

# February 2026



**Bethlehem**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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



Website: [www.bethlehemtc.org](http://www.bethlehemtc.org)  
Email: [bethlehem@bethlehemtc.org](mailto:bethlehem@bethlehemtc.org)

**Building Hours:**

Monday – Thursday, 9am to 2:30pm

**Office :**

Monday – Thursday, 9am to 2:30pm

**Worship Times:**

Sunday: 10 am Modern Worship with  
Traditional service on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.**

***“You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” – James 2:8 (NRSV)***



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

For much of my spiritual life, I have avoided the book of James, and with the exception of “Year B” (Mark’s gospel), we seldom see James in our worship texts. Martin Luther famously objected to the book of James because he thought its focus on works as “first fruits of faith” detracted too much from the power of justification “sola fide” – or “by faith alone.” James claims that “just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.” (James 2:26.) After being in ministry now for over twenty years, I confess, however, that while I profess Luther’s insistence on grace, faith and scripture, I also have a soft spot for James. We are studying it together on Wednesdays in January and February in our Zoom Book and Bible Study Group (feel free to join!) Taking James into account, you could say that our faith might be a mere collection of good thoughts, prayers, and personal identify without a real connection to God through our neighbors...many of whom have more needs now than ever. When we are able to personify and materialize our faith in the form of the “Matthew 25” calls by Jesus (“I was hungry and you gave me food...a stranger and you welcomed me...[in need] and you gave me clothing...cared for me...and visited me”), our faith bears good fruit indeed.

So, even as we believe that God does the “heavy lifting” for our salvation, this month I give thanks for the many ways God inspires us all to help with Safe Harbor and many other ministries. I give thanks for the many ways our new vision is planting good seeds with Social Ministry and Outreach, in New Life Together, and via Creation Care. Speaking of that, our Lent theme this year will be based on the book *A Watered Garden* by Ben Stewart with devotions written by pastors throughout our synod and state. For these fruits and for many others, I give thanks. Much peace!

- Pastor Paul



### **A Word From the President:**

As February begins we look forward to many sweet loving days. Of course Valentines, a time to give your loved ones candy.

Then we have Shrove Tuesday, also known as Pancake Day which began in medieval times to rid your home of fats, sugars and butter before the beginning of Lent. It is also a day of repentance, transition and preparation before the time of fasting on Ash Wednesday and the 40 days until Easter.

There are other names for this tradition, Fat Tuesday and the celebration in New Orleans. The Polish population celebrate by eating Paczkies which are fruit filled donuts full of lard and sugar. Oh my what a day! So celebrate and enjoy all of the sweets for 1 day, before we Christians begin the solemn time of fasting as we remember the life and crucifixion of Jesus Christ our Savior. Blessings to you all. Gail

## DECEMBER FINANCIAL NEWS

December 2025 Financials (net of solar panel tax credit, basement refresh, and accounting adjustments)

December income was \$35,898. Budgeted income was \$32,672 resulting in a \$3,226 surplus against budget. Expenses were \$34,286. Budgeted expense was \$27,725 resulting in expense exceeding budget by \$6,561. The overage was due to higher snow removal (\$1,400), electricity Nov & Dec (\$1,340), storm/water abatement (\$2,145, and year end distributions (\$2,550). From a cash perspective our income exceeded expenses by \$1,612.

Full Year 2025 Financials (net of solar panel tax credit, basement refresh, and accounting adjustments)

Full year income was \$419,946. Budgeted income was \$368,799 resulting in a \$51,147 surplus against budget. Expenses were \$473,360. Budgeted expense was \$393,156 resulting in expense exceeding budget by \$80,204. The overage was due primarily to \$63,353 expenses for fire suppression, HVAC system, and storm/water abatement. From a cash perspective our expense exceeded income by \$53,414.

