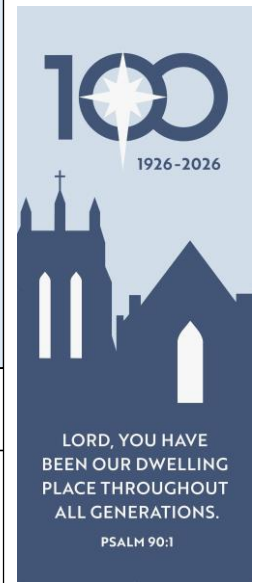


Address: 3705 S. Anthony Blvd. Fort Wayne, IN 46806

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

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



From the Pastor's Desk

Where Confession Meets the Cross

There's a strange instinct in all of us. When something breaks in the house, we cover it with a rug. When a warning light comes on in the car, we turn up the radio. When something fractures in our own hearts—anger, envy, lust, pride—we either hide it deep enough that no one can see... or we rename it so it doesn't sound so serious. We live in a time that is uncomfortable with the word sin. Sometimes we soften it. Sometimes we laugh at it. Sometimes we even celebrate it. Rarely do we simply confess it. And yet Lent gently, firmly brings us back to honesty.

Many of us have chosen something to "give up" this season—sweets, social media, certain comforts. But beneath those choices is a deeper invitation: to give up the illusion that we are fine on our own. To give up the exhausting work of pretending. To give up hiding. Lent is not about self-improvement. It is about truth-telling. King David writes, "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD, 'and you forgave the iniquity of my sin'" (Psalm 32:5). That sentence shapes our worship. You hear it in the silence before confession. You speak it when we say together: we have sinned in thought, word, and deed. Notice the movement: "I said, I will confess...and you forgave..." No probationary period. No spiritual groveling. Confession and forgiveness are joined as tightly as cross and resurrection.

That is what makes Lent such a strange and beautiful season. It is paved with confession, yes—but not with despair. Christians do not redefine good and evil according to cultural trends. We do not pretend sin isn't serious. It is serious enough to require the death of the Son of God. But because we take sin seriously, we also take forgiveness seriously. The cross of Jesus Christ tells the truth about us. It exposes our rebellion, our selfishness, the thoughts we hope no one sees. It tells the truth that sin is not small—it is deadly. But the cross tells a deeper truth still: God's mercy is greater.

Lent walks us toward Good Friday with mixed emotions. There is sorrow. How could there not be? We hear the hammer. We see the darkness at noon. We hear our Savior cry out, "It is finished," and feel the silence that follows. But beneath the sorrow runs a quiet joy. The One who hangs there does so willingly. The cross is not an accident. It is the place where every confessed sin is laid down once and for all. When we kneel in confession, we are not groveling before an angry judge. We are coming to a crucified Savior who already knows everything—and loves us still. That is why confession is not something to fear. It is something to practice.

In a culture that hides sin or parades it, Christians do something radically different: we bring it into the light. We say what God already knows. We agree with Him. And then we listen as He speaks a better word: "I forgive you." Those words are grounded in Christ's blood. When absolution is spoken in worship, it is not the pastor's opinion. It is Christ's verdict over you, spoken into your ears here and now. That is why our Lenten discipline matters. Not because giving up chocolate or caffeine makes us holy, but because self-denial trains our hearts to say, "I am not my own master." It exposes where we cling too tightly. And as those attachments are revealed, so are the sins beneath them. And then—beautifully—we confess. Lent gives us space to examine ourselves without fear, because we know where the road leads. It leads to a hill outside Jerusalem. It leads to a cross. It leads to a sealed tomb, but one that will not stay that way.

As we move through these weeks together at Bethlehem, let this be a season of honesty. Not crushing guilt. But real confession. Specific sins. Brought into the light. And then real absolution—clear forgiveness, spoken and received. "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD, 'and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.'" That is what waits for us at the cross.

So if this season feels heavy, that's okay. Good Friday is heavy. It should be. But it is not hopeless. Beneath the sorrow is a deeper certainty: our sin, however great, has been carried by Christ. Lent trains us to tell the truth about ourselves. Good Friday shows us the truth about our God. And just beyond that dark Friday morning, before the sun has fully risen, a stone begins to move. Death loses its grip. The grave gives up its claim. And the forgiveness spoken over you now will echo into an empty tomb—and into a joy that will never end.

