

January 2026



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 with Traditional service on the 2nd Sunday.
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.

“¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped,^[g] they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” – Matthew 2:10-11 (NRSVUE)



Dear Bethlehem sisters and brothers,

The above passage is a famous one. **Epiphany**, referring to the visitation from the three “magi” or “wise men,” appears curiously only in Matthew’s gospel. Other epiphanies of Jesus – defined in Greek as “manifestations” or “appearances” – are elsewhere in the gospels around Christ’s baptism for example (manifesting the Trinity as dove/Spirit, voice of God the Father, and the person Jesus.) Here, wise or royal travelers from distant regions learn of Jesus’ importance for the world and legitimate his heavenly kingship with a visit with an offering of gifts.

If we’re being honest, our Christmas gifts are often less reminders of our love for Jesus and more of our love for one another. Regardless, our true focus on Epiphany and in the Christmas season is the Christ child, and what he continually brings to our lives: an awakening love and a saving grace for all of humanity.

As we begin a new year together, we may draw inspiration from the images to your right: (1) the culmination of our “What Can’t Wait” Advent theme in the “Love” of Christmas; (2) the Magi appearing in our narthex who approach the baby Jesus in homage, worship and gifts, and (3 and 4) the surprising gift of a Bethlehem member, who gifted some welcoming furniture and ambience to enhance how we welcome Christ each time we enter our Gathering Space... **What newness awaits us in 2026 as we travel to manger and throughout the kingdom?** Let us venture forward boldly – in peace, togetherness and shalom!

- Pastor Paul



A Word From the President:

As we move into January and Celebrate the rest of the Christmas Season. We may just take down our artificial tree, like me. If you have a real tree, do you recycle it so it can be made into mulch? Or have you considered taking it outside and put bird seed ornaments on it. Tie fruit rings or use pine cones and smear with peanut butter and roll in bird seed or sunflower seeds and tie those to the tree. Then sit back and watch the birds enjoy your tree. If you haven’t done it before, give it a try and what a way to enjoy nature and God’s creatures will love you.

Psalm 104.12 ESV

By them the birds of heaven have their habitations; they sing among the branches.
New Year’s Blessings to you all!

Gail

NOVEMBER FINANCIAL NEWS

November Income was \$35,752. Budgeted income was \$34,918 resulting in \$834 surplus against budget. Income from the annual Craft Fair of \$4,687 is included in November's numbers. Expenses were \$39,190 against budgeted expense of \$28,249 resulting in spending exceeding budget by \$10,106. The overage is due to costs of locating the blockage, clean, and repair of the storm water drain from BLC to Garfield Road. Overall, our November expense exceeded income by \$3,438.

YTD income was \$384,645 after removing \$44,366 of income designated for the Basement Refresh Project. Budgeted income was \$336,127 resulting in \$48,518 surplus against budget. Expenses were \$439,074 after removing \$23,274 of expense designated for the Basement Refresh Project. Budgeted expense was \$365,431 resulting in spending \$73,643 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 November 30th, we have spent \$54,429 more than we have brought in.

Salvation Army Bell Ringing Report: The following people were Bethlehem's Salvation Army Bell Ringers on December 6 and 7, 2025: Frank and Pat Wall, Lindsay and Dave Susalski, Sue and Bill Allen, Don Sheehan, Tim Goebel, Dan and Laura Hahn, Mary Ann Tanis and Braxton, Pastor Paul and Parker, Jim Hinds, Jim and Cindy Monroe, Kathi Ivany, Jim Hutchison and Claire, Gail Tokey, and Carl and Suzanne Lehto. They stepped up and answered the call not knowing what the weather might be. The weather was quite cold and windy but bearable when suitably dressed. The total donations received for the two days of ringing was \$1,269.26. The first two hours of ringing on Friday were done by members of another church who had committed to ring before Bethlehem was assigned to ring on Friday and Saturday. We don't know how much was given during those first two hours but if we assume donations were made at a constant rate through out the day, then the donations during Bethlehem's bell ringing would be approximately \$160.00 less for a total of \$1,109.26. These funds will certainly put some extra cheer in the lives of several families in the Traverse City area during this Christmas season. Thanks for a job well done.

Creation Care Team update: our next Creation Care core team meeting will be **Monday, January 12th at 6pm** in the Youth Room. Subcommittee members may be meeting before as needed. Contact Paul Wiemerslage, Tina Dohm or Pastor Paul for any updates.

Pancake Breakfast before the service on January 25th – Please support the youth for their upcoming annual ski trip.

NEW MEMBERS: If you are interested in membership, please contact the office or membership co-chair Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net.

NEW MEMBER INSERT IN YOUR MAILBOX FOR YOUR DIRECTORY: If you haven't already retrieved it from your church mailbox, PLEASE TAKE IT HOME!!!. Tuck it in the back cover of your directory in case you want/need to contact any of these new members. If you cannot stop by church please contact the office so a copy can be sent by email or snail mail.