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**Souper Bowl Sunday – February 8, 2026** Immediately following the church service, join us for our first annual Souper Bowl Sunday – a delicious way to fight hunger in our community! Looking for a few “souper volunteers” to bring a crockpot or large pot of your favorite homemade soup (enough to share). This will be a take-out only event offering containers filled with warm soups, breads, and desserts. All free-will donations will benefit our Food Pantry. To volunteer by bringing soup, sign up in the Gathering Space or contact Peg Pepler at [pepler6088@gmail.com](mailto:pepler6088@gmail.com) or 585-414-8200.

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**Giving Statements Available** Your individual giving statements will be available in your mailbox in the Narthex beginning Sunday February 1, 2026. The statement covers giving from January 1st through December 31, 2025. Please pick them up at your convenience. To save on postage, I will mail out the ones not picked up by the end of February. Thank you for your generous support for the programs and ministries of your church. We are all blessed by your faithful giving. Your Bookkeeper

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**NEW MEMBERS:** The new member meeting has been rescheduled for Sunday, February 15th immediately after church. If you are interested in membership, please contact the office or membership co-chair Cindy Monroe at [cmonroe@chartermi.net](mailto:cmonroe@chartermi.net)

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**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.

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**Social Ministry/Outreach update:**

**Monthly outreach meal:** We have a confirmed interested group of 10 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 about 6 times per year. Please prayerfully consider this service which we will begin offering in April. Even if you can only come once or twice in a year, your help will be appreciated.

**Freedom Builders:** Orientation meeting is July 21 at 6pm and work days July 22-25 7:30am 'til done meeting at their new warehouse at 571 West Commerce Drive

**Habitat for Humanity build:** It helps to plan ahead...could you assist with a build project in Florida in late October or early November? Or perhaps a different build project? Dates are not certain at this time, but you could set aside some time and money.

**REMEMBER:** If questions, concerns, or ideas contact Cindy Monroe or Jim Hutchison. Next meeting for the full group will be on a Sunday in March after the service.

**Grief Group** meets the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month from 3:30-4:30 in the gathering space, unless the TC schools are closed. Any questions contact Peggy Burns 232-392-6913.

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**Chair Yoga** will continue to meet at 3:00pm on Mondays. It is still \$5 per class

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**Choir News:** The choir has resumed its practice schedule on Mondays at 2:30.. Come and join in the musical fun!

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**The Fellowship Committee** provided a dinner for 18 on January 15th for Third Thursday. Coming In February, Souper Bowl Sunday on February 8th will serve a variety of soups, breads and desserts for take out after the church service. There is no charge for the food, but free will donations are gratefully accepted with proceeds benefiting the Food Pantry. Mark your calendars for: Shrove Tuesday, February 17th, at 5:30 PM serving the traditional pancakes and sausage, quiche, desserts as well as classic Mardi Gras fare. Every Thursday in Lent will feature a meal prior to the church service at 5:45. There will be sign-ups requesting volunteers to provide a meal for each Thursday during Lent.

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**There will not be a Third Thursday service in February as it is the day after Ash Wednesday. Below are the important dates for Lent through Easter.**

February 17 – Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper 5:30pm  
February 18 – Ash Wednesday service 7:00pm  
February 26 – Lenten Meal and Service 5:45pm / 7:00pm  
March 5 -- Lenten Meal and Service 5:45pm / 7:00pm  
March 12 -- Lenten Meal and Service 5:45pm / 7:00pm  
March 19 – Lenten Meal and Service 5:45pm / 7:00pm  
March 26 -- Lenten Meal and Service 5:45pm / 7:00pm  
March 29 – Palm Sunday service 10:00am  
April 2 – Maundy Thursday service 7:00pm  
April 3 – Good Friday service 7:00pm  
April 4 – Easter Vigil service 7:00pm  
April 5 – Easter services 8:00am / 10:00am  
April 5 – Easter Brunch 9:00am

