No way would I ever be Reinhart!  
I let them know that in advance!  
But, still, I loved my Grandpa. He was a dad to me.  
My father went to fight a war.  
I'd not meet him til I was three.

I wish I still had photos  
of my Grandad's DeSotos.  
He bought them all at Rousseau Brothers  
every other year,  
Unless he wrecked them,  
which he did with constant frequency.  
He had a white one, then a blue one,  
then, black, maroon and gray.  
The one I most remember was bright green in '53.  
My Grandma's kin owned Tonne Dairy.  
Her cousins owned Wayne Candies  
at Anthony and Berry.  
So I grew up with chocolate –  
and chocolate milk. Okay?  
And that's why even now,  
I must have chocolate every day!  
Let this not be forgotten:  
I was the first grandchild born, I was spoiled rotten!  
That always included something sweet.  
It started here – on where? – Alexander Street.  
My sisters and I would sit on those back steps,  
our Grandma's reprimands  
Would teach us patience as the squirrels  
took peanuts from our hands.  
Down the street lived Mrs. Hickman,  
how she loved to bake!  
I especially liked her chocolate almond cake.  
Down the alleyway at Eckart or McKee,  
There was a Bon Ton Bakery  
That made things perfectly.  
My sisters liked the cream puffs.  
And not that anyone cares  
My preference often had to be those  
huge chocolate eclairs!  
This old house brings back memories.  
At Christmas, there were Christmas trees  
And packages with gifts galore  
From every downtown Fort Wayne store.  
Every Christmas, after church,  
we'd go to Grandma's house.  
I would get a tie and shirt,  
my sisters would all get a blouse.  
Grandma had her charge accounts  
at Grand Leader, Wolf & Ds.  
She would order duplicates  
of all the clothes she bought. But please!  
She would order duplicates of  
kids' clothes she would buy.  
She stored them in the attic,  
we never asked her why.

In her kitchen pantry, you won't believe – hello!  
She had a hundred boxes – all flavors of Jell-O.  
And even though this might have been  
in '53 – good Heaven!  
Some of those old boxes dated back to 1947!

In the front closet,  
Grandpa kept a fancy tape recorder.  
He'd play back all the Christmas cheer  
and holiday disorder.

My Grandpa's uncle, Ferdinand,  
was much older by far.  
Back in 1888, he opened Oyster Bar.  
Today that restaurant still exists.  
I stop in on occasion.  
When I ask for the family discount,  
I'm met with brusque abrasion.  
The Oettings were a ruthless bunch.  
They'd rather fist-fight than eat lunch.  
My Grandpa's brothers, Wilhelm. Right?  
At 36 killed in a fight.  
It wasn't any pro-like spar.  
It was a fight outside a bar.

My Aunt LaVerne lived down the block  
on Drexel Avenue.  
We called her Dutch but why that was  
nobody really knew.  
My mom and aunt would get dressed up  
and take the bus downtown to shop.  
It was a Saturday routine they thought  
would never ever stop.  
At noon they'd meet at Murphy's,  
enjoy the luncheonette.

Then off to Hutner's Paris, Robert Hall, Patterson-  
Fletcher, Wolf & Dessauer, Grand Leader, Richman  
Brothers and the other stores.

My Grandmother shopped much differently.  
She'd check out all the ads,  
Then call up all her favorite stores,  
and buy out everything they had!  
It was the 1950s – those good ol days are gone.  
My Grandmas stuff all got delivered – 1  
ong before Amazon!  
As soon as Grandma's order was checked out  
and complete,  
the stores trucks started pulling up – to where? –  
Alexander Street!

My Grandpa and Grandma lived here  
for over fifty years.

My Grandpa liked his bourbon –  
and favored German beers.  
I visited so frequently they probably got tired of me.  
But, if they did, I never knew, they loved me –  
and my sisters, too.

But life goes on (as so were told)  
I watched my grandparents grow old.  
And, as my life turned to a tizzy,  
I had less time for them. I'm busy.  
There was no time for Bethlehem.  
I moved away – from all of them.

It had become all about me.  
I moved to Washington, D.C.  
With little thought, they got rejected.  
Old people rarely are respected.  
But now I'm old – and realize  
How facing when the day one dies,  
it's such a shame how I neglected  
those memories – and love so sweet  
I got right here – on Alexander Street.



