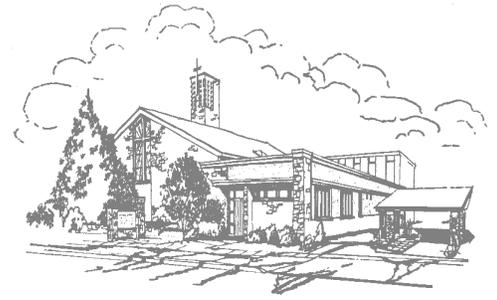


Bethlehem Star

Lutheran Church Lansing



Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lansing, Michigan

Pastor Matt Smith (and John Burow)

December 2022

Prayer

“So, I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” - Luke 11:9-10

“Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” - Matthew 26:41

As the first of the **Marks of Discipleship** (*aka Core Spiritual Practices*), the first step for us in Church Revitalization is making a full commitment in the congregation to a life of prayer. We have mobilized a group of ten **“Prayer Warriors”** who are praying everyday for the revitalization of Bethlehem *and* specific areas of immediate concern for Bethlehem. We have also recruited **“Prayer Guardians”**, a group of almost forty people who are committed to pray for the revitalization of Bethlehem every 30 minutes from 6:30 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. These folks are praying for the revitalization of Bethlehem and anything else that they feel needs prayer in their lives.

Our **Board of Worship Life** is continually working to make our worship time together more inclusive and revitalized. It has been the practice at Bethlehem for many years to name specific individuals in the Sunday **Prayers of Intercession**. Because personal privacy has become a growing concern in current times, we have decided not to include *full* names of individuals in our spoken prayers on Sunday, especially since they are now broadcast on YouTube (including those serving in the military). Instead, the assisting minister and/or pastor will say only first names, without congregational repetition, of people in particular need of prayer. This change will take place beginning on Sunday, December 4. However, the full names of individuals to be included in prayers will be printed in the Sunday bulletins and monthly newsletters. Prayer Warriors and Prayer Guardians will be provided complete lists of persons in need of prayers for their daily, private prayers. Anyone can contact the church office, and Tracy can provide up-to-date prayer lists.

We all could be listed each week for prayer concerns. Therefore, we each need to include all members of our Bethlehem family in our prayers. Should you need any special prayers, you can let the church Secretary know of the need. We want to be sensitive to all needs and support everyone in our prayers.

Adult Forum: “Deepening, Nourishing, Revitalizing Our Core Spiritual Practices”

I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. - John 15:5

In January we will turn our attention to revitalizing our life in Christ by exploring together the 7 Spiritual Practices that lie at the heart of our life together. We will begin with **prayer** where we have already made a significant investment of ourselves. Of course, even as we move on to the others, prayer remains central to connecting to all that God intends for our congregation. Please make plans to be part of this holy work.

Advent Offering Envelope – Lansing SAVE 8th Graders

This is a bit different than our 5th Sunday offering and will involve some extra accounting for our financial folks. Proceeds from the Advent Offering Envelope included in this newsletter will be used to boost the accounts of 8th Graders in the Baker Neighborhood and congregation. The hope is that this extra deposit will encourage the students as they move into high school to continue their education. Lansing SAVE is hoping to boost the accounts of ALL 8th Graders to a minimum of \$20, but for this we will continue our focus in the area we “champion”. Look for more information in the Sunday Parish Notes.

Welcome to a New Church Year

Starting with the First Sunday of Advent, (November 27) we begin the Year of Matthew. We will mostly focus on Matthew’s Gospel. Here Jesus is presented as the one who fulfills God’s mission, first given to Abraham, to bless all peoples. Events in Jesus’ life are said to happen in order to fulfill what is written in the Scriptures. Jesus also steps into the role of Moses, revealing in five sermons the life God intends for us, deepening and expanding what was commanded in the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures. In spite of this insistence on a “higher righteousness” (Matthew 5:17-48), it is forgiveness from God and for one another, not our performance, that marks the community and holds it together. Early on, Jesus is called “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us.” Fittingly, Jesus’ final words are the promise to be with us always. This Gospel contains riches that will be a blessing to us throughout the year.

