

December 2023



Bethlehem
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor Paul Busekist
Traverse City, MI 49686
(231) 947-9880



Website: www.bethlehemtc.org
Email: bethlehem@bethlehemtc.org

Building Hours:

Monday – Thursday, 9am to 2:30pm

Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday, 9am to 2:30pm

Worship Times:

Sunday: 10 am Modern Worship including
Communion with service Livestreamed on
Facebook and YouTube

Sunday School/Adult Education: 9:15am

Third Thursday Worship: 7:00pm

Nursery open during worship service

Follow the STAR to Bethlehem!

Our Mission...

“We journey with God, to serve with love”

Our Vision...

“As a community of believers journeying with God together, we at Bethlehem are called to serve with love by growing a premier youth ministry; enlivening Christian discipleship through lifelong learning, care, and spiritual formation; fostering a vibrant and inspiring worship experience; utilizing our natural setting and location for faithful creation care and outdoor ministry; and opening our doors always to be a “campus at the crossroads” for the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.”

“Lost in the night do the people yet languish,
... Will not day come soon? Will not day come soon?”- ELW 243, *Lost in the Night*



“And even as I wander, I'm keeping you in sight
You're a candle in the window on a cold, dark winter's night.” – REO Speedwagon, *I Can't Fight This Feeling*

“Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil, for you are with me.” -*Psalms 23:4a*

Dear sisters and brothers,

What do the three song/psalm lyrics above have in common? Why, Wondering and Wondering, *that's* what!© Whether you are languishing, joyfully pining, or merely putting one foot in front of the other right now, for this coming Advent season we are all wandering a little as we await the Christ child to be born anew in our hearts. And so we wonder... how will God awaken something new within us? Will our present darkness break into a new light of unexpected relief and joy? Or perhaps, is this wonderful feeling we already have inviting us to seek something unforeseen and lifegiving beyond our imagining?

This Advent season, we will spend some time reflecting on scriptural texts for the season, accompanied by reflections from the **Lutheran “Book of Faith” series entitled “I Wonder as I Wander.”** Each week in Advent this year, look for reflections – either on Facebook, the church website, or during Advent Nights this month (December 7th, 14th and 21st) – as we anticipate Christ's birth, walking together with varied emotions in an otherwise hectic time of year.

One special note is for our annual **“Blue Christmas” service held on December 21st at 7pm**, after our Advent meal at 5:45... Perhaps you or someone you know is not feeling the "Joy" of the Advent and Christmas season this year. Often loss, anxiety or grief during the Holidays can leave us feeling out of sync with our culture, when in fact the true meaning of Advent includes nearly every human emotion, as we long for Christ's birth. Leaders from four local ELCA churches invite you to join us on the longest night of the year (December 21st.) This year's service includes words of solace and hope from Pastors Haley Vay Beaman (Feast of Victory - Acme), Jonathan Reid (Immanuel - Suttons Bay), Tim Jahn (Advent - Lake Ann) and Pr. Paul here at Bethlehem.

Peace be with you this season as we journey together.

-Pr. Paul

PROSE FROM THE PREZ:

We have just celebrated Thanksgiving and I am so thankful that BLC is such a giving and involved church. What a blessing that over 60 people were involved in the Craft Show! You have shown that if you are given a specific job for a short period of time, you show up and then some. I even met helpers who were NOT members...they heard of the event and wanted to help. Now there is another need. This one may not be as exciting and busy as the craft show, but it definitely provides a service and fills a need. You (and a friend) are requested to sign-up to help with our Advent meals. You could plan/buy the food, prepare the food, serve the food, or clean up after. Check your availability for 12/7, 12/14, or 12/21. The sign-up sheets are on the table in the Gathering space or contact Gail Goldsmith by text or phone at 231-633-2630 or at ggoldsmith74@gmail.com. The Advent service follows the meal. Thursday evenings are definitely a good way to prepare our hearts, minds, and spirits for the joys of Christmas. Please take a moment to check your calendar and make the commitment to serve others in our church.