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**Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser Thank You's!** A huge thank you to all of those who braved the cold to help with the pancake breakfast fundraiser! Adult volunteers (Renae Wells, Tina Dohm, Meredith Busekist, Mary Ann Tanis, & Pastor Paul) ran the grill, washed dishes, made coffee, helped with set-up and clean-up, and so much more! Youth volunteers (Makena & Lincoln Dohm, Noah Finch, Sammy Steffunick, Braxton Rhodes, & Parker Busekist) served food, set and cleared tables, washed dishes, and worked so hard to make this fundraiser a success - every youth who volunteered will have their ski passes covered for our upcoming annual Ski Trip to Crystal Mountain! A special thanks to everyone who joined us for breakfast and supported our youth - we appreciate you!

**BOOK CLUB:** We are returning to the home of Betsy Morley, but on a different day this month. We will meet Monday Feb 16 at 5:30 to discuss "How to Read a Book" by Monica Wood. It is an excellent book involving grief, second chances and forgiveness. Please contact Betsy at [betsymorley@charter.net](mailto:betsymorley@charter.net) if you are NOT on the mailing list and would like to attend.

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**Join us on Friday, February 13th for another XYZ Potluck & Presentation!** After our delicious potluck at noon, we will enjoy a presentation by Tom Fordyce, a local Leelanau expert in rocks and stones. He will be bringing some of his personal collection to show and tell. He also invites you to bring a rock to identify! You can read a great 2007 article about Tom from the Glen Arbor Sun in your weekly BLC email. We hope you can join us for a wonderful afternoon - open to adults of all ages!

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**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

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**Creation Care Team update:** our next Creation Care core team meeting will be Monday, March 16th 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.

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**COLLEGE & MILITARY LOVE PACKAGES:** We will again be sending Love Packages to our college and military people who are away from home. Please furnish the name and complete address for your loved one by February 8th to Nancy Ammann at [nmammann@gmail.com](mailto:nmammann@gmail.com) OR phone 946-8433. Thank you.

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**SAVE YOUR PAPER SACKS:** Please check the nooks and crannies of your home for paper sacks. The Baby Pantry fills requests from preschool teachers for their students whose parents cannot make it to the pantry. Paper sacks are the perfect size to place the needed items for each child. Just place your bags on the Care table in the coat room. Thank you!!

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**Volunteers for Watching the Front Door During Worship:** The Safety and Security Committee has the new sign up sheets available. We need volunteers who can be available to stay in the Gathering Space to lock the doors and let in late comers for Sundays. We appreciate all of the volunteers. If you have any questions, the committee members are Gail Goldsmith, Maureen Bauer, Jana Rockne, and Dave Pepler.

**Food Pantry:** After 3 years of managing the food pantry, I have made the decision to step away from this project. With the help and support of many, the food pantry project has been strengthened and supported by the congregation. It is my belief that this support will continue and the food pantry will continue to be supported and to serve our community in the future. Please continue to donate to support the food pantry going forward as our community continues to rely on it on a regular basis. You can support the pantry with monetary donations and food staples. Blessings, Kathie Bair

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**Outdoor food pantry update from Linda Hansen:** Our congregation provides food for two different missions: The Baby Pantry and the Outdoor Food Pantry. The needs are very different. This is the focus for the Outdoor Food Pantry: Food or toiletries in individual or small packaging. We have found the needs to be serving sizes of items that are portable. Some examples are:

tuna fish or chicken pouches (not tuna or chicken salad),  
protein bars, granola bars, trail mix  
crackers or crackers with peanut butter or cheese filling  
plastic fruit or vegetable cups  
ramen, rice or potatoes in the individual serving cups or foil packets  
oatmeal packets, small containers of peanut butter  
jerky/meat sticks, dried soup mixes, dried fruits  
Toiletries/other: toothbrushes, toothpaste, feminine products,  
small first aid kits, toilet paper, wet wipes, glasses wipes  
hand/toe warmers  
NO CANS or GLASS containers in the winter months.  
No expired food.

