

August 26, 2025



Greetings, friends at Bethlehem:

This message is being sent with great excitement to you - the "many ministers of Bethlehem" - as an update for our continued work in new Mission and Vision together. We give thanks for the input and assistance of the congregation who have collectively completed our Mission and Vision Statements (below). Now it is time to put our words into action. We are excited to be at this stage...looking forward to moving ahead together!

On Sunday, September 7, we will join the many ELCA congregations working on ministries we share with "God's Work, Our Hands" (i.e. "GWOH") Sunday. This year our work at BLC will be gathering for updated information and moving into teams as we begin planning and organizing for our next phase. If you have not been too involved with the process up until now, no worries! Come and join in! There will be great information shared to help you determine where it is you would like to be involved. All are welcome!

The day's agenda looks like this:

Worship at 10:00 a.m. followed by a brief fellowship gathering in the Fellowship Hall. There will be light refreshments as we hear a few general announcements giving guidance to our day. Following that, each person will move into one of the three various spaces to join a team of interest to them. The various teams include: **Social Ministry and Outreach, Creation Care, and New Life Together.** Many of you already indicated which team you feel called to join - and some have picked multiple! (See the attached "Summary of Vision" sheet/s on separate colored pieces of paper if you already identified an interest area on May 18th.) **But for the sake of our time on September 7th, we ask that you pick the core team that interests you most and attend that meeting (as all three groups will meet at the same time).** We are planning that core team conversations will conclude by 12:30 p.m. so that folks can get on with their day.

Between now and September 7th, we ask that you place your name on the sign-up sheet found in the narthex of the church (even if your name is on a "core team" list.) **This will help us to better plan for refreshments, handouts, space, etc., on the 7th.** There is nothing else you will need to do other than to come with an open and willing heart on Sunday, September 7.

Throughout the Mission/Vision process, we have held three congregation conversations, one retreat, and a ministry fair to help our congregants give input and become better informed as to the direction the congregation is desiring to move. **Now we are ready to talk with participants, get organized, invite leaders to come forward, and get started!** This is a very exciting time for Bethlehem and a new chapter in our life together. So please join us and pray also for our ministry at Bethlehem! Pray for guidance as to how you may be involved. There are many tasks in which we can participate...one of those is being fervent in prayer!

God is Good, All the time!! All the Time, God is Good!!!! Hope to see you on September 7th!

Your Vision Team

Kathie Bair, Craig Bauer, Tim Goebel, Jana Rockne, Kelly Thomson, Pastor Paul, and Sherri Helman

Our mission: *We worship, work and welcome...Sharing God's love and grace with all.*

Our vision: *Together, we embody our mission by BOLDLY following Jesus, serving the needs of the world and one another, and caring for all of God's Creation. ALL ARE WELCOME.*

To see electronic copies of all these documents, visit www.bethlehemtc.org/GWOHSunday

SUMMARY OF VISION IN ACTION SIGN-UP SHEETS

For God's Work Our Hands (GWOH) Sunday, September 7th, 2025 (Core Team 1)

FOCUS #1: Social Ministry and Outreach

Description: Identifying ways Bethlehem can serve our neighbors more widely and intentionally in the Traverse City and northern Michigan area/s. This can include activities both on- and off-site with the purpose of widening our service, presence and ministry.

People who expressed interest at the May 18th gathering (additional members are WELCOME!):

David Peppler
Claire Hutchinson
Jeanne Bowling
Kristen Rivard
Tina Dohm
Pat and Patti Friedli
Meredith Busekist
Nancy Ammann
Steve Kramer
Lindsay Susalski
Tom Christensen
Carolyn Mann
Jana Rockne
Flasterer's (Nancy and Jay)

Janet Landis
Jim Hutchinson
Forrest Bowling
Cindy Monroe
Diane Cunningham
Peggy Goebel
Pam Reid
Peg Peppler
Aaron Thomson
Dave Susalski
BJ Christensen
Amy Hansen
Carl Lehto
Kathie Bair

Possible Activities/Ministries:

