

May 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 :
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.



“As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother’s womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.” – Ecclesiastes 11:5 (NIV)



“Let us proclaim the mystery of faith” - (Catholic liturgy AND the ELW Advent to Epiphany prayer before communion for Setting 1, p. 110)

Giving Thanks, Proclaiming Mystery

Dear Bethlehem sisters and brothers,

The first thing I want to do is clearly say “THANK YOU!!”

In case there was any doubt, Thursday, April 16th was my favorite Third Thursday (and quite possibly the Best Thursday EVER!) in our shared ministry at Bethlehem. Walking into the Fellowship Hall to see so many of you smiling and surprising me completely at dinner was an amazing birthday gift. All the cards and gifts besides were so thoughtful and wonderful, also. So, from the heart, THANK YOU, FRIENDS!!

As we head into May, there are a few other “flashpoints” from April to highlight. First, is the culmination of our Lenten journey through *A Watered Garden* (Stewart) and “from grayscale to technicolor.” What a way to see anew the potential of Creation and the promise of the Gospel together. The second highlight is something I will share more with you in the days and weeks ahead: a transformational Ecumenical Round Table (ERT) last week – something that happens each year now with my participation in the steering committee for the Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology. Not only did we discuss how important it is to be present in an age of increasing disconnectedness and A.I. automation, but we learned of new ways our brothers and sisters from the Presbyterian Church of the USA (PCUSA) and the Catholic Church are equipping their leaders and co-travelers in the faith. Exciting stuff, more to come.

I want to conclude this message with a discovery of mystery. First, from the book of Ecclesiastes, which we are studying each Wednesday this month...Its author famously states that “there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9). Yet, mystery is prominent in our faith, as noted in the Ecclesiastes verse above. And even as we are tempted to think that new inventions and seemingly unlimited information at our fingertips are taking the mystery OUT of our lives, God always provides us with the ultimate mysteries that cannot be fully measured or attained: HOW life first began, WHERE the wind (and even the Spirit) originates, and WHY our days on earth are numbered. All of those questions, and more, amount to what our Catholic friends say often (and so do we, if we venture to ELW Setting One’s prayer before communion – who knew?!?): “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.” Perhaps the mystery is one of the best parts of faith...

Friends, I invite you all to join us, either virtually or in the Youth Room each Wednesday in May from 1:30-3pm as we study Ecclesiastes, or in worship, or somewhere else along the path. Until then, be well.

-Pastor Paul

A Word From the President:

The month of May is here. The time for flowers to bloom, grass and trees are turning green. The earth is alive and so are we.

We also celebrate Memorial Day, to honor those who paid the ultimate sacrifice fighting for our freedoms. Take a moment and pray for those who have served our country, now and in the past and those who have passed away. Dear Lord, thank you for those men and women who are and have fought for our country, keep them safe. Be with their families as they have also made a great sacrifice. Amen
God’s Blessings to you all.

Gail

MAY 2026 STAR FELLOWSHIP REPORT

There were two major Fellowship events in April:

Easter Brunch was held on April 5, 2026 at 9:00 AM between the 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM services.

Members signed up to bring main dishes, pastries or side dishes. Special Easter tablecloths, placemats and napkins had been ordered and stored decorations from past years were used. Dishes donated included 10 pounds of bacon, 130 sausages, ham, several egg based breakfast casseroles, French Toast casserole, potato side dishes, a fruit pizza, yogurt, granola, deviled eggs, and Easter dyed hard boiled eggs. Dozens of muffins and breakfast coffeecakes and breads (regular and gluten free) were donated along with Barbara's special Heavenly Hash New Orleans Easter eggs (all taken!). We counted 76 people attending. **Free will donations totaled \$189.00.**

The second event was on 3rd Thursday, April 16th which coincided with Pastor Pauls' Birthday. A surprise was suggested by Alanna and Peggy Burns to Fellowship, so Pastor's favorite food from Portillo's in Chicago was ordered for the event. We also made a "clone" of Portillo's beef along with barbeque shredded chicken, and several side salads. His favorite desserts of pound cake and coconut cupcakes were decorated with camping and hiking picks. We counted at least 50 people, likely more. **Free will donations totaled \$133.00.**

The final third Thursday of the season will be on May 21st.