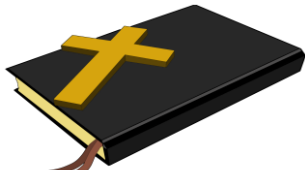
Pastor Ben

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



ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Join your Bethlehem family for a Lenten Bible Study series through Sunday March 29. Our fieldworker, Jon Dize will lead and will be focusing on the Parables of Luke 15. Come hear how the Angels will rejoice when those lost are found as we prepare ourselves for the death and resurrection of our Lord.

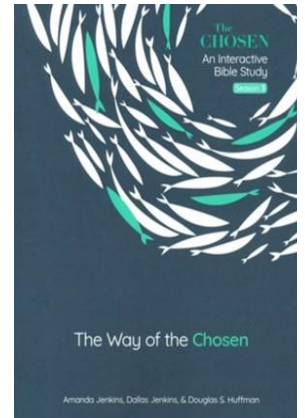
IN CHRIST ALONE

Sonshine Club 2025 - 2026

Children ages 3 yrs - 5th grade are invited to join us in the Sonshine Club room during the Education Hour after Sunday worship. Our theme this year will focus on stories of Jesus and how we can live in Him. Parents are always invited to join us and even children under 3 are welcome to participate with a parent present.

Women's Saturday Morning Bible Study

Season 3 of
The Chosen
Room 1 at
9:30am every
other Saturday.
March 14 & 28,
and April 11.



MARCH 28

As we continue in this centennial year of our congregation under the Men's Prayer Breakfast theme of "100 Years of Life Together at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church," on Saturday, March 28, we shall consider from the book *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer ". . . that Christian brotherhood is not an ideal, but a divine reality."

Please join us in the cafeteria starting at 8:30am that day as we have breakfast together followed by a devotion, prayer time, and our study of God's Word.

All Bethlehem members, friends, visitors, and neighbors are welcome. *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world."* Romans 1:8 NIV.



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

**March 1, 2026 – Second Sunday in Lent
Land, Legacy, and Life! - Genesis 12:1-3**

Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

God holds your entire world in His hands through three special gifts: Land, Legacy, and Life! Learn how these gifts, promised more than four thousand years ago to Abraham continue to share our past, present, and future.

Featured Choirs: Holy Cross Junior Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.; St. John Lutheran Adult Choir, Indianapolis, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Immanuel Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

**March 8, 2026 – Third Sunday in Lent
Living Water - John 4:10**

Rev. Shayne Jonker

Our sin has left us parched and thirsty. No mere water can quench our thirst for God. Oh, how we try the alternatives. But, the polluted puddles of this world's religions and spiritualities can't quench the deep thirst we have for righteousness, for wholeness, for peace. Only God can provide that Living Water which flows freely like a stream. Only God in the flesh opens up that stream to us so that we may drink and live.

Featured Choir: Lincoln Lutheran High School, Lincoln, Neb.

Featured Art and Architecture: Christ Lutheran Church, Woodburn, Ind.

**March 15, 2026 – Fourth Sunday in Lent
Eyes That See - John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39**

Rev. Paul Shoemaker

Jesus performs a miraculous sign, giving sight to a man born blind. What a tremendous gift! But the religious leaders, who were spiritually blind, refuse to see with the eyes of faith that the Man before them is the Christ. We thank God for spiritual sight and the opportunities we have to lead others to spiritual sight.

Featured Choirs: Christ Our Rock Lutheran High School, Centralia, Ill.; Indiana District LWML Choir

Featured Art and Architecture: Zion Lutheran Church, Woodburn, Ind.

**March 22, 2026 – Fifth Sunday in Lent
Is, Not Was - John 11:17-27, 38-53**

Rev. William Mueller

John 11 brings us to one of the greatest miracles of Jesus: raising Lazarus from the dead. In this account, Jesus also teaches us two powerful truths. He shows what it means that He is the Resurrection and the Life, and He moves us to discover that believing this resurrection truth greatly impacts our life.

Featured Choirs: Saint Paul Singing Saints, Concordia, Mo.; Lincoln Lutheran High School, Lincoln, Neb.

Featured Art and Architecture: Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Van Wert, Ohio

**March 29, 2026 – Palm Sunday
Do You Understand? - John 12:16**

Rev. Scott Zeckzer

We are told that the disciples did not understand what was going on during the first Palm Sunday. The crowds were excited about Jesus but were confused, too. What about you? Do you understand Palm Sunday?

Featured Choirs: Holy Cross Angelis Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.;

Holy Cross Men's Chorus, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Emmanuel Lutheran Church, New Haven, Ind.



www.myfwl.org

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Celebrating 100 years

Lord,
You have been our
dwelling place
in all generations.

