

December 2025



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 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.



Greetings and Advent blessings, sisters and brothers of Bethlehem!

You may recognize the lyrics for the ELW and Taize song, "Wait for the Lord." But you might not be familiar with the wonderful work of A Sanctified Art, whose material we partnered with this year for Lent ("Full to the Brim".) For Advent this year, we partnered once again with the theme "What Can't Wait." See the next page for more details.

This Advent we also look back to a wonderful year at Bethlehem and updates since the November STAR. Last month, with YOUR help and the assistance of our Mission Endowment Fund and the Good Samaritan account, Bethlehem was able to help 80 families with grocery assistance. We also sent two of our members to partner with St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids on a mission trip (see next page) and helped many other families in need through our BLC Food Pantry kiosk. God is working through the hands, feet and voices of Bethlehem. Thanks to you and thanks be to God!

On Wednesday afternoons, we continue to study either a book of the bible (every other 6 weeks or so) or an inspiration book (this time, from November to mid-December currently with the novel *The Life of Pi*.) We invite anyone who would like to join us watch the feature-length movie from the book with us in the Youth Room on Wednesday, December 17th at 1:30pm.

Other important dates for Advent are our Advent dinners (5:45pm) and worship services (7pm) on the Thursdays of 12/4, 12/11 and 12/18, culminating with our ecumenical "Blue Christmas" dinner and service on December 18th. Ladies, be sure to check out the Christmas Tea on December 7th. Finally, our confirmation students, choir members and other BLC members are welcome to join us for pizza and Christmas Caroling to our homebound members after worship on Sunday, December 21st.

We hope to see you on Christmas Eve at 4pm or 7pm, and may your Advent be full of joyous waiting for the Lord, and urgency for the love that "can't wait" to happen, today and always! Shalom...

- Pastor Paul

A Word From the President:

Merry Christmas to all of you! Can you believe, it is almost Christmas?

My question is how did Santa Claus come to be Christmas? We are celebrating the birth of Christ. So I looked it up, thank you Google! It all started with St. Nicholas who was a Christian Bishop in the 4th century. He was known for his generous heart, especially toward children and poor. A famous story was how he gave a dowry for 3 sisters who were poor. He saved them from a life of servitude. His feast day is December 6th, which became associated with gift giving. I believe Jesus would have been very happy with St. Nicholas as he loved and cared for others. And of course over the centuries St. Nicholas has had many other names and ways of giving. Santa Claus is the American version. In this time, with so many of our neighbors having great needs. Love your neighbor and consider giving to Toys for Tots, Salvation Army, Father Fred, Safe Harbor, Bethlehem's food pantry, buy a bag of groceries for a neighbor. Be a St. Nicholas or Santa Claus, or a caring neighbor. God will see your giving heart.

Have A Blessed Christmas!

Gail

New Advent Devotional “What Can’t Wait!” is Here

This fall, a team of Bethlehemers led by Linda Reyelts, sought a new way to reflect upon Advent. Partnering with BLC members and drawing up artistic resources from A Sanctified Art, we invite you to look at waiting a little differently this Advent season.

From the SA website: “Advent is a season of waiting, but is idle waiting what God wants of us? In preparation for the coming Messiah, we wonder together—what things can’t wait? What demands our immediate attention? What requires our work and preparation? What is it that God can’t wait for? Is it our praise, reconciliation, and proclamation? Is it the end of suffering, isolation, and fear? This Advent, we invite you to join us in imagining, prioritizing, and preparing. As we wait, what can’t?”

Look for images, reflections and your copy of the “What Can’t Wait?” devotional at Bethlehem starting November 30th. (Please take one per family. We can print more if needed!)



A Child Shall Lead Them (Garrity)



A Dance... and Flurry



© A Sanctified Art



In November, Bethlehem (TC) Partnered with St. Luke's (GR) for a Habitat for Humanity Mission



BLC/St. Luke's Squad

New member Fred Reyelts wasted no time bringing his substantial experience with Habitat for Humanity mission trips to Bethlehem this past fall.

Working with a core of 6 team members from Fred and Linda's former ELCA church (St. Luke's) in Grand Rapids, he and Pastor Paul helped create an 8-person team from November 9th – 15th in Sebring, Florida to prime and paint the exterior of one home and put up ALL the remaining exterior walls of another home. BLC Vision in Action!