NEW MEMBERS: Three new members will be accepted on May 31: Kathy Blume (sponsored by Barbara Oster) and Marilyn and Mark Farnwall (sponsored by Laura and Dan Hahn). If you are interested in membership, please contact the office or membership co-chairs Cindy Monroe at cmonroe@chartermi.net or John Halstead at marilynjohnctc@hotmail.com

Social Ministry/Outreach update (REMEMBER: If general questions, concerns, or ideas contact Cindy Monroe or Jim Hutchison):

Monthly outreach meal: By the time you read this BLC volunteers will have prepared their first community meal the 4th Sunday of the month at Grace Episcopal. There will always be sign-up sheets in the gathering space for more volunteers. Please prayerfully consider helping. Even if you can only come once or twice in a year, your help will be appreciated especially on the Sundays of Memorial Weekend or Christmas weekend.

Freedom Builders: Orientation meeting is July 21 at 6pm at their new warehouse at 571 West Commerce Drive, and workdays July 22-25 7:30am 'til done. Contact Jim Hutchison or Carl Lehto.

Habitat for Humanity build: It helps to plan ahead...could you assist with a build project in Florida in early November? Or perhaps a more local build project this spring/summer in Kalkaska? For the Florida mission trip, we don't have a certain number of folks we need – from 1 or 2 to a handful would work to join our friends from St. Luke's (GR)! For local Habitat work days, we would like to get a group of 5 or 6 together sometime this summer or fall. Dates are not certain at this time, but you could set aside some time and resources. Contact Fred Reyelts

Going to the Theatre: One of BLC's own Kathi Ivany-Mort and her husband Jef will be performing in a reader's theatre **COSMO ST. CHARLES IS DEAD AND SOMEONE IN THIS ROOM KILLED HIM** May 8-May10. Tickets cost \$10.00. Cindy Monroe has a block of tickets for Sat May 9 at 2:00. Contact her if you want one of those tickets, or contact the Old Town Playhouse if you want a ticket for a different day.

Where 2 or more are gathered in my name. (Matt 18:20) In our world today there are a lot of things that we need prayer for. Every 4th Tues. starting at 11:00, we will be offering a time and place in church to pray. Please join us. If any questions, please contact Peggy Burns at 231-392-6913 or cobaltblues2003@yahoo.com

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.

Chair Yoga meets at 3:00pm on Mondays. It is \$5 per class.

Sunday School and Sunday's Adult Education hold their classes at 9:15am on Sunday.

The Wednesday Zoom Book/Bible Study meets at 1:30pm with a study of the Book of Ecclesiastes. See Pr. Paul or Barbara if you have any questions.

XYZ (EXtra Years of Zest) will next meet on Friday, May 8th. Please note that this is the last meeting before we break for the summer! XYZ is predominantly geared toward seniors but is open to adults of any age - the conversation and presentations would be enjoyable for all! In May, after our potluck lunch at noon, we will be enjoying a performance of live music by Hammer'd. Hammer'd is a local folk band that plays a wide range of Celtic, ethnic, and folk music. Their members play a number of vintage instruments including flute, concertina, hammered dulcimer, bowed psaltery, marimbula, and bodhran (Irish drum).



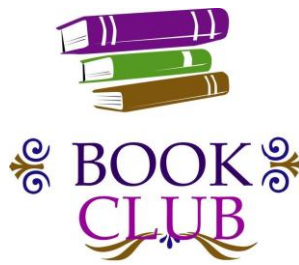
The Noisy Offering

NOISY OFFERING: We thank you for your generous giving of \$264.95 We are well on our goal of \$500! We will be collecting through May 10. This year the Synod has chosen to donate the money collected toward Lutheran World Response-Ukraine and Samaritas-New Americans. The money will be taken to Synod Assembly on May 15-16. If you have any questions, please contact Peggy Burns, Jim Monroe or Cindy Monroe, BLC voting delegates.

Verse O.N.T.A.P.: Do you like the Beatles, Pat Benatar, Bob Marley, Elvis (and other artists from the last few decades)? Turns out that scripture has some things to say about love, relationship, and some connections to these rockers' lyrics! Check out Verse O.N.T.A.P. on **Sunday, May 17th** 5:30pm-7:00pm at The Workshop 221 Garland St.