Christmas Blessings to you and your loved ones, Cindy Monroe BLC Council President

Safety and Security Committee

The new security cameras are installed. This was a big project that people have wanted for a long time. We are happy to be able to check that off our bucket list. There are several people trained on how to access the cameras from their smart phones and computers. This will help to keep our church, congregation and guests safe. If anything happens on the property we will be able to go back to watch the video to see what happened. Stay safe as the weather will be changing soon.

New member orientation: Arrangements are in the works for a gathering in December or January. Please contact membership chair, Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net or the office at 947-9880 if you are interested in joining Bethlehem.

Spotlight on Zeke: So many of us enjoy Zeke's talents with religious music, but did you know that he plays other kinds of music at various locations in the Traverse City area? Here is a list of his engagements in the next month that are close to TC:

Sat 12/2—Brady's Bar—6:30

Wed 12/6—Park Place-Minerva's 6:00

Sat 12/9—Hotel Indigo—6:00

Wed 12/13—Park Place-Minerva's 6:00

Sat—12/16—Brady's Bar—6:30

Wed 12/20—Park Place-Minerva's 6:00

Fri 12/22—Hotel Indigo—6:00

Wed 12/27—Park Place-Minerva's 6:00

Fri 12/29—MiddleCoast TC 6:00

Sun 12/31—Hotel Indigo RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

Caroling for our Homebound (shut-in) members on December 10th It's time to get in the spirit of the season! On Sunday Dec 10, we will have a light meal after the service and then divide into groups to go caroling. We hope to have enough people for 3 teams to cover different parts of town, so we want to get the word out early! If you feel singing is not your strong suit, that's ok - the rest of us will help carry the tune. Your smiling presence is most important! Our members who cannot get out to see us REALLY appreciate seeing other members in-person. Please mark your calendar for the 10th!

Choir News: You may have noticed our choir is growing. Thanks to Sherri Helman, Tim Goebel, and Jim Hutchison for joining our ranks. We would love it if YOU would come and give it a try. **Choir rehearsals will be held on Tuesdays instead of Thursdays during Advent to accommodate mid-week services. December rehearsals will be December 5, 12, and 19.** The choir will be singing, *Shepherd's Joy* by John Parker and Mark Hayes, and *Christmas Communion Song* by Susan Naylor Callaway. Lastly, Tony and his wife, Lesley, run a non-profit theater troupe, Mashup Rock & Roll Musical. They take a well-known story and mix it with well-known music and turn it into a whole new original musical. If you want to see Tony perform in their latest production, Look Who's Talking Heads, you can see it on January 5 & 6 at The Alluvion on 8th St. Find them on the internet at mashuprockandrollmusical.com/upcoming-shows-tickets. If you need to contact Tony for any reason, he can be reached via text or voice call at 231-942-1162. His email address is bero.tony@gmail.com

The Fellowship committee is planning Advent meals at 5:45pm on December 7th, 14th and 21st. Phil Bossardet is planning to prepare a Christmas Dinner for the 21st, which is Blue Christmas. Our key issue is we need help. There are only 2 or 3 of us and we could use 2 or 3 more. Please contact Gail Goldsmith at 231-633-2630

SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGING: Volunteers are needed to ring bells for the Salvation Army at Tom's East Bay Store on December 8, and December 9, 2023. The first shift starts at 10:00 am and the last shift starts at 6:00 pm. Each shift is 1 hour long. If you are willing to ring please call Carl Lehto at 231-223-7187 home, or 231-944-9640 cell. We need 18 ringers. You can bring a friend with you to ring. Please dress warmly. The needs are greater than ever so your help will be appreciated more than ever. Merry Christmas. Thank you.

A big thank you to all who turned in Olesons' receipts. We just received a check from Olesons for \$268.15 for a total of \$593.03 this calendar year. Please continue to drop off your Olesons' receipts at Bethlehem. Please note they do not expire. Thank you.