Pr. Paul & Fred at work



OCTOBER FINANCIAL NEWS

October Income was \$56,532. Budgeted income was \$29,793 resulting in \$26,739 surplus against budget. The large surplus was due to a surge in deferred revenue from Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) and Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) contributions. Expenses were \$49,838 against budgeted expense of \$31,825 resulting in spending exceeding budget by \$18,013. The overage was due to October having three pay periods and \$9,873 for on-going storm/water issues. Overall, our October income exceeded expense by \$6,694.

YTD income was \$348,889 after removing \$44,366 of income designated for the Basement Refresh Project. Budgeted income was \$301,208 resulting in \$47,681 surplus against budget. Expenses were \$400,233 after removing \$23,274 of expense designated for the Basement Refresh Project. Budgeted expense was \$337,181 resulting in spending \$63,052 more than budgeted. The high level of spending results from consulting and repairs for HVAC and storm/water damage experienced this year. From a cash perspective our YTD ending October 31st, we have spent \$51,344 more than we have brought in.

Advent and Christmas Services

December 4: 7:00pm Holden Evening Prayer with Advent meal at 5:45pm

December 11: 7:00pm Advent/Christmas Hymn Sing with Advent meal at 5:45pm

December 18: 7:00pm Blue Christmas Service (will be Live-streamed) with special Christmas dinner at 5:45pm

December 24: 4:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with emphasis on Children (will be Live-streamed)

December 24: 7:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

CHRISTMAS AT TCHS: It's that time of year again when we make Christmas a bit happier at the Traverse City High School. The 'Red Tag Tree' is up and ready for you to choose a gift item. Please note the red tags on the tree are for clothing and some personal items and a flyer beside the tree list some fun things the students would love to have. Please return the items to church by December 8th so we can deliver them in time for their Christmas party. Do not wrap the gifts. Thank you so much for your generosity!

NEW MEMBERS: Our new members, Laura Okimi and Claire Hutchison were welcomed on Nov 23. Hopefully you have had a chance or will soon have the opportunity to meet them. If you are interested in membership, please contact the office or membership co-chair Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net.

Grief Group: Meets on the 1st and 3rd Mondays at 3:30pm

Staff Christmas Gifts It is that time of year to give thanks to the Bethlehem employees with a Christmas Gift. They work so hard to keep our church running smoothly. Staff include: Pastor Paul, Barbara, Phil, Alanna, Tony, David and Zeke, with added gifts of appreciation to Peggy, Kate, Phil and Denice for all of their extra volunteer services. If you would like to give a monetary donation, please place cash or check in an envelope with "Staff Gift" written on the envelope. You may:

1. Place the envelope in the offering plate/vase,
2. Give to any Council Member.
3. Or mail your gift to the church at 1050 Peninsula Drive, Traverse City 49686, attention Dave Pepler.

Your gift should be received by Sunday, December 14th in time for the Staff Christmas Party. Thank you for your generosity.

Food Pantry News:

Year To Date monetary donations: \$1,976.... Funds spent: \$1,629. Balance: \$347.

3 Thrivent grants for \$250 each...Multiple member donations and a fantastic food drive.

The food pantry also provides food to the Baby Pantry each month. Thank you so much for your continued support. There is great need in our community. Kathie Bair

"The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor."

Proverbs 22:9

HANDBELLS FOR CHRISTMAS The rehearsals will be Mondays at 3:30pm. 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.

Social Ministry/Outreach update: Please step forward to volunteer when a call is put out for assistance with any of these activities:

Jan 24-28 Safe Harbor under the leadership of Tom Rockne.

Feb. 7 Northwest Michigan Action Agency Super Saturday event at the Career Tech Center on Parsons Rd (Carolyn Mann or Nancy Ammann)

Any time-If you feel the spirit calling you to volunteer at Jubilee House contact Pastor Derek Quinn at 231 947 2330 or email dquinn@gracetc.org.

Pray and consider: Could we field a group of 6 volunteers to prepare a community meal the 4th Sunday of the month at Grace Episcopal?

If questions, concerns, or ideas contact Cindy Monroe or Jim Hutchison. Next meeting for the full group will be scheduled in late Feb or early March.



Social Ministry and Outreach Group Activity SUPER SATURDAY February 7, 2026 Northern Michigan Community Action Agency

We need volunteer teams to assist with tasks for Super Saturday which will be held at: TCAPS Career Tech Center on Parsons Road. Team members may choose to serve from 8 to 11 AM

Or from 11AM to 2 PM Background checks are required well ahead of time and will be administered free by DHS.