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**Annual Ski Trip! All Are Welcome!** Ready to brave the winter cold and join us on the slopes? Our annual intergenerational Ski Trip to Crystal Mountain is on Sunday, February 22nd! All ages are welcome to join us, both for skiing and for dinner at Geno's afterward. (This is a pay-your-own-way event - youth who volunteered at the pancake breakfast fundraiser will have their passes covered.) If skiing isn't your thing, you are still welcome to come just to watch the fun! We hope to see you there! Reach out to Alanna with any questions.

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**Sledding Party!** Let's enjoy this beautiful winter wonderland! Bring a sled and join us for sledding at the fantastic Twin Lakes hill on Saturday, February 28th at 12:30pm. Snacks and warm drinks will be provided! If you don't want to sled, you are still invited - it's enjoyable to watch the fun while sipping hot chocolate!

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**Please Note:**

Barbara Oster/Administrative Assistant works 9:00am-2:30pm on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday

Phil Anderson/Bookkeeper works 8:30am-12:30pm on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Please note that Phil will work these days until next summer

Alanna Steffunick-Boomer/Ministry Coordinator working in the office on the first Tuesday of each month from 9:30am - 12:30pm, and on Wednesdays from 11:30am - 2:30pm on all other weeks. I will also work from home throughout the week.

## Notes From Alanna

### **I'm Back!**

Huge thanks to Tina for taking over the last few STAR articles, and thank you to all of you for giving me time away with my sweet kiddos over the past few months! It was such a special time. I've missed you all, and I'm excited to be back! I have a new work schedule, so be sure to check for that so you know when to catch me if you need anything! Please feel free to reach out!



### **Winter Fun!**

We have two fun outdoor winter events coming up! The annual Ski Trip to Crystal Mountain is on Sunday, February 22nd - everyone is invited to join us there and for dinner at Geno's for dinner afterward (pay your own way). We will also be going sledding at Twin Lakes on Saturday, February 28th - snacks and warm drinks will be provided! Even if you don't want to sled, it's a lot of fun to watch! Hope to see you there!

*-Alanna Steffunick-Boomer, Ministry Coordinator*

## Christian Education News February 2026

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22nd ANNUAL BLC SKI TRIP

Watch for more details to come soon & thank you for supporting our pancake fundraiser!



College & Military Care Packages – it's that time again!  
We want to show our love to those away from home:  
Submit names & contact info ASAP to Nancy!

### Happy Valentine's Day!

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three;  
but the greatest of these is **love**.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13 NKJV



-Christian Education Committee



SATURDAY 2/28 ANNUAL BLC SLEDDING PARTY 12:30pm  
Get your sleds out & plan to join us at Twin Lakes –  
We'll provide snacks & drinks!

## ELCA Global Links - Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church in Nepal (a nation between India and China) was established in 1943. There are Six congregations and 1,400 members. The church's ministry is primarily to the Santal, an indigenous group of people residing in the eastern region of the country.

In October 2025, Rinki Soren was ordained as the first woman pastor of the Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church. On her journey to becoming a pastor, Rinki received an **ELCA International Leaders Program** scholarship when she attended Nepal Korea International College and pursued a degree in theology. As one of the youngest pastors in her church, she wants to strengthen the faith of other young people like her: "As a pastor, I want to teach theology to our Christian youth, and in particular, I want them to learn about our Lutheran identity."



## WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM - FEBRUARY 2026

### Prayer for February:



Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love and guidance as we enter February. Please guide and protect our family, friends and us throughout this month. Help us reflect Your love in our actions and thoughts, and provide strength and comfort to those in need. May we remember Your greatest act of love through Jesus Christ and share that love with others. In Jesus' Name. Amen

**FEBRUARY BIBLE STUDY:** Rebecca/Anna and Sarah circles will meet on Thursday, February 12th at 1PM in the church library. The lesson will be taken from the December, January and February issue of the *Gather* magazine. We will study lesson #2, "Now let us pray", praying with the body of the Earth where we will explore ways we can pray not only *for* creation but *with* creation as our sacred neighbors. Please contact Nancy Ammann if you are interested in joining us.