Psalm 90:1



Bethlehem Lutheran Church 100th Anniversary 1926-2026

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

BIG-EYED FISH FRY

The March 100th Anniversary activity is the Big Eye Fish Fry on **FRIDAY, MARCH 27**, from 4:00-7:00pm. Tickets are available now. To purchase a ticket please see Rhonda in the office, Charlotte Ratliff, Deanna Nelson, Sharon Shediack, Dora Thompson or Sharon Dietrich. A 3-piece adult ticket is \$15 and a 1-piece child ticket is \$5. Cash or check. Carry out available. Delivery available by Blake Sebring, call the church office with your name, address, and phone number.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SATURDAY, APRIL 25

Clean up for Shepherd's Hand Walk

SUNDAY, APRIL 26

Preacher: Rev. Eli Voigt

MAY 30

Men's Prayer Breakfast 8:30am – Speaker: Dr. George Fry – “American Lutheranism in the 1920's”

SUNDAY, MAY 31

Service 9:00am – Preacher: Rev. Phil Rigdon

Education Celebration / Church Potluck

Blake Sebring – “Bethlehem Memories” Talk: Mr. Ron Oetting

JUNE 20

10:00am - Neighborhood Walk - 3205 Alexander St. Site of Bethlehem's 1926 Portable Chapel - Talk: Mr. Ron Oetting

JULY 18

10:00am – 3:00pm - Community Fest / Health Fair - Fellowship, Food and Fun

Order your 100th anniversary shirts today!

Use the QR code to order shirts.



BETHLEHEM TRIVIA

- Women were given voting privileges in 1972.
- In March 1927, Bethlehem requested membership in the Missouri Synod.
- In January 1931, a new school building was built.
- On January 26, 1930, Bethlehem had 231 communicant members and had a farewell service at Alexander & Drexel Avenues. The first floor served as the church and the basement, and the second floor was the school.
- The first hymn sung was the 46th Psalm.
- In March 1930, Bethlehem Lutheran Church purchased 3215 South Anthony as the parsonage.

TAKE AND SHARE PICTURES

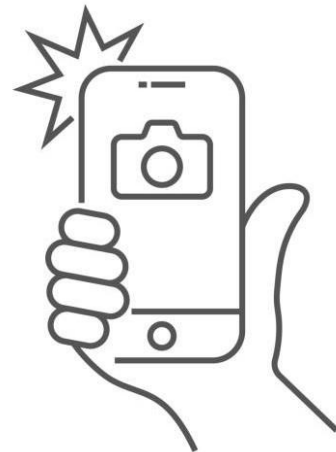
Keep taking those pictures of Bethlehem's 100th anniversary. We ask you to send us any photos appropriate to our 100th anniversary, maybe even wedding, events, school activities or baptism photos from the past. We can't promise we'll use them all, but we'll do our best!

We are also going to be collecting comments we can include in this yearbook. Instead of signing this yearbook, we'd like to ask you to consider contributing a comment by answering one simple question: What has Bethlehem meant to your life?

Thank you!

You can submit them by emailing the church the office at

bethfw@yahoo.com.



WORSHIP SCHEDULE FOR LENT - EASTER

February 25 - Midweek of Lent 2 – 6:30pm
March 4 - Midweek of Lent 3– 6:30pm
March 11 - Midweek of Lent 4– 6:30pm
March 18 - Midweek of Lent 5– 6:30pm
March 25 – Midweek of Lent 6 – 6:30pm
April 2 - Maundy (Holy) Thursday - 6:30pm
April 3 - Good Friday - 6:30pm
April 4 – Easter Vigil 4:00pm
April 5 - Easter Sunday service 10:00am

March 4th. 11th. 18th and 25th.

All are welcome to join us at 5:30pm for a simple meal each week before the service. Look for sign-up sheets to volunteer to bring food items to share in the Fellowship Hall

MUSICAL CELEBRATION

Showcasing skills and abilities as true instruments of God, talented musicians performed at Bethlehem Lutheran Church on Feb. 15. As the February portion of the church's 100th anniversary, the hour-long, Musical Celebration included approximately 50 attendees joining in as a congregational choir.