- 5 Pair with other congregations/organizations to expand outreach programs
- 0 Support KAN DU ISLAND (on Garfield near Airport) ministry to those suffering mental illness
- 4 Increase building use by organizations within our larger community
- 17 Continue BLC participation with Safe Harbor and Baby Pantry (expand Baby Pantry to include food, clothing, essentials, etc.) and potentially expand our Food Pantry/Kiosk
- 2 Develop and strengthen community outreach to children and teens
- 3 Focus on serving specifically young families of BLC
- 8 Feed people of BLC, those in our community, those in need, etc. (bear in mind the term "feed" can include a wide variety of ministries)
- 0 Get involved out into the community, spread the news of BLC, enhance exposure and increase hospitality and invitation
- 5 Establish a Meals Program housed at BLC
- 3 Address LGBTQ Community needs
- 16 Continue involvement in Habitat for Humanity, Freedom Builders, or Project Feed the Kids

SUMMARY OF VISION IN ACTION SIGN-UP SHEETS

For God's Work Our Hands (GWOH) Sunday, September 7th, 2025 (Core Team 2)

FOCUS #2: New Life Together

Description: Identifying ways Bethlehemers can grow deeper in relationship with one another. This could range from structured discipleship (i.e. evening bible study or other interest group) to interactions much less formal (i.e. dinner "pods" etc.)

People who expressed interest at the May18th gathering (additional members are WELCOME!):

Forrest Bowling
Nancy Ammann
Aaron Thomson
Lindsay Susalski
Carl Lehto
Amy Hansen
Sherri Helman

Kristen Rivard
Steve Kramer
Tom Christensen
Dave Susalski
Inga Nyquist
Peggy Burns
Tim Goebel

Possible Activities/Ministries:

- 2 Develop greater opportunities and unique ways to welcome
- 3 Build up small group ministries — developing deeper "connectiveness"
- 0 Expand use of social media, facebook, include daily devotionals, Bible Verse, etc.
- 0 Expand use of outdoor signage board located on Garfield Avenue
- 7 Increase service to one another such as rides, helping with home projects, visitation, meals, etc.
- 0 Develop a system of sharing members talents, lending a hand to one another, publicize, make the ministry evident, public, and easy to access
- 5 Expand the ministry of the Men's Group to include both the working on various projects within the needs of the parishioners of Bethlehem and a Men's Bible Study
- 3 Expand Christian Education especially for children and teens
- 4 Host musical performances held at BLC — open to public
- 2 Initiate a Gift Inventory Program...helping to identify strengths and spiritual gifts of members/visitors in order to better match people to areas of service and enhance self confidence in serving
- 5 Expand Christian Care Giving beyond sharing of flowers
- 0 Expand the use and visibility of the Caring Board

SUMMARY OF VISION IN ACTION SIGN-UP SHEETS

For God's Work Our Hands (GWOH) Sunday, September 7th, 2025 (Core Team 3)

FOCUS #3: Creation Care

Description: This focus will identify ways that Bethlehem can more actively steward our resources, building/grounds and God's Creation while also more intentionally wandering and wondering faithfully in their midst. This can include activities and spiritual practices on our property and beyond, including the establishment of a "Green Team" at BLC.

People who expressed interest at the May 18th gathering (additional members are WELCOME!):

Doug Cunningham
Kristen Rivard
Tina Dohm
James Hinds
Scott Schlagel
Steve Kramer
Lindsay Susalski
Carl Lehto
Inga Nyquist

Forrest Bowling
Barbara Wright
Pat and Patti Friedli
Pastor Paul*
Jim Monroe
Aaron Thomson
Dave Susalski
Tom Christensen
Carolyn Mann

Possible Activities/Ministries:

- 8 Participate in the Community Garden/Faith Reformed Church
- 1 Explore a program such as "Paper Gator" whereby BLC would become a recycling hub in the community
- 5 Expand projects based on God's Work, Our Hands
- 4 Continued emphasis on energy and carbon saving opportunities and measures, like the solar equipment already installed at BLC (e.g. HVAC, insulation, lighting, etc.)
- 9 Support and participate in public events such as the Cherry Festival and other civic festivals where environment care and clean up is required
- 2 Engage with community and environmental groups, support/participate in their work
- 8 Regularly schedule hikes/walks, camp outings and other spiritual renewal activities in nature