## Health Concerns\*



# The Power of Prayer

*Mary Woodring, Jerry Hill,  
Richard Fernholz, Lee, Ken,  
Judy Fenton, Julie Lapeer, Lynn,  
Ron Hellenga, Cindy Hitesman,  
John Stretlien, Harper Wiemerslage,  
Leroy, Roy Dumond, Dale & Cheryl,  
Patti, Sharon, Julie Barrett, Steve, Christine,  
Sherry, John Block, Bob, Pat Burton,  
Marianne, Norm Fred, Chris,  
Kyle, Janet, Cheryl, Greg, Pat*

**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.

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### **Prayer Requests:**

- Prayer Chain:** Please contact Jan Stretlien at [jstretlien@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:admin@bethlehemtc.org)

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Are you checking for the latest BLC updates at: [www.bethlehemtc.org](http://www.bethlehemtc.org)?

You saw Norm and others take the photos...be sure you see them at [www.bethlehemtc.org](http://www.bethlehemtc.org)!

Good News...and great news...at [www.bethlehemtc.org](http://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](http://bethlehemtc.org/Council-Minutes)**

# BLC Contacts

## **Church Office**

Pastor Paul Busekist	<a href="mailto:paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org">paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Admin. Asst., Barbara Oster	<a href="mailto:admin@bethlehemtc.org">admin@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Bookkeeper, Phil Anderson	<a href="mailto:bookkeeper@bethlehemtc.org">bookkeeper@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Anthony Bero, Music Director	<a href="mailto:bero.tony@gmail.com">bero.tony@gmail.com</a>
Alanna Steffunick-Boomer, Ministry Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Alanna.Steffunick@bethlehemtc.org">Alanna.Steffunick@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.bethlehemtc.org">www.bethlehemtc.org</a>

## **Church Council**

Gail Goldsmith, President	<a href="mailto:president.council@bethlehemtc.org">president.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Maureen Bauer, Vice President	<a href="mailto:vicepresident.council@bethlehemtc.org">vicepresident.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Nancy Pflasterer, Secretary	<a href="mailto:secretary.council@bethlehemtc.org">secretary.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Dave Peppler, Treasurer	<a href="mailto:treasurer.council@bethlehemtc.org">treasurer.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Jim Monroe, Financial Sec.	<a href="mailto:financialsecretary.council@bethlehemtc.org">financialsecretary.council@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Peggy Burns, Christian Care Giving	<a href="mailto:christiancaregiving.committee@bethlehemtc.org">christiancaregiving.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Tina Dohm, Christian Ed.	<a href="mailto:christianeducation.committee@bethlehemtc.org">christianeducation.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
, Fellowship	<a href="mailto:fellowship.committee@bethlehemtc.org">fellowship.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
John Halstead, Membership/Evangelism	<a href="mailto:membershipevangelism.committee@bethlehemtc.org">membershipevangelism.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Doug Cunningham, Property	<a href="mailto:property.committee@bethlehemtc.org">property.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Jana Rockne, Personnel	<a href="mailto:personnel.committee@bethlehemtc.org">personnel.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Jana Rockne, Safety & Security	
Bethany Uhl, Stewardship	<a href="mailto:stewardship.committee@bethlehemtc.org">stewardship.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Denice Bossardet, Worship and Music	<a href="mailto:worshipmusic.committee@bethlehemtc.org">worshipmusic.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Tina Dohm, Youth/Y2A	<a href="mailto:youth.committee@bethlehemtc.org">youth.committee@bethlehemtc.org</a>
Pastor Paul Busekist	<a href="mailto:paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org">paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org</a>

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  
Lent and Easter dates  
Book Club News  
XYZ  
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Skiing and Sledding  
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