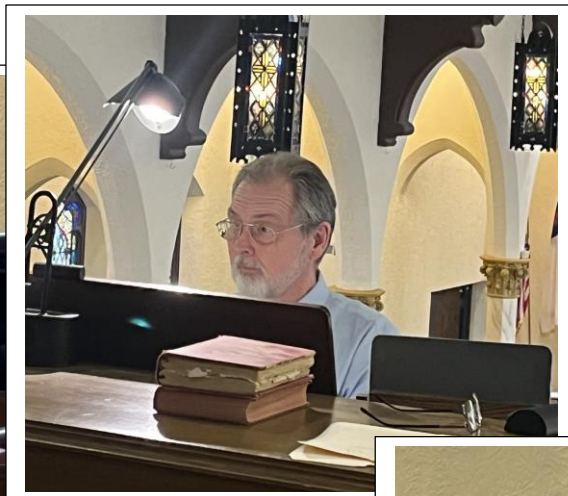
After an introduction from Bethlehem pianist, choir director and handbell choir director Kasey Needham Hapner, Pastor Ben Ahlersmeyer offered an opening prayer before the handbell choir performed "Quickening Spirit." The handbell choir consists of Josiah Hapner, Jacob Hapner, Allison Cheng, Mary Snow, Joshua Hapner and Laurie Hapner.

Kasey Needham Hapner's efforts continued as she performed "In Christ Alone" and "My Shepherd Will Supply Thy Need" on the piano and led the handbell choir in "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence."

Michael Hollman, a 42-year organist from Zion, brilliantly performed Johann Sebastian Bach's "Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor" on Bethlehem's pipe organ which was dedicated in 1966. Hollman also led the attendees by playing hymns "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," "A Mighty Fortress" and Alleluia Song of Gladness."

With piano by accompanist Lois Foote, soloist Mary Snow sang exceptional versions of "Simple Gifts" and "Loveliest of Trees."

Pastor Ahlersmeyer's closing comments included recognition of Bethlehem's generational choral and musical directors Oscar Albers and Ren Frank and thanked past organists and choir directors Dennis Anderson, Donna Miles, Bob Miller, Tom Remenschneider, Doug Reynolds, Luann Vachon and Bob Vogel.





THE Rescue Mission

CHANGING LIVES FOR GOOD™

Sign-up to help at the Rescue Mission.

We have openings for volunteers as well as bakers. The sign-up sheet, as well as additional Mission information, is located on the bulletin board outside the Book Nook Library. Take a look to see what time slot might fit for you! We serve and donate desserts every 4th Sunday of the month.

\$15 FOR 3 PIECES

\$5 FOR 1 PIECE

Bethlehem LUTHERAN CHURCH

FISH FRY

BIG EYED FISH

FRIDAY MARCH 27TH 4:00PM TO 7:00PM

Join us in the cafeteria!

Ticket includes fish, choice of side, coleslaw (3 pc only), tartar sauce, drink & a dessert

Dine-in or Carry-out

FISH FRY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

COOKIE BAKERS WANTED chocolate chip and snickerdoodle
HELP IS NEEDED

Thursday – set up, prep food;
Friday-servers and clean up.

Call Rhonda in church office (745-3228) or Sharon D. (515-2616).

Any help is appreciated!
Thank you.

Food Bank Report

By Sharon Shediack

January

We provided food to 290 individuals. They included 130 children under the age of 18, and 41 individuals over the age of 60. Our congregation provided 392# of food. We went to Community Harvest 4 times this month to purchase 2355# of food in the amount of \$530.

Our 17 volunteers gave 111 hours of their time.

We could use **SOUP**.

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

May your troubles be less,
And your blessing be more.
And nothing but happiness,
Come through your door.

Irish Blessing

small GROUPS

Looking for a GOOD BOOK to snuggle up with?

.....a DVD to watch this evening?

.....a daily DEVOTIONAL to start your day?

.....a book to read to your GRANDCHILD?

.....a new BIBLE STUDY for your small group?

Come and check out the selection in the Library located next to the Fellowship Hall.

Here's the procedure:

- 1) Browse the selection of materials.
- 2) Choose any materials that interest you.
- 3) Take them home for as long as you want.
- 4) Pass them on, or return them for others to enjoy. Look for the box labeled RETURNS.
- 6) Donate any books, videos, music CDs, or audio books that others might enjoy. Place them in the box labeled DONATIONS.

The door of the library is always open. It's a comfortable space for sitting and reading, with a table for meeting with a few others. There are toys and books for children and teens as well.

PLEASE ENJOY OUR LIBRARY!

Books you may want to read!

We would like to showcase some of the varied materials we have to offer in our library.

We thought we'd start with some authors you may know!

