

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.



"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" – Esther 4:14 (NIV)



Dear Bethlehem brothers and sisters:

Perhaps I can only speak for myself (and a few of our bible study participants) when I say that studying the book of Esther these last few Wednesdays in September and October has been both a joy and an inspiration. Esther is the only book in the bible that does not mention God explicitly, but God is "hidden" throughout. The verse above proves to be at the book's center: "[Perhaps]," says Esther's mentor Mordecai, "You [Esther] have come to your royal position [as queen of Persia] for such a time as this."

"For such a time as this." First, **what is "this"?** For Esther, who hid her Jewish identity before becoming queen in her oppressor's (Persia's) country, "this" was the chance to persuade her king/husband to "undo" an evil edict by the king's second-in-command, Haman. The edict was for Persia to ruthlessly slaughter Esther's people (the Jews) throughout the whole country, because of what was essentially a grudge. "This" moment, for Esther, held the weight of her world on her shoulders. Does it seem that way for us sometimes? Does it often feel that we carry a weight so heavy that it may crush us before we can lift it to its proper conclusion? Perhaps...

We live in challenging times. Yet the real hope in Mordecai's call to Esther is two-fold, "Perhaps YOU have been called **for such a time as this**" to (1) be exactly as you are, and (2) to rise up and make a difference in this world...This call is both exciting and challenging. And it is both now and later. **Where is God calling us to be at Bethlehem and in y/our lives of faith?**

November is a big month for us to make a difference, starting on **November 1st**: BLC's Annual Craft Sale welcomes the community to Bethlehem – to appreciate local creativity and artistry and let folks know we are here! **November 2nd**: Bibles for Youth, Reformation Day and a double-baptism! One week later, Bethlehemer Fred Reyelts and myself will head to Sebring, Florida to work on a Habitat for Humanity house with other Michiganders from St. Luuke's Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids. On November 23rd, the Creation Care Team will host a Seed Sowing Workshop (see a few pages beyond here for more information) as well as XYZ ministry (November 14th), Stewardship/Pledge Sundays on the 9th and 16th, and much more! I am also very pleased to announce that Linda Reyelts and a small team of writers are putting together a **Bethlehem Advent Devotional with content from both BLC members and A Sanctified Art**...The theme will be **"What Can't Wait,"** and captures perfectly that call from God (through Esther) of what does this time, this moment present for us – to go boldly into the world and make a difference this Advent and always...for such a time as this.

Shalom...
Pastor Paul

A Word From the President:

It's November. The time for Thanksgiving. I would like you to know what I am thankful for. First of all God, he has given me everything in my life. If it weren't for God I would have nothing so there would be no list to give you. Second is my family, I am so happy to have them to love and support. My friends, I am so blessed to have many friends. My church family, thank you all for your care. I love you all. My health, as many of you know I have been through a lot. God has been with me all of the way. God placed me in a wonderful career as a Social Worker so I could care and assist many people in my life. Thank you God for my life!

Please count your blessings in this month of Thanksgiving.

Gail

SEPTEMBER FINANCIAL NEWS

September Income was \$34,453. Budgeted income was \$29,793 resulting in \$4,660 surplus against budget. Expenses were \$38,578 against budgeted expense of \$33,216 resulting in spending exceeding budget by \$5,362. Overall, our cash expenses exceeded income by \$4,125. The only line item having a large variance was 52020 Custodial Services which was due to spending \$2,200 to have the fellowship hall and kitchen floors stripped and waxed.

YTD income was \$350,983. This figure is inflated by \$44,366 of income designated for Basement Renovations. Netting this out gives a truer picture of income at \$306,617. Budgeted income was \$271,415 resulting in \$35,202 surplus against budget. Expenses were \$347,795 (net of \$23,274 of Basement Renovations expense). Budgeted expense was \$305,366. The result was we spent \$42,429 more than budgeted. From a cash perspective we ended September having spent \$36,292 more than we brought in. A bit of good news is the mortgage will be paid off in November.

GOOD SAMARITAN UPDATE – YOUR FUNDS AT WORK !!!

YTD donations to the Good Samaritan fund have totaled \$6,847...a remarkable figure and shows just how generous our congregation can be. The money goes directly to those truly facing hardships. Hardships that many, if not most of us, have ever faced. What better way to help those in our community in need of support. A breakdown of the key areas of support include Gas/Food/Auto ... \$450, Housing/Utilities ... \$927, and Rent Assistance ... \$1,792.

NEW INSERT IN YOUR MAILBOX FOR YOUR DIRECTORY: If you haven't already retrieved it from your church mailbox, please stop there and get it. Please tuck it in the back cover of your directory in case you want/need to contact any of these new members. For those of you who cannot stop by church please contact the office so a copy can be sent by email or snail mail.