Please consider helping with this project. Needs: registration check-in volunteer, breakfast station support, hot cocoa station monitor, food station ticket taker, "wayfinding" guides, tax packet distribution, food area support and clean-up, food box distribution (end of day), table moving and breakdown crew, general end-of-day clean-up. Contact Carolyn Mann 231-995-9035 or Nancy Ammann 231-946-8433. Additional details available soon.

Bethlehem Supports Safe Harbor in January

Bethlehem will be at Safe Harbor January 24, 25, 27, and 28 providing a wonderful hot meal for all guests and staff. The four kitchen groups are being led by B.J. Christensen, Cindy Monroe, Tina Dohm, and the Bair/Goebel team. Right after the first of the year I will have sign-up sheets for those who want to assist with Check-in, dispensing meds, and assisting the guests in the dining area. Also, we will again be collecting snacks and fruit for evening distribution. We'll be acting fast January 4, 11, and 18 to get ready. Any questions...call me at 231-631-0040. Thank you!
Tom Rockne, Bethlehem Safe Harbor Coordinator

BOOK CLUB NEWS: We are celebrating the holiday season and taking a short break until we meet again in Jan. A book will be dispersed at the Dec Christmas gathering. If you are not currently on the email list and would like to receive information please contact Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net. .

December's XYZ potluck & presentation will be on Friday, December 12th. After a delicious potluck lunch at noon, we will have a presentation by Mike Tusan of Mad Mike's Computer Services. 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!

A big thank you to all who have turned in Olesons' slips. We received a check from Oleson's for \$207.55 for a total of \$1031.80 so far this year. Olesons' slips never expire. Please continue to turn in your Olesons receipts to Bethlehem. Thanks so much!!! Also, the area for the Oleson receipts is in the lower cabinets below the mailboxes (under the A-B-Cs...). The cabinet door is marked with the receptacle inside. Unfortunately, we are no longer collecting the receipts from Family Fair or any other grocery store. We just collect for Olesons

Dear Members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church,

It's that time of year when the Finance Committee and the Church Council is preparing a budget for the next year. To help forecast income for 2026, please return your 2026 pledge card, if you have not already done so.

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, if you have not fulfilled your pledge 2025, we ask also that you do so before the end of the year. 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
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Financial Secretary

Phil Anderson
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Bookkeeper

Giving Statements Available

Your individual giving statements will be available in your mailbox in the Narthex beginning Sunday November 30, 2025. The statement covers giving from January 1st through September 30th. Please pick them up at your convenience. To save on postage, I will mail out the ones not picked up by mid December. Thank you for your generous support for the programs and ministries of your church. We are all blessed by your faithful giving. Your Bookkeeper



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 Tina

(Alanna is on maternity leave - thank you Tina for taking over!)

Heavenly Father, we thank thee...

As we continue to count our blessings during the holiday season, I would like to take a moment to include some of our **Many** volunteers. These volunteers help to educate our youth and young adults. These volunteers help to raise funds for our youth and young adult programs. These volunteers help to place Jesus in the hearts of our youth and young adults. These volunteers work to schedule fun events to keep our youth and young adults engaged and involved in our church. For this...we give thanks.

Success!!

To list a few of our most recent success stories and events: the bake sale and fundraiser, The Wittenburg Door and questions for Pastor Paul, and Bibles for youth. We are looking forward to the Christmas season and the involvement of our youth and young adults in the programming. We are also looking forward to our Intergenerational events that will take place after the holidays.



-Tina Dohm, Youth & Y2A Committee

Christian Education News December 2025

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25th

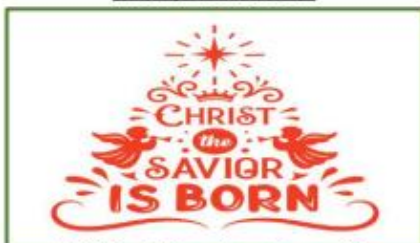
Support our upcoming annual ski trip –
Let our youth serve you breakfast before church!

Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser

8:45am – 9:45am
Sunday, January 25th



Merry Christmas!



-Christian Education Committee



Please join us
at our 4pm Christmas Eve service
for this year's Christmas Eve Children's Program!!!



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22nd
Our annual youth family & friends ski trip –
Watch for more details to come soon!

ELCA Global Links

Photographs are usually featured in the articles about global mission news. This gives the reader an opportunity to see numerous groups of people across the globe, who are either called to serve the ELCA, or they tell the stories of people in our partnership countries who are working to spread the Gospel in their lands. The photo below is of the newest missionaries sent out to serve on your behalf.