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

Chair Yoga will continue meeting at 3:00pm on Mondays but not on Wednesdays. It is still \$5 per class

Choir News: The choir has resumed its practice schedule on Mondays at 2:30. The next rehearsal is January 12th. Come and join in the musical fun!

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.

Monthly outreach meal: We already have a group of 6 volunteers to prepare a community meal the 4th Sunday of the month at Grace Episcopal. We would like to have 6 more volunteers so each volunteer is only needed 6 times per year. Please prayerfully consider this service so we can begin offering a meal in March or sooner.

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 volunteers to assist with hospitality 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. If you can help, please sign the sheet in the narthex or call Carolyn Mann at 231-995-9035 – ASAP Please consider helping with this project. Needs: registration check-in volunteer, breakfast station support, hot coca 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. For additional details see the poster in the narthex.

Bethlehem Supports Safe Harbor in January

It's January and Bethlehem volunteers are preparing to host Safe Harbor guests for dinner on the 24th, 25th, 27th, and 28th. Cindy Monroe, Tina Dohm, B.J. Christensen, and the Bair-Goebel Team are assembling their kitchen teams. If they need additional help in the kitchen I'll advise. We do have to have two dishwashers for each night! We will have sheets to sign-up to help with check-in (including a runner for contraband and meds), to dispense meds (it's an easy stationary job), and to provide welcome and assistance in the dining area. We will also have sheets to sign up to provide treats- fresh fruit, crackers, cookies, energy bars, etc. These must be “store bought” as only food made on site can be distributed. BLC Safe Harbor Coordinator Tom Rockne and other volunteers will be available on 4 JAN to answer your questions. Questions now? Reach Tom at tomrockne@gmail.com or 231-631-0040.

BOOK CLUB NEWS: The next meeting for the book club will be 5:30 on January 14 at The Cottage. We will be discussing *The Winemaker's Wife*, an historical novel by Kristin Harmel. If interested in attending please contact Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net.

January's XYZ potluck & presentation will be on Friday, January 9th. After a delicious potluck lunch at noon, we will have a presentation by Connie Hintsula of Alliance for Senior Housing. 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. 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
Financial Secretary
Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Phil Anderson
Bookkeeper
Bethlehem Lutheran Church



Notes From Tina

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



Jesus-Joy-Christmas

When these three words are typed in to the Google search it states: Jesus' birth at Christmas brings "great joy" because He is the promised Messiah, the King who brings salvation, restores our relationship with God, offers forgiveness, and provides an everlasting hope. What do those three words mean to you? Jesus is our joy provider. And during the Christmas season we find joy in Jesus.

2026 Upcoming Events

May the New Year bring you blessings and happiness. Our upcoming events for Christian Education and Y2A include our annual pancake breakfast fundraiser for the ski trip in January, our annual (intergenerational) ski trip at Crystal Mountain in February, and our sledding trip somewhere in between. All fun things to look forward to in our snowiest of seasons.

-Tina Dohm, Youth & Y2A Committee

Christian Education News **January 2026**

PANCAKE BREAKFAST FUNDRAISER JANUARY 25th

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



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

Happy New Year!



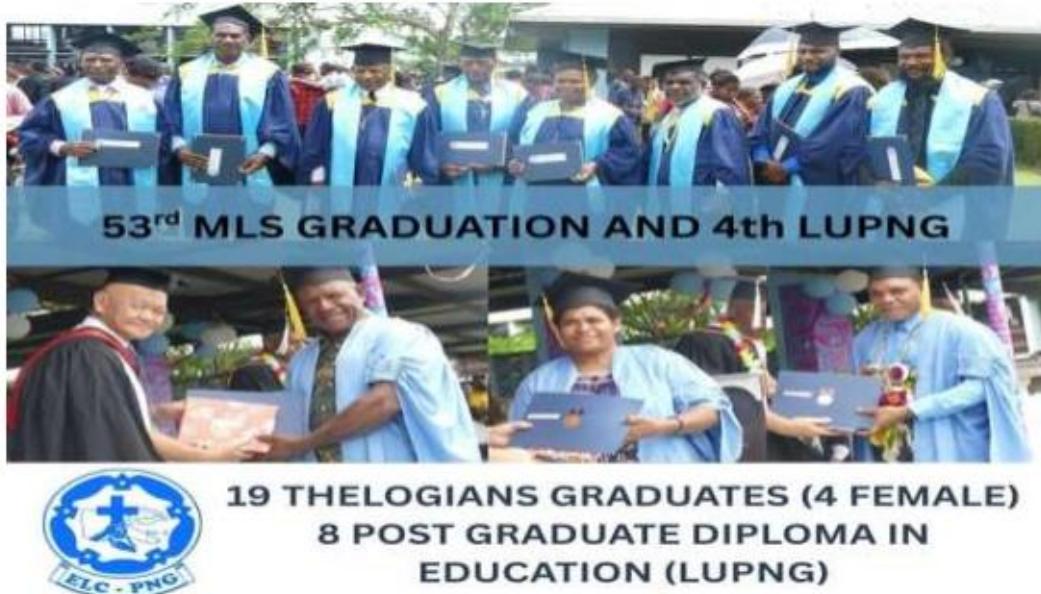
-Christian Education Committee



ANNUAL BLC SLEDDING PARTY
Plans are in the works –
Get your sleds out & watch for more details soon!