Thank You! Bethlehem was well represented as we hosted the Autumn Theological Event for Rostered Ministers. A big thank you goes to the planning committee of Pastor Paul, Peggy Burns, Kathie Bair, Tina Dohm and Gail Goldsmith. They all helped set up, serve and clean up including doing some custodial duties. Thank you also to Lindsay Susalski for serving, and Jim Hinds for working the soundboard for the full event. Kathie and Meredith made a beautiful brochure to hand out. It included our favorite places in the area. So many people brought in their fall decorations and pumpkins from home. The church looked very festive. Also thank you Bethany Uhl for all of the napkins, they were lovely. We had pastries galore. You all really came through. Thank you to Diane Cunningham, Barbara Oster, Tina Dohm, Kathie Bair, Jana Rockne, Nancy Ammann, Peg Peppler, Betsy Morley, Cindy Monroe, Tom Christensen, Peggy Burns, Pamela Snyder and Linda Hansen for all of the delicious treats. Thank you also to the Confirmation Class for making the big wonderful "Welcome" sign. Thank you Alanna for the beautiful signs for welcoming our guests.. There were so many positive comments from the Pastors and Bishops. We served 100 people for 3 days. Thank you all! God has blessed our church with so many giving people.

We have been extremely fortunate to have received many generous donations for the Food Pantry. These donations come not only from Mission Endowment and Concessions from the Prince of Egypt, but from congregational members. With your continued support we will be able to continue this vital outreach ministry to our community. We also provide food to parents who come to the Baby Pantry at BLC each month and they are extremely appreciative. If you haven't yet donated to the Food Pantry, please consider doing so. If you have donated in the past, I encourage you to continue doing so...and THANK YOU VERY MUCH. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Suzanne Lehto for all of her years of hard work to keep the Food Pantry going. She will continue to stock the cart of items we offer to Baby Pantry parents but will no longer serve as a committee co-chair for the Food Pantry. Again, thank you so much Suzanne. If you'd like to help to stock the kiosk or shop for the Food Pantry, you can contact me. Kathie Bair. "The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor." – Proverbs 22:9

Project - Fill the Pantry Please bring a food item, personal product or cash donation to church on November 9th to help fill the needs of our community over the coming months. Please make checks out to Bethlehem Lutheran Church with "Food Pantry" in the memo line. We will receive a matching grant up to \$250 from Thrivent Financial. Thank you for your support!

HANDBELLS FOR CHRISTMAS? Are you interested? Rehearsals are tentatively scheduled for Monday at 3:30 beginning in Nov. The song(s) will be taped in advance so you do not have to be present on Christmas Eve. Please contact Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net if you have not already done so. We need to know the number of participants so we can select music for the right amount of ringers.

NEEDED! WELCA is collecting 48 of the quart size jars with lids (like mayo, spaghetti, etc). They may be plastic or glass. Please be sure they are clean and label free. You may put them in the box in the gathering space. Thank You!



Social Ministry/Outreach update: We had our follow-up meeting on Sunday Oct 19. We have a very motivated group of volunteers filled with a passion for service and there is always room for more. Please step forward to volunteer when a call is put out for assistance. We have one new activity that we feel we can manage...helping with the Northwest Michigan Action Agency Super Saturday event at the Career Tech Center on Parsons Rd on Feb 7, 2026. More details to come on that. Also, some members of the group are visiting Jubilee House as the first step to determine if they would be good volunteers in that location. The first step is to schedule a visit with Pastor Derek Quinn. There was hope that we could field a group of 6 volunteers to prepare a community meal one time per month in the Grace Episcopal location but there does not seem to be enough volunteers for that at this time. We are hoping that some of us can shadow/help with their meal preparation and this can be a goal for the future. Anyone interested in any of these activities can contact Cindy Monroe or Jim Hutchison. The next meeting for the full group will be scheduled in late Feb or early March.

BOOK CLUB NEWS: We are meeting for a pizza dinner at BLC on Wednesday, Nov 19 at 5:30. We will be reading *Wild* by Kristin Hannah. This is a reissue of one of her earlier books, *The Magic Hour*. If you are not currently on the email list and would like to receive information please contact Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net.

November's XYZ potluck & presentation will be on Friday, November 14th. After a delicious potluck lunch at noon, we will hear a presentation by Kristina Schnepf, the director of Green Door Folk School. Green Door is a recently opened nonprofit that is rooted in the folk school tradition, offering hands-on workshops that connect people to passions, new or old, the land, and each other. Remember, XYZ is predominantly geared toward seniors but the time spent together and the wonderful presentations are enjoyable for adults of any age - we hope you can join us!

Native Plant Seed Sowing Workshop Sunday,

November 23, after the service. Starting a native plant garden can be simple and cost-effective when you know how to sow your own seeds! Join us for a hands-on workshop hosted by the Creation Care Committee and learn how to grow native plants from seed. We'll sow seeds in containers to set outside for the winter season. Once spring arrives, the seeds will germinate naturally with very little maintenance— perfect for transplanting to your new or existing gardens. Containers will be provided. Sign up in the hallway to RSVP and help us prepare. We'd love to see you there!