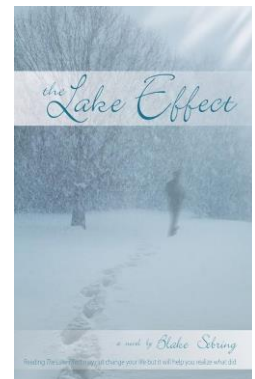
The Fragrance of Mercy by Donna Volmerding

This murder mystery, written by one of our long-time members, will keep you turning the pages as the story unfolds. You may even get a glimpse of some slightly familiar landmarks. As the title suggests, the author encompasses the concepts of justice, evil, forgiveness, and mercy within the story. This book is both entertaining and thought-provoking.



The Lake Effect a novel by Blake Sebring

Another book by another Bethlehem author. You may know Blake for his sports writing, but he's written about more than the Fort Wayne Komets! From the book cover: "What if you never recognized the biggest moment in your life? When a lake effect snowstorm forces a close-knit group of college students to spend a night in a dorm lounge, one friend shares a theory—everyone has a distinct moment in their life that transforms them into adults. The youthful idealists dismiss the concept, but 15 years later the memory challenges one to travel across the country, renew relationships and test the premise..."



Stumbling Toward Utopia:

How the 1960s Turned Into a National Nightmare and

How We Can Revive the American Dream by Timothy S. Goeglein

Tim Goeglein grew up in Fort Wayne and became the VP of External and Government Relations at Focus on the Family in Washington, D.C. In this book, Goeglein looks at the philosophies and policies that led to the societal earthquake of the 1960s, and how that has led to the cataclysm America faces today. He offers a blueprint for how we can return to the core values upon which America was built: personal responsibility, respect for life, sexual restraint, and patriotism.



Would you like to review a book that is in our library?
Submit it to hapners6@gmail.com.

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.**

MOODY MARCH

As winter fades and spring tiptoes in, many of us experience a shift in our mood. March, with its unpredictable weather and lingering post-winter blues, can feel like an emotional rollercoaster. But rest assured—fluctuating moods are a normal part of life. The key is understanding what impacts your mood, learning how to avoid absorbing negativity from others, and discovering ways to elevate your energy and overall well-being. Let's dive into how you can navigate the ups and downs of "Moody March" and step into spring feeling your best.

Our moods are influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, including:

- Hormones, sleep patterns, and neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine play a significant role in regulating our mood.
- The transition from winter to spring can impact our mood, especially as sunlight exposure increases, helping to boost serotonin levels.
- Daily stressors, work pressures, and personal responsibilities can weigh heavily on our emotional state.
- The people we encounter and the quality of our relationships significantly affect how we feel.
- Nutrition, physical activity, and hydration can either uplift or deplete our energy levels.

Understanding these influences can help you become more aware of why you may feel up or down on any given day, making it easier to manage your mood.

The good news is that there are plenty of ways to improve your mood and boost your energy, even during the unpredictable month of March. Here are some practical tips to help you feel your best:

- Physical activity releases endorphins, which are natural mood lifters. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise most days—whether it's a brisk walk, yoga, or dancing to your favorite music.
- Quality sleep is essential for emotional regulation and energy levels. Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night, and maintain a consistent sleep schedule.
- A balanced diet rich in whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, can have a profound impact on your mood. Avoid excessive sugar and caffeine, which can lead to energy crashes.
- Exposure to natural sunlight increases serotonin levels, improving your mood and energy. Aim to spend at least 20 minutes outside each day, especially in the morning.
- Focusing on the positive aspects of your life can shift your mindset. Take a few minutes each day to write down three things you're grateful for.
- Building strong social connections is crucial for emotional well-being. Make time to connect with friends and loved ones, whether in person or virtually.
- Doing things that bring you joy and fulfillment can significantly boost your mood. Whether it's a hobby, creative project, or spending time in nature, make space for activities that nourish your soul.

March may come with its fair share of mood swings, but it also marks the beginning of spring—a season of growth, renewal, and fresh possibilities. By understanding the factors that impact your mood, setting healthy boundaries, and incorporating mood-boosting habits into your daily routine, you can navigate the challenges of "Moody March" and embrace the season with a sense of vitality and optimism.

So, as the days grow longer and the world begins to bloom, remember that you have the power to uplift your mood, energize your spirit, and step into spring feeling truly tip-top.

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.

Bethlehem Mission News and Prayers

By Jane Miller

We received good news from Southeast Asia this past weekend:

Our dear children, Tim and Michelle Miller, are coming home to the US the end of March for a short furlough! They will fly into Chicago and the Peoria, IL area on Wednesday of Holy Week, pick up the car they jointly own with their children, Sarah and Zack Anderson whom you met and heard last Spring before they left for Thailand for Zack's language training in Chiang Mai, and drive here on Maundy Thursday! It will be so great to celebrate Easter with them and our other Fort Wayne Family!!!