December Adult Forum: “Befriending the Gospels”

This month we wrap up our overview of the Four Gospels. We will spend the first three Sundays in December learning to “listen” to the distinctive voices of each Gospel. Our focus will be on the Passion and Resurrection narratives. Please join us for discussions that could well enrich your relationship to each Gospel for years to come.

549 E. Mt. Hope Ave.
Lansing, Michigan 48910
Phone: (517) 482-3225
FAX: (517) 482-2458

Ministers

All of the members of
Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Pastor Matthew A. Smith
pastormattsmith@gmail.com
(517) 881-9890

Assistant to The Pastor
Pastor John W. Burow
pastorjburow@yahoo.com
(517) 614-4559

Church Secretary / Star Editor
Tracy Baker
bethlehemplansing@gmail.com
(517) 482-3225

Congregation President
Jim Whitman

Organist
James Schippers

Choir Director
Sue Nelson

Handbell Choir Director
James Schippers

Contemporary Worship Director
Laurey Wyble

Office Hours
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (M-F)

Visit our website at:
www.bethlutheran.org

Worship Schedule

8:45 - Sunday School
9:00 - Adult Forum
10:00 - Worship - Holy Comm.
Sanctuary - in person
And LIVE Streaming on
YouTube

Worship in December 2022

Assisting Ministers

December 4 - Bob Meeker
December 11 - Susan Mahoney
December 18 - Nancy Holderread
December 24 - Nancy Holderread
December 25 - Don Telles

Children's Sermons

December 4 - Pastor Matt Smith
December 11 - Pastor John Burow
December 18 - Pastor Matt Smith
December 24 - Pastor Matt Smith
December 25 - Pastor Matt Smith

Guess Who Is Turning 100?!

We are, and we look good for our age!

In September of 2024 we will be celebrating the 100th year anniversary of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church. What a wonderful milestone! **And one that will certainly warrant a special event.**

September of 2024 and the 100th Anniversary of BELC will be here before we know it, and we want to be ready! Here is your first assignment. Much of the history of the church is told in stories and in pictures. So, for the next few months we are asking that you find those special pictures that document the church's past. Whether it is a picture of the first members or of last week, we want your photos.

Please bring or send COPIES of your photos to the church office and ask them to be placed in the anniversary box. On your COPIED photos please provide information about the who, what, when, where and why if possible. Please only submit **COPIES** of your photos as we are going to be unable to return them to you after the celebration. In addition we are looking for your stories. A one page typed story to be included on a storyboard would be a wonderful way to share a memory you have about the church for all to see. These pages can be emailed to bethlehemplansing@gmail.com with the subject line **ANNIVERSARY STORY**, or brought to the church office.

So, bring in your pictures and email those memories!

Statement of Purpose and Guiding Principles for Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

God's purpose for our church, as disciples of Jesus Christ, is to share with all people God's word, love and saving grace.

We will pursue this purpose by:

1. Being a Christ-centered, joyful community of baptized believers who gather regularly for worship, the Lord's Supper, study and prayer.
2. Inviting, accepting, and supporting all people as we build attentive, respectful relationships.
3. Taking action and risks with bold faith, acknowledging our imperfection, while trusting in Christ.
4. Actively engaging in community outreach near and far.
5. Being faithful stewards of our time, talents, possessions and all of God's creation.

Adopted January 29, 2017

Stewardship

Rejoice Exceedingly!

This is the Christmas season, and, a small but important part of Jesus' birth is the visit of the magi. Their visit is recorded in the second chapter of Matthew's gospel. Following the star, inquiring at the king's palace, informed by the priests where to find the child, they trudged with determination to Bethlehem, bringing with them the gifts they planned to present as they worshiped him. *"When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On 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).

What did the wise men from the East know about this baby or his family? Not much. Yet they came in faith, bringing gifts with them to honor him. How far did they travel? How long was their trip? We can guess, but what's important to know is that, for them, the trip with all its drudgery was worth it. *"They were overwhelmed with joy."*

How long a trip are we prepared to make this Christmas to worship the Christ-child? Are we willing to put up with inconvenience and sacrifice in order that we might come before him with our gifts, offering them in faith, as these magi did?