Contra Dancing by Bayside Travellers Contra dancing is similar to square dancing, and each of their dances feature live music by local folk bands. They will be back with us for dancing on **December 9th** and monthly dances through the rest of the 2023 year. All are welcome to attend, no partner or experience is necessary! The dances are by donation. For more information or further dates, please reach out to Alanna at alanna.steffunick@bethlehemtc.org

Food Pantry: We will NOT be closing our outdoor pantry for winter this year. We have a new member who ran an outdoor pantry downstate and she has given us lots of ideas of foods that can be stored there during the cold months including: hamburger helper, stuffing mix, dry milk, instant potatoes, cookies, and rice. Also, there is always room for dry goods such as toilet paper, paper towels etc. Please start looking for some of these items when they are on sale and bring your extras to the coat room. Your generosity is so appreciated.

Wednesday Bible Studies:

Adult Bible Study: meets in the Youth Room from 9:30-11:30am, with the Gospel of John.

The Zoom Book and Bible Study: meets on Wednesdays from 1:30-3:00pm. The group will complete the study of the Mitch Albom book, *Have a Little Faith* on December. The next study will begin in January with a study of the book of Mark.. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Barbara Oster or Pr Paul.

Adult Education in the Youth Room plus Sunday School - every Sunday at 9:15am. Please note that Adult Ed and Sunday School will not meet on December 24th and December 31st.

The next Third Thursday service will be a Blue Christmas service on December 21st at 7:00pm. The service will be livestreamed. The BLC Fellowship Committee will be providing a meal prepared by Phil Bossardet at 5:45 p.m. Please come early and share in fellowship and stay for the service.

December's XYZ Potluck & Presentation will be on Friday, December 8th, at 12pm noon. While primarily geared toward seniors, the group is open to any adult who would like to attend! XYZ meets monthly September through May for a potluck lunch, followed by a program or presentation. December's presentation will be by one of our own members of Bethlehem, Sherri Helman, who will give a presentation titled: "The Bible in Living Color." On Sherri's trip to the Holy Land this past January, one of the repeat travelers described her first pilgrimage there as this: "A time when the Bible went from black and white to living color." That was the experience that occurred for Sherri. In her sharing at the December XYZ Luncheon, some of those experiences will be shared from the heart! Please know this will not be a political conversation about the conflicts and unrest within Israel....it will be an intimate sharing of faith, blessing, and gratitude! We hope you will join us in December for good food, fellowship, and a wonderful presentation!

FOR BOOK CLUB MEMBERS AND ANY WHO LOVE TO READ:

The book club is taking a Christmas holiday in December. The Jan book will be announced in the group email and in the Jan STAR. If you are not on the email list and want to join our group on the 4th Tues at 5:30 please contact Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net.

Notes from Alanna...

Sledding at Twin Lakes!

BLC's annual sledding party at Twin Lakes is scheduled for Sunday, January 21st at 2:30pm! We will be providing drinks and snacks - just bring yourself and your sleds! All ages welcome - we'd love to see you!

XYZ Potluck

XYZ Potlucks continue! On December 8th we will hear from Sherri Helman in her presentation "The Bible in Living Color," where she will share her experiences traveling in the Holy Land. Join us for food, fellowship, and a great presentation!



Holiday Contra Dance - Potluck Dinner & White Elephant Dance!

Bayside Travellers is having a special holiday contra dance on December 9th. They will have their normal beginner workshop followed by wonderful music and dancing, but with the addition of a potluck dinner at 5:30pm, and a special White Elephant Dance at some point during the evening! Come on out to support local traditional music and dance!

-Alanna Steffunick, Ministry Coordinator

"...with that hymn he softly sang, of God's good grace."

The Soldier and the Oak, Elliot Park

Christian Education News December 2023

JANUARY 21st – BLC INTERGENERATIONAL SLEDDING PARTY

Dress warm & bring a sled to Twin Lakes Park!