## UPCOMING EVENTS



**Bethlehem Lutheran Church**  
3705 S. Anthony Blvd.

# COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

## Health Fair

**JULY 18, 2026**  
10:00a-3:00p

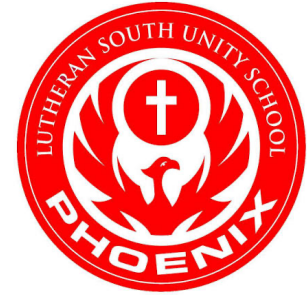
Join us for

**WORSHIP SERVICE UNDER THE TENT**  
4:00p-5:00p

MUSIC • FOOD • GAMES  
CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES  
BOUNCE HOUSES • DUNK TANK  
CLOWNS • GIVEAWAYS  
BINGO UNDER THE TENT  
FELLOWSHIP • AND MUCH MORE!

*Celebrating 100 Years*  
1926-2026

**SATURDAY, August 8**  
LSUS Clean – Up



Save the date:  
Tuesday, September 29  
for directory  
pictures. Further  
information about sign-  
ups will be forthcoming.

### Bethlehem Lutheran Church & School Alumni Dance & Reunion

Saturday September 12, 7:00pm – 11:00pm

Allen County Fairgrounds - 2726 Carroll Rd., Ft. Wayne, IN 46818

Home & Family Arts Building

Bethlehem invites all church and school alumni to celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with us.

The celebration includes: DJ and Line Dancing Instructor  
Refreshments & Cash Bar and Bethlehem memorabilia auction

Purchase tickets with cash or check during coffee hour  
Mail a check (your name will be on a list for admittance)

Credit Card – use the donate button on our website [Bethlehemlcs.org](http://Bethlehemlcs.org)

There is an option for dance tickets (your name will be on a list for admittance)



# 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.**



## HOW DOES SUMMER AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH

“Summertime, and the livin’ is easy,” the old song may go, but that isn’t the case for everyone. While others may be looking forward to family vacations, outdoor gatherings, and the laid-back vibe summer months can bring, for some, seasonal affective disorder (SAD) actually increases during the summer months.

If you find yourself experiencing increased anxiety, depression, or even simply new mood swings that affect your personal life or daily activities this summer, here are a few things you can do.

### PHYSICAL HEALTH:

Physical self-care can include exercise, nutrition, quality sleep, keeping up regular check-ups with your doctor, and staying hydrated. In the heat of summer months, this might include:

- Swimming or finding an online exercise workout you can do at home, indoors
- Creating light but healthful meals incorporating fruits, nuts, fish or chicken, and crisp, refreshing greens
- Keeping your bedroom cool with dark shades and quiet fans
- Scheduling a skin exam with your doctor or dermatologist
- Keeping a cheerily decorated water bottle nearby (and full of cold water)

### MENTAL HEALTH:

Mental health self-care can involve anything that stimulates your brain and helps you practice kindness toward yourself. Summertime mental self-care might include:

- Watching a summer blockbuster or playing a favorite game with friends
- Saying something you like about yourself out loud each time you look in the mirror
- Sitting quietly in the sun or shade with a book or journal
- Taking time to organize a desk drawer or closet
- Saying no to invitations if attending will only cause you stress

### EMOTIONAL HEALTH:

Emotional self-care empowers you to recognize and feel both positive and negative emotions, but to express them in ways that are healthy for your mind, body, and personal connections. Use the summer to do this by:

- Setting up a phone or virtual call with a friend you haven’t talked to in a while
- Exploring a new guided meditation
- Playing with a pet (either yours or someone else’s)
- Writing a letter to one of your strongest emotions, telling it how it makes you feel
- Boxing with a mattress or pillow
- Laughing as frequently (and heartily) as possible

### FIND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT IF NEEDED

If none of these tactics seem to be changing your summertime blues, or your symptoms are becoming overwhelming, a mental health professional may provide the support and suggestions you need to work through the season.



“When you go through deep waters,  
I will be with you.”  
ISAIAH 43:2

## 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 Thresa Lightning (260-417-1450), our Grief Coordinators.

# The Joyful Corner

## The Joys of Summer

Summertime represents living life with more enjoyment...with a sense of abandonment of worry, stress and intensity. There seems to be more laughter in the air and a spirit of simplicity and playfulness. We have more fun, spend more time with friends and enjoy moments of being childlike again. We are out of doors more often, go barefoot and enjoy a more lighthearted approach to the days and evenings.