BELATED THANK YOU: A delayed note of appreciation to those in the bell choir who worked hours in order to present joyful music during communion on Easter Sunday: Crystel Fernholz, Laura Hahn, Kate Holtfreter, Carl Lehto, Jim Monroe, Jan Mudgett, Sheila Mosley, Brad Schuler, Scott Sorenson, Lindsay Susalski Director: Cindy Monroe Videographer: Jim Muratzki. Hope you are present on Sunday May 3 when a smaller bell ensemble will ring IN PERSON in the front of church.

BOOK CLUB: We will meet at the home of Betsy Morley on Wed May 27 at 5:30 to discuss HORSE by Geraldine Brooks. If not already on the email list please contact Betsy at betsymorley@charter.net to find out what to bring for the meal.



A big thank you to all who have turned in Olesons' slips. On March 8, 2026, we received a check from Olesons for \$294.24. In 2025, we received a total of \$1031.80 from people turning in their Olesons receipts. We will see how well we do this year! Thank you so much to everyone who turned in their Olesons receipts. 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

Creation Care Team update: our next Creation Care core team meeting will be Monday, May 4th 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.

New Adventure sponsored by Membership Committee: The membership committee tries to make certain that there is contact with as many members as possible. What about when some of those members live in the U.P.? Those who are interested can go on an adventure! Mark and Kathy McPherson live in Cedarville and now have retirement jobs as local tour guides for some Great Lakes ships. They have graciously offered any BLC members a free tour of Sault Ste Marie. Yes, it will be a long day, but except for the drivers you can sleep in the car! The tour will be Sat May 30 leaving the BLC parking lot at 7:00 am, with pit stops both going and returning and eating a meal in the Soo. Contact Cindy or Jim Monroe or sign up in the gathering space.

Let's Celebrate! Bethlehem paid off the mortgage to the church in November, so let's celebrate. Our Congregational meeting will be on June 14th, so after the meeting we will have a party and burn the old mortgage (copy).

A Peek at the Safe Harbor Calendar

June 23/24/25 (a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday), Bethlehem will be hosting meals at Safe Harbor this summer. A Hot Dog Picnic, a Pulled Pork Dinner, and a Fried Chicken Meal. A sign-up for side dishes, servers, and staff for check-in, meds, and meal hosts will be up in the Gathering Space in May. If needed, Bethlehem may return in July with another solo night of meal service. Next January (23, 24, 26, & 27), Bethlehem will once again rely on our Monroe, Dohm, Bair/Goebel, and Christensen kitchen teams to deliver their delights. Treats will be welcome. Support positions will also be filled. Thank you to all who have and will join in this key outreach. Happy to answer any and all questions at any time.

Tom Rockne Bethlehem Safe Harbor Coordinator M.231.631.0040

Thank you Sustaining Endowment Committee: Thanks to funds approved by this committee we are starting a gradual changeover of our round tables in the fellowship hall. You may have noticed that many of our current tables have chips on the side edges which can scrape you or snag your clothing. Also, those tables are very HEAVY!! We will have 10 new tables before the end of April and a dolly which can move 8 tables at a time and which has a softer bottom on which the tables can rest. If you know anyone who wants a 6 ft folding diameter table, please check with the property team about availability and appropriate donation. (A nice tablecloth will cover the worn spots.)

GRAND TRAVERSE BABY UPDATE The Grand Traverses Baby Pantry has been able to continue with its services (23 years and counting) because of 25 committed and dedicated volunteers. Everyone has been blessed with gifts and talents, special pieces of assistance to the whole and the results is something organic, alive and changing, in response to the challenges. We've learned to adapt, and, hopefully, we can continue for a while longer. With the dedicated volunteers, the support of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, the community, donors and so many others before us, we are making a positive impact on circumstances of young families in our area. It's Truly amazing!