What causes our joy this Christmas season? Is it seeing the eyes of little children light up when they open their presents? That's good. Is it finding exactly the right gift for someone special? That's good, too. But do we rejoice exceedingly when we see the star? Contrary to the messages we hear in the commercials and even the seasonal songs, the entire focus for Christmas should be the birth of Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Along with doing all the wonderful things that are good to do at this time of the year, including visiting the sick and the shut-in, baking goodies for food banks, sharing financial resources with those in need, and all the shopping and caroling and everything else, let's find our joy in seeing the star. That star points us to Jesus and leads us to the Cross. May God grant us the same determination and faith that the wise men had when they traveled to honor Jesus. Let us open our treasures and worship him with our best and most precious gifts as the magi did.

As the *Star of Bethlehem* guided the wise men, may the light that is the light of the world guide our thoughts, words, and actions. Merry Christmas!

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Contributions

Income includes all monies given for budgeted items such as heat, power, water, salaries, repairs, maintenance, ELCA Mission Support, support for Samaritas, local benevolence and board spending as of October 31, 2022.

General Fund Operational:

Expenses through October 31, 2022:
\$293,393.14

Received through October 31, 2022:
\$255,903.75

Prayer Corner

Please Note: Hospitals do not notify churches when a member has been hospitalized; even if you inform them at registration of your church membership. If you would like a visit from the pastor, please call the church office at 482-3225 or call Pastor Matt directly at 517-881-9890.

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS and with your cards and visits:

Shelby Waters in The Willows at Okemos
John Nelson in Grandhaven Living Center-Senior Care in Lansing
Rhoda Hunter in Prestige Way in Holt
Pat Lebsack in The Willows, East Lansing

Those at home: *John Bartel, Virginia Bauman, Tosha Brisbo
Crystal Collins, Joann Dyer, Doug Griffin, Emma Hicks
Marilyn Bass-Huyser, Nancy Jackson, Michael Mahoney
Linda McClellan, Yvonne Nelson, Tharin Palmer, Carol Roush
Connie Scott, Audrey Skidmore, Betty VanConant, Steve Viele
Emily Viele, Cheryl VanPatten, Matthew White*

If you know of a member you would like us to include on this list or remove from this list, please call the church office.

MISSION PARTNERS Pray for the people and ministry at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Pray for the Baker Neighborhood Partners and Community Police Officer and other first responders.



Pastoral Acts:

Funeral:

Tom Armstrong

November 8, 2022

PRAY for those who are on active duty in the United States Military Services:

Chris Browne – *U.S. Air Force*
Tyler Barnes – *U.S. Marines*
Darian Doan – *U.S. Army*
Andrew Devine – *U.S. Nat'l Guard*
Carson Kosloski – *U.S. Marines*
Joshua Kosloski – *U.S. Army*

Rusty Landry – *U.S. Air Nat'l Guard*
Christopher Morgan – *U.S. Marines*
Ben Painter – *U.S. Air Force*
Ryan Schiffner – *U.S. Air Force*



HOW IS YOUR WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AT BETHLEHEM?

The Mission Plan of Bethlehem urges us to care for our faith community. In that regard, the Board of Worship Life is asking for feed-back about the worship experience at Bethlehem. The Board has prepared a brief survey about our worship. We are asking people who attend worship at Bethlehem to tell us what you particularly like about our worship and what you would like to see done differently. Every member of each family is encouraged to complete a survey. Paper copies of the survey are available at church. Additionally, an online survey is available on Survey Monkey using the following link: (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdQvSCIVtfUVVaVuGGsru-FDNeDKdsnO7i3yFo2Gfm-98qnbA/viewform?usp=sf_link). A group email containing the link to the survey was sent after Thanksgiving. If you did not receive it, please contact the church office with your current email address.

We're asking for responses, either online or returned to church, by December 20, 2022. Thank you to everyone who takes the time to provide their opinions about worship at Bethlehem. We would like to make our worship experience as meaningful as possible for everyone.

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church Women

Women of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
in America

All women of Bethlehem Lutheran Church are members of the Women of the ELCA and are invited and encouraged to participate in all activities listed in the newsletters, bulletins, flyers or on the bulletin boards.