We'll bring the hot cocoa & snacks – ALL AGES WELCOME!!!



Countdown to Christmas!

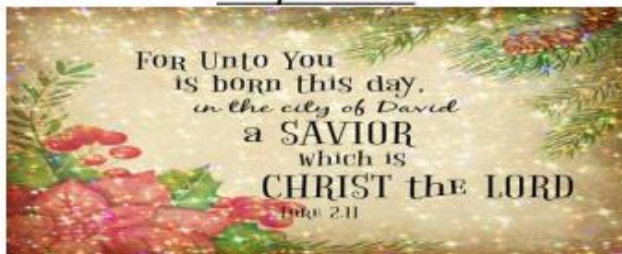


Join us for family Advent nights every Thursday!

WHEN: 12/07, 12/14, & 12/21

WHAT: Dinner, special Nativity activities, & worship

Merry Christmas!



-Christian Education Committee



It's that time again...pancakes & skiing – stay tuned for details & thank you for supporting our youth!



FINANCIAL NEWS

October income was \$26,859, compared to projected income of \$29,349. We received \$2,489 less than projected. Expenses were \$28,542.66, compared to a budget of \$29,937. This resulted in spending \$1,395 less than budgeted. For the month, the church brought in \$1,683 less than we spent.

Year-to-date income is \$311,057, compared to projected income of \$288,448. This resulted in the church receiving \$22,609 more than projected. Expenses were \$319,619, compared to a budget of \$306,612. We have spent \$13,006 more than budgeted. For the year, the church has spent \$8,561 more than we brought in.

TRAVERSE CITY HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS GIFT TREE IS UP! Please note that most of the items on the 'tree' are clothing and more 'needed' items. There is also a separate sheet that lists other items the students would love to have. You may choose one or both. Please drop off unwrapped gifts prior to Sunday, December 10th. Thank you for your generosity. The students so appreciate it!

Ready. Set. January 27, 28, and 30! SAFE HARBOR!

Yes, it's coming on fast. As I have already mentioned, Cindy Monroe, Tina Dohm, and B.J. Christensen will once again be leading Kitchen Teams that prepare some of the Winter's Best Safe Harbor meals...and Bethlehem volunteers gained valuable experience last year in assisting at check-in (the Safe Harbor staff screens first) assisting with meds (the guest determines what they need and when), and clearing and cleaning tables (guests often bus their own dishes). We'll also again be gathering snack items. Check your calendars and plan to participate in and feel the fulfillment of this service.

I'll post sign-ups in January and anticipate your prompt response. I'll also be there each night to assure all goes well.

Tom Rockne, Bethlehem Safe Harbor Coordinator, M.231.631.0040

Coffee and Cookies on Sunday: Remember that treats and a hot drink on Sunday are appreciated by all. Please take a moment to sign up to bring cookies or some other tasty treat on the Sunday that works best for you. Or sign up to prepare the coffee. As requested by some of our new members there is a plan in the works to have one Sunday per month when we join in the Fellowship Hall. We can sit at a table and chat with someone new while we munch on a treat. More on that to come...

Dear Members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church,

It's that time of year; the leaves start to turn color and fall to the ground. It is also the time of year when we like to take some time and gratefully thank the congregation for your continued support of our wonderful church. We are all grateful to have such abundant blessings with our location and our faithful members. It's important to remain dedicated to our Christian faith and do our best to follow through on our commitments. With love & kindness we ask that if you are able and willing to help the church in a financial way, we really need your help. Contributions are behind where we should be for the start of the fourth quarter. This is primarily because of pledged money that has not yet been received. We respectfully ask that if you can do what you have pledged or even a little bit more, the church will put those dollars to good work. Thank you for prayerfully considering this appeal. We appreciate your support and are grateful for all you do to make Bethlehem Lutheran Church a thriving community of believers. Jim Monroe, BLC Financial Secretary and Phil Anderson, BLC Bookkeeper