They will worship with us here at the LLV Chapel on Resurrection Day, but have asked if they may speak at Bethlehem on the second Sunday of Easter. Pastor Ben said that would be great, and if you are able to hold the Bible Study hour in the Sanctuary, I will also be able to join you for the service and their presentation afterward! We hope you will be able to share in welcoming them home to Bethlehem. This will be a fairly short working furlough in this part of the country, since they also need to visit supporting churches in Wisconsin, Missouri, and Texas, where they were not able to visit when they were home for Sarah's wedding in Illinois in July of 2024.

Please join us in praying for safe travels, good health, good connections for Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) missionaries and staff worldwide this Spring and Summer worldwide.

We also received a very helpful Prayer Calendar from LAMB, the Lutheran Agency for Missions to Burmese! Since the Muslim observance and our Lenten season coincide, our friends at New Life and Southwest Lutheran Churches, including Rev. Jim Keller, Rev. Soe Moe, and Medical Deaconess Taylor Htoo Aung, have, with Jeanne Burger's help, put together a prayer calendar to help us in daily praying for local Burmese Muslims, that the Lord Jesus would bring them to understand God's amazing, priceless, unfailing, trustworthy, strong, abounding, enduring, hopeful love.

I will list the March prayers for individual Muslims by initials:

Pray that HS will accept Jesus' amazing love. - John 3:16

Pray that BB will welcome The Father's love. - John 15:9

Pray that MT will be moved by Jesus' sacrificial love. - John 15:13

Pray that AB will be drawn to Jesus' everlasting love. - Jeremiah 31:3

Pray that NM will be moved by Jesus' saving love and follow Him. - Ephesians 2:4-5

Pray that CM will believe that Jesus died for them. - Romans 5:8

Pray that MH will see that Jesus' love for them is permanent. - Romans 8:39

Pray that TD will be touched by Jesus' immeasurable love. - Ephesians 3:17-18

Pray that AD will be blessed by Jesus' offering of fragrant love. - Ephesians 5:2

Pray that CL will of and welcome Jesus' lavish love. - 1 John 3:1

Pray that TH will believe that Jesus died for them. - 1 John 3:16

Pray that AK will trust in Jesus' life-giving love. - 1 John 4:9

Pray that MI will see that Love sent Jesus to atone for their sins. - 1 John 4:10

Pray that AC will learn to live in God's love. - 1 John 4:16

Pray that God's love will fill CB's heart. - 1 John 4:19

Pray that NN will seek Jesus' merciful love and find eternal life. - Jude 1:21

Pray that MH will grasp that Jesus loves them dearly. - Colossians 3:12

Pray that HM will receive the greatest gift - Jesus' love. - 1 Corinthians 13:13

Pray that will help the LAMB staff, board, & volunteers share the love of Jesus with Burmese Muslims.

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

The Joyful Corner

The Joy of a Repentant Heart

"Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit." — Psalm 51:12 (ESV)

Lent is often viewed as a somber season—a time of fasting, self-examination, and recognizing the heavy weight of our sin. While we do not shy away from this, the true "joy" of Lent lies in where we take that heavy weight.

We recognize that true repentance is not meant to leave us in despair. Instead, it is the pathway to the profound joy of grace. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father runs to meet the repentant son not with condemnation, but with celebration.

This Lent, find your joy in realizing that Christ welcomes you, regardless of your past failures. Our "joyful" Lenten task is to turn from our sin, lay it at the foot of the cross, and receive the joyous, free gift of forgiveness. It is a joy that survives our sorrow because it is rooted in Christ's finished work on the cross, not in our own efforts.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, during this Lenten season, we thank You that You do not despise a broken and contrite heart. Remove the burden of guilt, and in its place, restore the joy of Your salvation. Help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross. May that joy live in us. In Jesus' name, Amen.



**RESTORE UNTO ME THE
JOY OF THY SALVATION;
AND UPHOLD ME WITH
THY FREE SPIRIT.
~PSALMS 51:12~**

**The Lord himself goes
before you and will be with
you; he will never leave you
nor forsake you. Do not be
afraid; do not be discouraged.**

DEUTERONOMY 31:8-9

CHANGING FOOTPRINTS

Changing Footprints collects both new and gently worn shoes and distributes them to individuals who are homeless, affected by disasters, or otherwise in need. They are currently operating right here at Bethlehem and could use volunteers to help sort the many shoes they receive. If you can donate just a few hours a month, your help would make a big difference! For more information or to sign up to volunteer, please contact Cheryl at 260-341-0167.