Sunday School and Sunday's Adult Education hold their classes at 9:15am on Sunday. **The Wednesday Zoom Bible Study** meets at 1:30pm with a study of the book *Life of Pi*. You may attend either on Zoom or in person in the Youth Room.

The Grief Group meets on the first and third Monday of the month at 3:30pm



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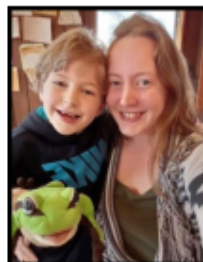
Monthly donation: 1/16 page \$25; 1/8 \$50; 1/4 \$80. Pay for a year in full---get 1 Month Free Questions??? Please contact Alanna Steffunick-Boomer at 231-947-9880 or

alanna.steffunick@bethlehemtc.org Make checks payable to BLC...put "Star Ad" on envelope.

Notes From Alanna

Christmas Eve Program!

I know, thinking about Christmas already! But we have another great Christmas program in the works for the kids this year, and we'd love to have as many involved as possible. No advance prep needed - just plan on joining us at Bethlehem for the 4pm Christmas Eve service! Kids will be called up just like they are during the Children's Message on Sunday mornings - it's going to be lots of fun, and we hope to see you there!



Out-of-Office!

At the time of writing this I am still working, but Baby Girl Boomer is arriving sometime soon, whenever she decides the time is right! I will be taking a bit of time off work as we adjust to the sweet new member of our family, but I will be back probably sometime in late December or early January! I will miss everyone and look forward to introducing baby to everyone when I am back!

-Alanna Steffunick-Boomer, Ministry Coordinator

Christian Education News November 2025

NOVEMBER 1st – BAKE SALE AT BLC'S ANNUAL CRAFT FAIR
Treat donations, time volunteering, & tasty purchases – thank you for supporting our ministry in so many ways!



Happy Thanksgiving!



-Christian Education Committee



Stay tuned...
We'll need some helpers
for this year's Christmas Eve Children's Program!!!



Sept & Oct Sunday morning "Bibles for Youth" class:
Kids learned special lessons & will receive a Bible –
Join us to celebrate them Sunday, November 2, 2025!

ELCA Global Links - Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land [ELCJHL]

The Rev. Dr. Imad Haddad was elected as the next bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), in 2025 and will be installed on January 11, 2026. Haddad, a Palestinian Christian, has served congregations in Jordan and the West Bank and recently received a Doctorate of Ministry from United Lutheran Seminary in 2025. His ministry focuses on accompanying people, particularly the vulnerable and suffering from political injustices and the harsh conditions in the region.



Bishop Haddad was born and raised in Beit Jala, studied at Near East School of Theology in Beirut, Lebanon, and at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in South Carolina. He was ordained in the ELCJHL in 2008 and served calls in the West Bank until 2020, when he was called to Good Shepherd in Amman, Jordan. He received his Doctorate of Ministry from United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia. Dr. Haddad is married to Rula Kasbari and has two daughters: Daline and Yara.



WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM NOVEMBER 2025



As the days grow colder in November, may you feel the warmth of God's love surrounding you, providing comfort and strength. May He bring Love to your heart, Health to your body, and Peace and Joy to your home.

NOVEMBER BIBLE STUDY: Our lesson in November is taken from the Gather magazine, Session #3: "There's a wideness in God's mercy." We remember the overwhelming generosity we have received from God. (written by Christa Von Zychlin.) Join us on November 13th at 1PM or November 18th at Noon here at Bethlehem.

THANK OFFERING SUNDAY: November 16th is the day most of the positions in the church service are performed by women of Bethlehem in thankfulness for all God has given us. We will be taking a special offering to benefit women of the ELCA in many areas. Thank offering jars are located in the Narthex if you desire to use one. Offering envelopes will also be provided on November 16th. If you prefer to give an offering by check, please make it out to **WOMEN OF THE ELCA**. Thank you!

CHRISTMAS TEA: Sunday December 7th at 2PM. The theme is "Old Fashioned Christmas". We will have a gift exchange (\$10 limit). Please also bring a half dozen cookies/treats to share. We would like to fill two baskets of canned/packed foods to share with the 2 families of the baby pantry.

Health Concerns*



The Power of Prayer

*Mary Woodring, Jerry Hill,
Richard Fernholz, Tom & Lee,
Judy Fenton, Julie Lapeer, Carol Bowes,
Lynn, Ron Hellenga, Cindy Hitesman,
John Stretlien, Harper Wiemerslage,
Leroy, Roy Dumond, Dale & Cheryl,
Patti, Sharon, Julie Barrett, Steve, Christine,
Sherry, Debbie Knopf,
Jim Rumbach, John Block, Bob,
Marianne, Norm Fred, Chris,
Kyle, Janet, Cheryl, Jef*

Meadow Valley: Carol Bowes

G. T. Pavilions: Shelley Miller

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 or email admin@bethlehemtc.org

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...

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Alanna Steffunick-Boomer, Ministry Coordinator	Alanna.Steffunick@bethlehemtc.org
Website	www.bethlehemtc.org

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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).

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