Global Links - Holy Land - Advent 2023

In the past weeks we have borne witness to the horrors of the escalating crisis between Israel and Hamas. Our prayers are with all our siblings in the region, including ELCA missionaries and our partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). The Young Adults in Global Mission program made the difficult **decision to evacuate the five YAGM participants and their country coordinators serving in Jerusalem and the West Bank.**

In a recent newsletter, missionaries to the Holy Land Gabi and Meghan Aelabouni shared what life is like for them right now: "We are safe. And we grieve for so many who are not. We are heartbroken. And we are deeply, deeply grateful to be here, standing and working with our Palestinian partners on behalf of our church. Thanks be to God." The Aelabounis serve as pastors to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem.

In response to the Hamas attacks in southern Israel, Israel's declaration of war against Hamas, and the ongoing Israeli siege of Gaza, the ELCA offers statements from some of our Lutheran and global partners in the region. Included are ELCA resources that provide a deeper understanding of the region's history, the humanitarian crises caused by the current war, and the ELCA's work for a just peace in Palestine and Israel. See the ELCA website for updates.



WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM - DECEMBER, 2023



"The Lord is coming, always coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognize Him at any given moment of your life.

Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord.: Henri Houwen

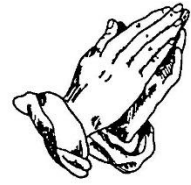
CHRISTMAS TEA: NOVEMBER 3, 2023 - 2-4PM: SEE THE POSTER AND FLYERS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. PLEASE JOIN US!

DECEMBER BIBLE STUDY: Taken from *Gather* magazine: "God's topsy-turvy kingdom: God is turning a world torn by conflict right-side-up." A look at Mary's Magnificat plus other stories of God's topsy-turvy work across generations. - written by Hannah Hawkinson

"You can never truly enjoy Christmas until you can look up into the Father's face and tell Him you have received His Christmas Gift." - John R. Rice



Health Concerns*



The Power of Prayer

*Richard Fernholz, Nancy Smith, Tom & Lee Miller,
Margie Whitney, Judy Fenton, Kate Holtfreter,
Julie Lapeer, Milt & Carol Bowes,
Lynn Hoyt, Tom Woodworth,, Ron Hellenga,
Molly Eastman, John Stretlien, Harper Wiemerslage,
Russ Luttinen, Sherry, Leroy Schlagel,
Roy & Marilyn Dumond, Sean Rivard,
Brenda Denoyer and the Denoyer Family,
Patti McCracken, Sharon Vanmeter,
Margaret Hutchison, Carol Collins,
Patience Lambert, Dale Leider, David Suby,
Jennifer Mowers, Debbie Knopf,
Gail Goldsmith, Kathi Ivany,
Liza Friedli, Jim Rumbach*

French Manor South: Brenda Denoyer **Grand Traverse Pavilions:** Margie Whitney

Evergreen Cottage: Milt & Carol Bowes

Boardman Lake Glens: Inge Thomas

Hospital Visits: Please let the church office know if you are going into the hospital for a scheduled procedure or an emergency so Pastor Paul can visit you.

Prayer Requests:

- Prayer Chain:** Please contact Jan Stretlien at jstretlien@gmail.com or 231-947-3265
 - Prayers read from the altar:** Please call the Administrative Assistant in the church office 231-947-9880
-

Are you checking for the latest BLC updates at: www.bethlehemtc.org?

You saw Norm and others take the photos...be sure you see them at www.bethlehemtc.org!

Good News...and great news...at www.bethlehemtc.org...

Looking for a link to last month's full Council minutes?