Sincerely,
Sally Hanley, Director of the Grand Traverse Baby Pantry

(For the names of volunteers and descriptions of their responsibilities, please read the bulletin board located in the Narthex). Please contact Patty Leibenguth for more information. 231-499-2816



VBS 2026: Knights & Castles is scheduled for July 27-29 (Mon-Wed), from 9am-1pm each day! VBS is open to kids ages 3-10 and registration will open June 1st at 9am - space is limited, so be sure to share the date with anyone you know who has kids in that age range! VBS is only possible with the help of many wonderful volunteers (adults and kids age 10+), so please let us know if you would like to help! There are many different volunteer opportunities, including leading groups of kids, helping with activities, decorating and prep, snack preparation, loaning of household items for decorations, donating snacks, and so much more. All are very appreciated and essential to making VBS a success! If you would like to help in any way, please reach out to Alanna at alanna.steffunick@bethlehemtc.org

Spotlight on Zeke: So many of us enjoy Zeke's talents with religious music, but did you know that he plays other kinds of music at various locations in the Traverse City area? Here is a list of his engagements in the next month that are close to TC:

Wed 5/6, 5/13, 5/20, 5/27 – The Pub TC, Traverse City 7:00pm;

Fri 5/22 & Sat 5/23 –Grand Traverse Resort, Acme 7:00pm;

Mon 5/25—Memorial Day French Valley Vineyard, Cedar 7:00pm



Property Update

Almost a year has passed since the morning of Saturday, June 21st, when Traverse City experienced a rare weather event when 2.3 inches of rain fell in an 18 minute window resulting in unexpected substantial flooding in the basement.

It was later determined that the storm main had been severed during reconstruction of Garfield Avenue, effectively plugging Bethlehem's storm drain. This caused a roof drain pipe break, created by extreme pressure on the storm drain system. BLC currently remains engaged with MDOT in obtaining restitution.

The good news is, our actions taken to mitigate any additional flooding has been effective. The storm leader break repair and the double clean out / storm relief overflow installed functioned as expected during the recent extremely heavy April rains. The basement has been and continues to remain dry.

This unfortunate 2025 flooding situation had brought about a major delay in the Basement Refresh Project. Please know on a positive note, BLC is now in the process of resuming the long awaited Basement Refresh Project.

Notes From Alanna

Last XYZ Until Fall!

Our last XYZ until fall is on Friday, May 8th! After our potluck lunch we'll be enjoying live music from Hammer'd, a local folk band that plays a wide range of Celtic, ethnic, and folk music. Their members play a number of vintage instruments including flute, concertina, hammered dulcimer, bowed psaltery, marimbula, and bodhran (Irish drum). What a great way to end our XYZ season!



VBS Registration!

Planning is underway for VBS 2026: Knights & Castles! Registration opens on June 1st at 9am for kids ages 3-10, and VBS will run July 27-29. Space is limited, so make sure that registration date is marked on your calendar and sign up right away! We are always looking for more helpers and the more volunteers we have, the more kids we can accept, so let me know if you are interested in being involved! Keep an eye out for prep and decorating workdays, snack donation sign-ups, and more!

-Alanna Steffunick-Boomer, Ministry Coordinator

Christian Education News May 2026

Your help is needed
to make VBS a success this summer –
More volunteers mean more kids can attend!!!



Julia Acker & Jacob Graf are graduating –
watch for celebration details!
Congratulations & God's Blessings!!!

Happy Mother's Day!

**Her children arise up,
and call her blessed.**

Proverbs 31:28



First Communion classes during Sunday School –
we will celebrate our students later this month!
Please plan to join us for this faith milestone!!!


- Christian Education Committee

Global Links – ELCA Partnering with Lutheran Churches in Africa

- Twenty-one mission personnel are serving in eight countries in Africa in 2026.
 - Mission personnel serve through administration, education, evangelism, health care and gender justice, and as regional representatives.
- ELCA synods & global companions experience stronger engagement for mission & ministry.



The Rev. Dr. Elitha Moyo with Sunday school children at one of the new preaching points established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia.



**HAPPY
MOTHER'S
DAY**

WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM - MAY 2026



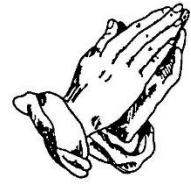
Mother's Day is a time to celebrate the incredible women who nurture, guide and shape us into who we are. For many, a mother's love is a reflection of a higher love - a testament to God's grace and the unwavering devotion present in a mother's heart. Be sure to share your love with your mother or someone who has been like a mother to you.

MAY BIBLE STUDY: We will be studying Session 3: Resurrection and life: God, whose name is 'I AM', promises to lead us into abundant life, now and forever. This lesson is taken from the March/April/May *Gather* magazine. Join us on Thursday, May 13th at 1PM in the library.