CHANGING THE WORLD, TWO FEET AT A TIME

DRAFT, not yet approved by the board
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church
Board of Directors Regular Monthly Meeting
January 13, 2026

Members present: Pastor Ben Ahlersmeyer, Greg Shediack, Brian Bates, John Bates, Dan Bates, Rachele Dance, John Stafford, Blake Sebring. Missing: David Schult. Guests: John Dize and Mark Blessing.

January's regular meeting started at 6:27 p.m. with Greg welcoming John Bates as the board's newest member. He replaces Evans Branigan who retired. John Stafford becomes vice president and Blake Sebring secretary.

Pastor started with a devotion based on Exodus 33, where Moses is interceding for the people, and asking for the Lords help and His presence. Moses was saying, If You aren't going to go with us, I don't want to go into the promised land. We need to understand that God has been with us in the past and will be with us in the future, but we especially need to know He is also with us right now, every step of the way. Pastor closed the devotion with prayer.

Mark Blessing, chairman of the community center committee, presented a detailed update. The hope is for the committee to become a bit more aggressive about sharing our plans with the public and those outside of the church, looking for help, guidance, advice, and looking for a partner as a main tenant of the building. We have not found the perfect partner yet, but we need to start moving ahead with plans.

The committee are looking at creating a name for the institution so people know what we are talking about, with a mission statement. Currently, we are using House of Bread as a placeholder name. The early version of the mission statement for the House of Bread Community Center is "Dedicated to improving the lives of the residents of Southeast Fort Wayne by coordinating access to facilities and provision of needed community services consistent with the Christian faith through partnering with Community Service Providers and Christian Organizations."

The committee feels confident there are service providers out there and we hope they can provide guidance on contacts with organizations that might need the space Bethlehem offers. We have strict guidelines for partners so that they meet our mission. Mark presented a proposed legal structure, suggesting the center organize as a non-profit entity that is controlled by the church, with the entity's board making the decisions. This is done to protect the church and its tax-exempt status. The five-person BOD would be represented by three people from Bethlehem, and two from the partners.

Mark suggests the entity/church may want to consider hiring a person for outreach to the community. Would that be a called position? Who would pay for this? This is not seen to be something Pastor could take on in addition to his regular duties. That particular idea and those discussions are just starting.

The committee is suggesting the possibility Bethlehem will rent space to the center which would then in turn sublet space to the organizations who want to use it. Mark is studying all accounting aspects to make sure the church is protected going forward. We cannot necessarily rent to a for-profit entity. That's why the mission statement is so important.

Work continues by the committee members, who will continue to keep the BOD regularly updated.

The minutes from the December 2025 board meeting were presented. John Stafford made a motion to accept the minutes and Brian seconded. The vote was unanimous.

The soul accounting report forwarded by the board of elders included the death of Dan Scheerer on Dec. 14.

Treasurer Brian Bates presented his monthly report for December. The church was about \$28,000 over budget on offerings for 2025 and finished with the overall budget of \$350,231 in offerings, which was 8 percent over budget for the year. All told we brought in \$381,847 for the year and did not need to take any money out of the endowment for 2025. We were about 1.5 percent under budget on expenses for the year at \$398,020 on a budget of \$404,019. The Endowment Fund through the Lutheran Foundation stands at \$1,451,128, with the Wells Fargo fund at \$52,473, for a total endowment of \$1,503,602.

The treasurer's report as submitted was unanimously accepted on a motion by Brian and seconded by John Bates.

Pastor's report included a review of the Christmas and Advent seasons, and the low attendance at both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. It was suggested that maybe a conversation needs to be held on the future of Christmas Day services and if we should consider possible changes.

Pastor is looking forward to Lent, with a theme of, "What are the things we are giving up for Lent, and looking at what Jesus gave up for Lent."

The 100th anniversary kickoff luncheon on January 11 was set up for over 200 people and was a huge, wonderful success. Thank you to all the ladies who did an incredible job with the meal. Hallelujah!

The board of property management – among others – did an outstanding job preparing the building for the opening weekend. The lights in the Narthex really make that portion of the building pop. The building and the event sparkled to set an outstanding example for the remaining anniversary events.

The church will hold installations of the elected board members and the school board representative Joe Nelson during the January 24 and 25 services.

The meeting finished at 8:15 p.m.

The next board meeting will be Feb. 10 at 6:30 p.m.