ELCA Global Links - Evangelical Lutheran Church - Papua New Guinea [ELC-PNG]

On November 29, 2025 - in our companion synod (ELC-PNG) - a total of 19 students graduated with Diplomas and Degrees in Theology. Among them were four female graduates, three with Diplomas and one with a degree, reflecting ELC-PNG's ongoing commitment to encourage and support women in theological education. Martin Luther Seminary is part of the Lutheran University in Papua New Guinea, (LUPNG). The new pastors will serve throughout the country in the 1.5 million member church.



VERSE ON TAP

Old & New Testament Appendix Project

Theme: Songs of Love and Emotion

5:30 – 7:00pm
@ Nocturnal Bloom
Brewery & Restaurant
3344 Cass Rd, Traverse City, MI

Join us as we Eat, Drink, Listen and Be Merry!

A partnership between...

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Presbyterian Church

The poster features a dark wood-grain background. The title "VERSE ON TAP" is in large white letters. Below it, the subtitle "Old & New Testament Appendix Project" is in gold. The theme "Songs of Love and Emotion" is in yellow. The event details are in white. The "Join us as we Eat, Drink, Listen and Be Merry!" text is in gold. The "A partnership between..." text is in white. Logos for Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Presbyterian Church are at the bottom.

Some November and December 2025 pics



Christmas Caroling
12/21/25: Singing with the Norm and Jane Fred...

Singing with Dale and Kathryn Thiel (right) and the Newhouses (below)



A zany Christmas sweater Habitat mission trip picture (right) and the full BLC – St. Luke's Habitat team...



"Before and after" house painting picture from Sebring, FL in Nov.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service(S) 11:30am - Worship and Music				Church Office is Closed Happy New Year (Happy Birthday) 5:30pm - ACA	6pm - LifeRing Recovery Group 7pm - Contra Dance - Bayside	6pm - AA
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3pm - Chair Yoga 3:30pm - Grief Group	Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work Group 10:45am - Staff Meeting	11:30am - Music Rehearsal	Sam - Baby Pantry Setup 10am - Baby Pantry+FH 1pm - Rebecca Anna Circle - 5:30pm - ACA	12pm - XYZ 6pm - LifeRing Recovery Group	7pm - Contra Dance - Bayside	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Traditional Worship Service 11:15am - Congregational Meeting 12:30pm - Youth Discipleship	Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work Group 1pm - Friendship Bible Study 6pm - Y2A/Christian Ed Meeting 6:30pm - Executive Comm (Zoom)	11:30am - Music Rehearsal 1:30pm - Zoom Book & Bible Study	5:30pm - ACA 5:45pm - Third Thursday Meal 7pm - Thursday Thursday/Time 2	STAR articles due today 10am - Sew Peaceful - 1pm - Lentil SG - Library 6pm - LifeRing Recovery Group	6pm - AA	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service(S) 12:30pm - Youth Discipleship	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 - BookSuper Club	5:30pm - ACA 6pm - LifeRing Recovery Group	6pm - AA	6pm - AA	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
8:45am - Pancake Breakfast 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service(S) 2pm - St Andrews Society 5:30pm - Verse Ontrap	2:30pm - Choir 3pm - Chair Yoga	11:30am - Music Rehearsal 1:30pm - Zoom Book & Bible Study	5:30pm - ACA 6pm - LifeRing Recovery Group	6pm - AA	6pm - AA	

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, Jim Rumbach, John Block, Bob,
Marianne, Norm Fred, Chris,
Kyle, Janet, Cheryl, Greg*

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 jsstretlien@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

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
Maureen Bauer, Vice President	vicepresident.council@bethlehemtc.org
Nancy Pflasterer, Secretary	secretary.council@bethlehemtc.org
Dave Peppler, Treasurer	treasurer.council@bethlehemtc.org
Jim Monroe, Financial Sec.	financialsecretary.council@bethlehemtc.org
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, Fellowship	fellowship.committee@bethlehemtc.org
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Jana Rockne, Personnel	personnel.committee@bethlehemtc.org
Jana Rockne, Safety & Security	
Bethany Uhl, Stewardship	stewardship.committee@bethlehemtc.org
Denice Bossardet, Worship and Music	worshipmusic.committee@bethlehemtc.org
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).

Lots of cool information inside
Pr Paul's Page
Council President's notes
Council officers and committee liaisons
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Book Club News
XYZ
Social Ministry/Outreach Update
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Christian Education News
Financial News
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The Power of Prayer
Church Calendar