- Warm temperatures: Feel: the warm air on your skin
- Cooling off in lakes, swimming pools or backyard sprinklers: feeling refreshed and calmed
- Children playing out of doors with laughter and exuberance: reconnection with the simple joys of childhood
- Parks with lush greenness and the scent of summer: communing with nature
- Flowers in gardens and window boxes: tending to the beauty of this world
- Long days where summer hangs in the air: having time for everything
- Travel opportunities: adventure, discovery and family time
- Colorful clothing and accessories: creativity and joy
- Lighter fare at mealtime: health, wellness and well-being
- Popsicle treats, fruity sorbet and lemonade: pure delight
- Eating out of doors at cafes, pubs and favorite spots: simple enjoyment of being out in the fresh air
- Enjoy blowing bubbles. Running through the sprinkler. Lying in the grass, finding animal shapes in the clouds.

This is what summer is all about: beginning again; a chance to, once more, truly enjoy life and the pleasures of warm days and long evenings. Perhaps summer is an opportunity to hear children and remember and reconnect with our own inner child. To join others at outdoor cafes, ride a bike or return to nature. To remember that life is good and days are sweet and that we can, for a time, allow ease and simplicity to be how we live and enjoyment of life to be how we navigate the warm, joyful moments of summertime.

Ultimately, our love of summer and our anticipation of endless, dazzling days of sunshine, warmth and ease show us how much we all want freedom, joy, delight and a simpler life. Find time this month to enjoy the fresh, warm air and make time for summertime fun!

*Thank  
you*



Priscilla, Vivian, Tony, and Victor would like to say thanks to all of you for your prayers, visits, texts, phone calls, and cards during the illness and death of Willard.

God's blessings to each of you.

## *Women's Summer Outing*

**Country Heritage Winery  
Lunch at 1:00pm ~ Tour at 2:30pm**



*Please sign up by to  
Dena Schult  
text/call  
260-602-8844  
or email  
denaschult@icloud.com*

# Bethlehem Mission News and Prayers

## BETHLEHEM MISSIONS AND PRAYERS

By Jane Miller

Dear Bethlehem Family,

It was a joy to watch online the baptism of the wife and baby of Anakone Somsanith this past Sunday, with former Pastor Jeff Olsen officiating and so many former members gathering to witness it, who had been involved in helping to settle the Somsanith family when they came many years ago as one of the refugee families brought over by Catholic Charities! As a Kindergarten Teacher at Bethlehem at that time, it was good to see Anakone and his brother Anasak as students in the school, and then once they grew up, to see them join the family in worshipping with us at Bethlehem! Over the years, the Olsens and the Somsaniths became very close family friends! Bethlehem has been a church. Who continues to reach out in love, just like Jesus would do! It was especially touching to me, as Sunday we also got to virtually witness the Baptism of our youngest great-granddaughter down in Missouri, Baptized by her Grandpa Steve Miller! "One Generation Will Tell the Next", Bethlehem's 100th Anniversary Hymn, is so fitting!!!

PLEASE PRAY for the outreach activities that our Congregation is doing in July, and especially in the Community Festival we are holding! Pray our neighbors sense the love and light of Jesus in our members!

Meanwhile, our neighboring Congregation, New Life Lutheran, continues to reach out to the Burmese Community in the Southeast area of Ft. Wayne, and many Burmese children attend our Lutheran South Unity School, along with Hispanic, White and Afro-American children; a true Mission school! That's what Heaven will look like!

PLEASE PRAY for the PARTIES in the PARK that New Life is holding at Three Fountains Apartments for the children in the neighborhood, and even a tea party LAMB is hosting for the ladies from the apartment complex! The Liberian Mission trip, led by Joe Boway and Mike Wakeland, has started its second part, with the group from Elmhurst, IL having arrived home safely by the time you read this.

PLEASE PRAY for Joe as he meets with church leaders in Monrovia and makes arrangements for transporting building and school supplies to rural Liberia. THANK GOD for a safe, effective mission trip!