ELCA Global Mission welcomed 20 new missionaries serving in 11 different countries. Our new global personnel are serving in roles such as pastors, teachers, Seminary Horizon International interns, coordinators and more.

Please keep our new missionaries and our companion churches in your prayers.



WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM - DECEMBER 2026



ADVENT is here. It's the time to focus on the birth of Jesus as a source of hope, peace and love. We celebrate the 'gift of God' through Christ's birth, reflecting on His love and sacrifice. We are guided by His light in the new year. We have joy in the Savior's birth, the hope He brings to humanity, and the call to share God's love with others.

CHRISTMAS TEA will be held on Sunday, December 7th at 2PM in the Gathering Space. Check out the display in the Narthex. We hope to see you there!

BIBLE STUDY: Our next Bible study will be December 11th at 1PM in the Library. We are inviting all women to join us. The study will be taken from the December *Gather* magazine titled: 'Practicing Advent Imagination: We cannot build a new future that we cannot imagine. The long night of Advent gifts us with time to dream. This study will offer us ways of imagining God's future for us and all creation through the dreams of Joseph, the Three Wise Men and Isaiah.' (written by Sarah Olson-Smith) If you need a copy of the lesson, please contact Nancy Ammann.

HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS!

Health Concerns*



The Power of Prayer

*Mary Woodring, Jerry Hill,
Richard Fernholz, 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,
John Block, Bob,
Marianne, Norm Fred, Chris,
Kyle, Janet, Cheryl*

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...

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

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
	2:30pm - Choir 3pm - Chair Yoga 3:30pm - Bell Choir 3:30pm - Grief Group	Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work Group 10:45am - Staff Meeting	11:30am - Music Rehearsal 1:30pm - Zoom Book & Bible Study	5:30pm - ACA 5:45pm - Advent Meal 7pm - Advent Service	6pm - LifeRing Recovery Group	8pm - AA
7	9	9	10	11	12	13
9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service(S) 11:30am - Worship and Music 12:30pm - Youth Discipleship 2pm - WELCA Christmas Tea	11am - Finance Cmte. 2:30pm - Choir 3:30pm - Bell Choir	Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work Group 1pm - Friendship Bible Study 6pm - Y2A/Christian Ed Meeting 6:30pm - Executive Committee (Zoom)	11:30am - Music Rehearsal 12pm - Baby Parity changeover 1:30pm - Zoom Book & Bible Study	9am - Baby Parity Setup 10am - Baby Parity-FH 1pm - Rebecca Anna Circle 5:30pm - ACA 5:45pm - Advent Meal 7pm - Advent Service	12pm - XYZ 6pm - LifeRing Recovery Group	9am - AA/JW 7pm - Contra Dance - Bayside
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Traditional Worship Service	2:30pm - Choir 3pm - Chair Yoga 3:30pm - Bell Choir 3:30pm - Grief Group	Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work Group 12pm - Sarah Circle - Library 6:30pm - Council Meeting	11:30am - Music Rehearsal 1:30pm - Zoom Book & Bible Study 5:30pm - Book/Supper Club	5:30pm - ACA 5:45pm - Third Thursday Meal 7pm - Third Thursday- Blue	STAR articles due today 10am - Sew Pieciful 1pm - Letto SG - Library 6pm - LifeRing Recovery Group	9pm - AA
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Youth Christmas Caroling event 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service(S)	2:30pm - Choir 3pm - Chair Yoga	Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work Group	Christmas Eve Church Office Closes at Noon 4pm - Christmas Eve Service 7pm - Christmas Eve Service	Church Office is Closed Merry Christmas 5:30pm - ACA	6pm - LifeRing Recovery Group	8pm - AA
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service(S)	2:30pm - Choir 3pm - Chair Yoga	Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work Group	Church Office Closes at Noon Happy New Year			

BLC Contacts

Church Office

Pastor Paul Busekist	paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org
Admin. Asst., Barbara Oster	admin@bethlehemtc.org
Bookkeeper, Phil Anderson	bookkeeper@bethlehemtc.org
Anthony Bero, Music Director	bero.tony@gmail.com
Alanna Steffunick-Boomer, Ministry Coordinator	Alanna.Steffunick@bethlehemtc.org
Website	www.bethlehemtc.org

Church Council

Gail Goldsmith, President	president.council@bethlehemtc.org
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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).

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