Submitted in His service,

Blake Sebring



CLHS NEWS

Free Concert

Featuring Concordia, Valparaiso University,
and Holy Cross

Concordia Lutheran High School's A Cappella Choir will join musicians from Valparaiso University and Holy Cross Lutheran Church for a special evening of sacred and choral music on **Friday, March 6 at 7:00 p.m. at Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School** in Fort Wayne. The concert will feature the Valparaiso University Chorale and Chamber Orchestra alongside Concordia's A Cappella Choir and Holy Cross' choirs, performing works by composers such as J.S. Bach and Eric Whitacre. This concert is **free and open to the public**. All are welcome to attend and enjoy an inspiring night of music.

CLHS Fine Arts Festival, Food Trucks and College Fair Sunday, March 15 | 1:00 -3:00 p.m.

Concordia Lutheran High School invites you to join us for our **Fine Arts Festival** on **Sunday, March 15, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.**, as we celebrate the creativity and talents of our Lutheran schools, from **preschool through college**. This festival will showcase student **art and music**, along with **food trucks** and **Concordia's College Fair**, making it an engaging afternoon for the whole family.

The highlight of the day will be a **festival concert at 2:00 p.m.**, featuring student musicians and ensembles. We look forward to welcoming our school families and community for an afternoon of fellowship, celebration, and the arts at Concordia Lutheran High School.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

2 – Brandon Knox Adam Rice	16 – Alexandria Foster-Lightning Dwight Freeman
3 – Marilyn Curl Loan Nguyen Mary Ann Oberholtzer	17 – Corinne Nahrwold Passion Young
4 – Lina Harris Barbara Daily	18 – Charlotte Stewart Austin Williams
6 – Lavonda Turner	21 – Annie Smith
11 – Rachael Michael James Soest	25 – Michelle Bearman
12 – Kera Roland	26 – Amarah Brown Eva Dressler
13 – Deici Flores Ashley Nelson	Ignacio Silva
14 – Seth Ahlersmeyer Krystana Gordon Jameria Snyder Brenda Warren	27 – Maria Nunez
15 – Doris Holmes	28 – Patsy Dressler Kari Kiger
	29 – Kenyatta Brown

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

- 21 – Mark and Janet Blessing (39)
- 22 – Donald and Yvonne Krill (46)
- 31 – Michael and Claudette Daniels (24)



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.



**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.
It's simple and secure.**

Visit

www.bethlehemlcms.org

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



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LUTHERAN CHURCH

**Facebook
Livestream**

Stream worship
weekly
9AM EVERY SUNDAY

Access the livestream by
visiting

www.facebook.com/bethlehemfortwayne



MARCH 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>
28	Kim Ellison Sharon Shediack	Michael Johnson			Carla Johnson	
1		Peter Schlie	Dan Bates	Suzie Emley	Aaron Brown	Hapner Family
4 Midweek						Hapner Family
7	Linda Stafford	Brian Bates			Charlotte Ratliff	
8		John Bates	Ron Gallmeyer	Donna Melcher Threasa Lightning	Josiah Hapner	Hapner Family
11 Midweek					Allison Cheng	Hapner Family
14	Mary Snow Allison Cheng	Ed Ramos			Blake Sebring	
15		Greg Shediack	Evans Branigan	Peter Schlie	Allison Cheng	Hapner Family
18 Midweek						Hapner Family
21	Sharon Dietrich Suzie Emley Amber Herndon	Peter Schlie			Charlotte Ratliff	
22		Peter Schlie	Dan Bates	Donna Volmerding	Aaron Brown	Hapner Family
25 Midweek						Hapner Family
28	Kim Ellison Sharon Shediack	Michael Johnson			Carla Johnson	
29		John Bates	Ron Gallmeyer	The Hapner Family	Josiah Hapner	Hapner Family

March²⁰²⁶

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 6:30pm – Bd. of Elders	4 5:30pm Lent Dinner 6:30pm Lent Service	5	6	7 8:30am Men’s Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
8 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour	9	10 6:30pm – Bd. of Directors	11 5:30pm Lent Dinner 6:30pm Lent Service	12	13	14 8:30am Men’s Bible Study 9:30am Women’s Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
15 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour	16	17	18 5:30pm Lent Dinner 6:30pm Lent Service	19	20	21 8:30am Men’s Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
22 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour	23	24 6:30pm – Bd. Of Property	25 5:30pm Lent Dinner 6:30pm Lent Service	26	27 4:00-7:00pm BIG-EYED FISH FRY	28 8:30am Prayer Breakfast 9:30am Women’s Bible Study 4:00pm Worship w/Comm
29 9:00am Worship w/Comm 10:30am Education Hour	30	31	<i>And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. Luke 1:50</i>			

Blessed by **God** for 100 Years