## Here are five powerful Bible verses to read as you celebrate this historic Independence Day:

**Understanding True Freedom.** John 8:36: "*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*" While we celebrate political freedom on July 4th, Jesus offers something even greater. He offers freedom from sin and the ability to live as God's children. Just as our founders fought for independence from oppression, Christ fought for our spiritual independence through His sacrifice, and we are no longer slaves to sin.

**The Value of Liberty.** Galatians 5:1 reminds us, "*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*" This verse teaches us that freedom is precious and worth protecting. Americans over the past 250 years have worked to preserve the freedoms established in 1776. We can stand tall like the Statue of Liberty, shining our light for all to see.

**Serving Others with Our Freedom.** Galatians 5:13: "*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.*" We understand that the festivities are fun, but freedom comes with responsibility. We're free to choose how we live, and God calls us to use that freedom to help others.

**Gratitude for Our Blessings.** Psalm 33:12 declares, "*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.*" On this 250th anniversary, We are to be thankful for the heritage of faith that influenced America's founding. While our nation isn't perfect, we can appreciate the freedom to worship, gather in churches, and share our faith openly.

**Standing for What's Right.** Proverbs 21:15 says, "*When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.*" The American Revolution was fought for justice and fair treatment. Christians are called to stand up for what's right while trusting God's ultimate justice.

DRAFT, not yet approved by the board  
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Board of Directors Regular Monthly Meeting  
June 9, 2026

Members present: Pastor Ben Ahlersmeyer, Greg Shediack, John Bates, Rachele Dance, John Stafford, Blake Sebring, Brian Bates, Dan Bates. Absent: Dave Schult.

June's regular meeting started at 6:27 p.m.

Pastor Ahlersmeyer started with a devotion from Matthew 9:35-38. Talks about Jesus's early ministry and asking his disciples to pray to the lord of the harvest for workers. He then sends the apostles out to work in His name. Jesus saw people in their condition and reacted to them, giving them compassion and time. He recognizes they are lost and need something. He calls and challenges us to see people and help them.

In the Community Center report, pastor continues to talk with Tony Hudson of Blue Jacket.

The Minutes from May were accepted unanimously after a motion from John Stafford and a second from John Bates.

There were no additions to Soul Accounting.

In the Treasurer's report, we are 2.5 percent above budget on the year so far on offerings. Expenses are at 41.8 percent of budget which is on point. The endowment funds are \$1,573,829. Building and Grounds is currently above budget at 49.1 percent, but that includes the purchase of a new mower. The budget was accepted unanimously.

In the Pastor's Report, Rhonda Cheng has retired and we will celebrate her service to Bethlehem at a later date. Details are upcoming. Akasha Kinley has been hired as a part-time fill-in as administrative assistant. Please extend patience and prayers as Akasha transitions. She'll be working 15 hours a week, 8-11 a.m. on weekdays. She can be reached through the general church email at Bethfw@yahoo.com or at the church general number 744-3228.

Organist Janelle Deal will return June 28 from her maternity leave.

There will not be any Saturday worship on July 4.

The Board will not be meeting in July. The next meeting will be Aug. 11 at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting closed with prayer at 7:30 p.m.



Hello Bethlehem!

My name is Akasha Kinley and I am Bethlehem's new secretary. I grew up in a very small town in Virginia, and I moved to Fort Wayne with my family after I graduated high school in 2021. Some of you may or may not know my parents, Pastor Daniel Kinley and Deaconess Stephanie Kinley. I have previously worked alongside my parents at Holy Cross, as aftercare worker, and as the youth ministries director.

This past year I worked as a preschool teacher aide for St. Peter's preschool, and I am currently working as a camp counselor for the YMCA at Arlington elementary school. Family is very important to me, and I love being with my friends. I love to be involved in the church and I am grateful for the opportunity to be here at Bethlehem. I am looking forward to getting to know you all.