MEN'S EVENT: WELCA will be honoring the men of Bethlehem on June 7th. We will provide a meal at noon plus some as yet undetermined entertainment! There will be further information coming soon. Watch for it and join us. All Men Are Welcome!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service 12pm - WELCA 1pm - Community Meal at	27 2:30pm - Choir 3pm - Chair Yoga 3:30pm - Bell Ensemble	28 Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work 11am - Prayer in the 12:30pm -	29 11:30am - Music 1:30pm - Zoom Book &	30 5:30pm - ACA	1 10am - Sew Pieceful 6pm - Game Night 6pm - LifeRing Recovery	2 8pm - AA
3 9am - First Communion 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service 11:15am - Mac 'n Cheese	4 2:30pm - Choir 3pm - Chair Yoga 3:30pm - Grief Group 6pm - Creation Care	5 Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work 10:45am - Staff Meeting	6 11:30am - Music 1:30pm - Zoom Book &	7 5:30pm - ACA	8 12pm - XYZ 6pm - LifeRing Recovery	9 9:30am - Youth 7pm - Contra Dance -
10 HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY 9am - First Communion 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Traditional	11 11am - Finance Cmte. 2:30pm - Choir 3pm - Chair Yoga 6pm - Co-Facilitators	12 Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work 1pm - Friendship Bible 6pm - Y2A/Christian Ed	13 11:30am - Music 1pm - Baby Pantry Spring 1:30pm - Zoom Book &	14 9am - Baby Pantry Setup 10am - Baby Pantry-FH 1pm - Rebecca 5:30pm - ACA	15 11am - Funeral - Carol 12pm - Luncheon - Carol 1pm - Lehto SG - Library 6pm - LifeRing Recovery	16 2pm - Leatherman Young 8pm - AA
17 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service 12:30pm - Youth 5:30pm - Verse O.N.T.A.P	18 2:30pm - Choir 3pm - Chair Yoga 3:30pm - Grief Group	19 Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work 6:30pm - Council Meeting	20 11:30am - Music 1:30pm - Zoom Book &	21 5:30pm - ACA 5:45pm - Third Thursday 7pm - Thursday	22 STAR articles due today 6pm - LifeRing Recovery	23 8pm - AA
24 9am - First Communion 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - Worship Service 1pm - Community Meal at	25 Church Office Closed Memorial Day 3pm - Chair Yoga	26 Bulletin articles due today 9am - LWR Quilters (FH) 9am - Property Work 11am - Prayer in the	27 11:30am - Music 1:30pm - Zoom Book & 5:30pm - Book Club	28 5:30pm - ACA	29 6pm - LifeRing Recovery	30 Joan Maule funeral (Time) 8pm - AA
31 9:15am - Adult Education 9:15am - Sunday School 10am - New Member 10am - Worship Service	1 9am - VBS Registration 3pm - Chair Yoga 3:30pm - Grief Group	2 Bulletin articles due today 9am - Property Work 10:45am - Staff Meeting	3 11:30am - Music 1:30pm - Zoom Book &	4 5:30pm - ACA	5 6pm - LifeRing Recovery	6 8pm - AA

Health Concerns*



The Power of Prayer

*Mary Woodring, Jerry Hill,
Richard Fernholz, Lee,
Judy Fenton, Julie Lapeer, Lynn,
Cindy Hitesman, Pr. Zack Nelson,
John Stretlien, Harper Wiemerslage,
Roy DuMond, Cheryl, Jan Schmidt,
Patti, Sharon, Julie Barrett, Steve, Christine,
Sherry, John Block, Bob, Pat Burton,
Norm Fred, Chris, Shelley Miller,
Kyle, Janet, Cheryl, Pat, Gretchen*

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

BLC Contacts

Church Office

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Anthony Bero, Music Director	bero.tony@gmail.com
Alanna Steffunick-Boomer, Ministry Coordinator	Alanna.Steffunick@bethlehemtc.org
Website	www.bethlehemtc.org

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Gail Goldsmith, President	president.council@bethlehemtc.org
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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
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Zoom Bible Study
Grand Traverse Baby Pantry
Social Ministry/Outreach Update
Notes from Alanna with Knights & Castles at VBS
Christian Education News
Financial News
ELCA Global Links
WELCA Page
The Power of Prayer
Church Calendar
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