Type this address/url into your web browser to get the latest approved minutes from Council (or call the office for a copy:

bethlehemtc.org/Council-Minutes

BLC Contacts

Church Office

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Bookkeeper, Phil Anderson	bookkeeper@bethlehemtc.org
Tony Bero, Music Director	bero.tony@gmail.com
Alanna Steffunick, Ministry Coordinator	Alanna.Steffunick@bethlehemtc.org
Website	www.bethlehemtc.org

Church Council

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Tina Dohm, Youth/Y2A	youth.committee@bethlehemtc.org
Pastor Paul Busekist	paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org

If you have an interest in serving on any of the above Committees,
Please contact the Committee Chairperson(s).

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service(S) 11:15am - Worship and Music 12:30pm - Confirmation Class at 2pm - Christmas Tea Social	4 Bulletin articles due today 8am - LWR Quilters (PH) 9am - Property Work Group 10:45am - Staff Meeting 3pm - AAUW 7pm - Choir Rehearsal	5 Bulletin articles due today 8am - LWR Quilters (PH) 9am - Property Work Group 12pm - Sarah Circle - Library 1pm - Friendship Bible Study 6pm - Y2A/Christian Ed Meeting 8:30pm - Executive Comite.(CR) 7pm - Choir Rehearsal	6 9:30am - Adult Bible Study 11:30am - Music Rehearsal 1:30pm - Zoom Bible Study	7 5:30pm - ACA 5:45pm - Advent Meal 7pm - Advent Service	8 5pm - All Star DE 12pm - XYZ	9 5:30pm - Contra Dance - Bayside
10 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Traditional Worship	11 1pm - Finance Comite.	12 Bulletin articles due today 8am - LWR Quilters (PH) 9am - Property Work Group 12pm - Sarah Circle - Library 1pm - Friendship Bible Study 6pm - Y2A/Christian Ed Meeting 8:30pm - Executive Comite.(CR) 7pm - Choir Rehearsal	13 9:30am - Adult Bible Study 11:30am - Music Rehearsal 1pm - Baby Pantry Set-up 1:30pm - Zoom Bible Study	14 9am - Baby Pantry Setup 10am - Baby Pantry-FH 1pm - Rebecca Anna Circle - 5:30pm - ACA 5:45pm - Advent Meal 7pm - Advent Service	15 STAR articles due today 10am - Sew Pieceful 1pm - Lehto SG - Library	16
17 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service(S)	18 Bulletin articles due today 8am - LWR Quilters (PH) 9am - Property Work Group 6:30pm - Council Meeting - 7pm - Choir Rehearsal 7pm - Launer SG @ at the home	19 Bulletin articles due today 8am - LWR Quilters (PH) 9am - Property Work Group 6:30pm - Council Meeting - 7pm - Choir Rehearsal 7pm - Launer SG @ at the home	20 9:30am - Adult Bible Study 11:30am - Music Rehearsal 1:30pm - Zoom Bible Study	21 5:30pm - ACA 5:45pm - Advent Meal 7pm - 3rd Thursday/Blue	22 7pm - All Star DE	23
24 10am - Worship Service(S) 4pm - Christmas Eve Service 7pm - Christmas Eve Service	25 A BLESSED CHRISTMAS CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	26 Bulletin articles due today 8am - LWR Quilters (PH) 9am - Property Work Group 8:30pm - Book/Supper Club	27 9:30am - Adult Bible Study 11:30am - Music Rehearsal 1pm - Johnson SG (Offsite) 1:30pm - Zoom Bible Study	28 5:30pm - ACA	29 7pm - All Star DE	30
31 10am - Worship Service(S)	1	2 Bulletin articles due today 8am - LWR Quilters (PH) 9am - Property Work Group 8:30pm - Book/Supper Club	3 9:30am - Adult Bible Study 11:30am - Music Rehearsal 1pm - Johnson SG (Offsite) 1:30pm - Zoom Bible Study	4	5	6



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IMPORTANT NOTICES

1. Save the Date: Congregational Assembly – after service on January 7, 2024.
2. if you are receiving this in the mail and prefer NOT to, please contact the office. 231-947-9880 or admin@bethlehemtc.org