## JULY BIRTHDAYS

1 – Carolyn Knox	15 – Matthew Jenkins
2 – Deanna Nelson	Michael Johnson
3 – Kaleah Hopkins	Olivia Smith
Fannie Moore	17 – Tina Adamonis
David Schult	18 – Margaret Burger
Linda Witte	19 – Janet Blessing
4 – Juanita Jennings	Daniel Duffy
7 – Boualinh Vongphachanh	20 – Michael Oberholtzer
9 – Mandy Martinsky	Sataria White
10 – Doris Scott	24 – Craig Bradley
12 – Lam Duong	Antonio Jones
Jayna Holmes	Glenda Starks
Carson Hutchinson	25 – DJ Nungester
Yohanes Lee	Zahara Nungester
Jaide Tucker	26 – Elliot Ferguson
13 – Sophia Grant	27 – Carlos Magadan
14 – Mary Ellen Emley	29 – Briauna Crawford
Andrew Thomas	31 – Ronald Gallmeyer

## JULY ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 – David and Dena Schult (65)  
 11 – Craig and Jennifer Bradley (5)  
 28 – Eddie and Nancy Pierce (24)  
 30 – Steve and Lenka Bercot (58)



LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES

[www.lhm.org](http://www.lhm.org)

To find airings near you, check the broadcast guide at [lhm.org/guide](http://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](http://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](http://lhm.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.



**Bethlehem**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Give your tithes and offerings online.  
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Visit

[www.bethlehemlcms.org](http://www.bethlehemlcms.org)

Or hold the camera of your smartphone over this code then click the link provided.



**Bethlehem**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

**Facebook  
Livestream**

Stream worship  
weekly  
9AM EVERY SUNDAY

Access the livestream by  
visiting

[www.facebook.com/bethlehemfortwayne](http://www.facebook.com/bethlehemfortwayne)



# July 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	Kim Ellison Sharon Shediack	Ed Ramos			Charlotte Ratliff	
5		Peter Schlie	Dan Bates	Suzie Emley	Aaron Brown	Hapner Family
11	Linda Stafford	Peter Schlie			Carla Johnson	
12		John Bates	Peter Schlie	Dena Schult	Josiah Hapner	Hapner Family
18	Mary Snow Allison Cheng	Michael Johnson			Carla Johnson	
19		Greg Shediack	Evans Branigan	Donna Melcher Threasa Lightning	Allison Cheng	Hapner Family
25	Sharon Dietrich Suzie Emley Amber Herndon	Brian Bates			Blake Sebring	
26		Peter Schlie	Dan Bates	Peter Schlie	Aaron Brown	Hapner Family

## HELP SHARE OUR WORSHIP BEYOND THE WALLS

Our church's **Livestream Ministry** helps us reach members who are homebound, traveling, or unable to attend in person—and it's only possible because of faithful volunteers behind the scenes. Right now, we are in need of **Livestream operators** and **PowerPoint operators** to help support our worship services.

No experience is required—we **will provide training** and ongoing support. If you're comfortable with basic technology, willing to learn, and have a heart to serve, this could be a meaningful way to use your gifts. Even serving **once or twice a month** makes a big difference.

By volunteering, you're not just running equipment—you're helping people worship, stay connected, and feel included in our church family. If you're interested or would like more information, please contact the church office to sign up or for more information (260-744-3228).

**Thank you for prayerfully considering serving in this important ministry!**

# July 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><i>Now the LORD is the SPIRIT, and where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is FREEDOM.</i></p> <p>2 Corinthians 3:17</p>			1	2	3	<p>4</p> <p>8:30am Men's Bible Study <b>No Worship Service</b> <b>HAPPY JULY 4<sup>th</sup></b></p>
<p>5</p> <p><b>9:00am Worship w/Comm</b> 10:30am Education Hour</p>	6	<p>7</p> <p>6:30pm – Bd. of Elders</p>	8	9	10	<p>11</p> <p>8:30am Men's Bible Study <b>4:00pm Worship w/Comm</b></p>
<p>12</p> <p><b>9:00am Worship w/Comm</b> 10:30am Education Hour Food Committee Meeting</p>	13	<p>14</p> <p>6:30pm – Bd. of Directors</p>	15	16	17	<p>18</p> <p>8:30am Men's Bible Study 10:00am-3:00pm Community Festival <b>4:00pm Worship w/Comm</b></p>
<p>19</p> <p><b>9:00am Worship w/Comm</b> 10:30am Education Hour</p>	20	21	22	23	24	<p>25</p> <p>8:30am Men's Prayer Breakfast 1:00pm Women's Summer Outing <b>4:00pm Worship w/Comm</b></p>
<p>26</p> <p><b>9:00am Worship w/Comm</b> 10:30am Education Hour</p>	27	<p>28</p> <p>6:30pm – Bd. Of Property</p>	29	30	31	