BELCW News

As the year winds down and we looked towards the birth of Jesus, the women of the church have their December General Meeting and Program planned for December 5th at 6:30 p.m.. The meeting will be held from 6:30-7:15 p.m. with the program to follow at 7:15 p.m.. Everyone is invited to attend our *Christmas Music and Sing-A-Long with James Schippers*. Please join us for this program with dessert following.

We will be electing new officers at our December General Meeting. We are looking for a Vice President and Mission Growth Coordinator. Please prayerfully consider serving. We have an excellent board and we all support each other. The Vice President is a one-year term (second year to serve as President). As the Vice President, you will welcome new members, attend monthly board meetings, and observe and learn from the President. The Mission Growth coordinator encourages women to purchase a subscription to the Gather Magazine, orders subscriptions of Gather for new members to Circles, and organizes programs for the general meetings and other events throughout the year.

Offerings to BELCW – If you would like to make an offering to the BELCW, please send checks to Peggy Teter, Treasurer, at 6044 W. Beard Rd, Perry, MI 48872.

December Happenings:

- December 5 – General Meeting and Program
- December 12 – Friendship Circle Dinner, 6:00 p.m. at Coral Gables
- December 12 – Harmony Circle Christmas Party
- December 13 – Rainbow Circle Cookie Exchange

If you haven't attended a Circle Bible Study meeting and would like to, please reach out to one of our board members (Candy Barnes, Peggy Teter, Sandy Westover, Michelle Smith, Kelly Carpenter, Cindy Marsh, Susan Mahoney, and Laura Halbakken).

From WELCA (Women of the ELCA) about our Mission: “As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.”



Here, you will find a list of the scripture readings that are part of the Daily Lectionary which move us from one Sunday to the next. You can also find these readings on our "Taking Faith Home" sheets we distribute after worship. They are also posted daily on our Facebook page. We encourage you to read your Bible every day as you live out your life of discipleship.

<> Pastor Matt

DECEMBER 2022	<u>08</u> Psalm 149	<u>16</u> Philemon 1:4-7	<u>24</u> Luke 2:1-20
<u>01</u> Psalm 147:1-11	<u>09</u> James 3:13-18	<u>17</u> Psalm 146:5-10	<u>25</u> John 1:1-14
<u>02</u> Romans 12:9-13	<u>10</u> Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19	<u>18</u> Matthew 1:18-25	<u>26</u> Isaiah 52:7-10
<u>03</u> Psalm 122	<u>11</u> Matthew 11:2-11	<u>19</u> Isaiah 9:1-7	<u>27</u> Hebrews 1:1-12
<u>04</u> Matthew 3:1-12	<u>12</u> Isaiah 35:1-10	<u>20</u> Romans 1:1-7	<u>28</u> Isaiah 62:6-12
<u>05</u> Isaiah 11:1-10	<u>13</u> James 5:7-10	<u>21</u> Isaiah 9:1-7	<u>29</u> Psalm 97
<u>06</u> Romans 15:4-13	<u>14</u> 3 John 1:1-8	<u>22</u> 1 John 4:7-12	<u>30</u> Titus 3:4-7
<u>07</u> Psalm 96	<u>15</u> Nehemiah 8:9-12	<u>23</u> Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19	<u>31</u> Psalm 98



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Terri Lentz	Dec. 2
Jack Midgley	Dec. 6
Sandra Westover	Dec. 7
Rick Wyble	Dec. 9
Kathy Halligan	Dec. 13
Heidi Berry	Dec. 16
Cheryl VanPatten	Dec. 18
Thomas Finn	Dec. 22
Barbara Smith	Dec. 22
Robert Robbins	Dec. 24



Happy Birthday

Each year our birthday list of members 62 and over is updated from the church records. If for some reason you do not wish to have your name appear in the newsletter or if you see someone we have missed, please call the church office.

Last Day to Donate clothing for Lyons Elementary is December 4, 2022.

Thank you so much to everyone who has made contributions to the winter clothing and underwear collection for the children of nearby Lyons Elementary School. It has been exciting to see more people involved this year in this outreach ministry. Just a reminder that **we are collecting underwear sizes 4t-12, boots size 13 and sizes 1-3, snow pants sizes 5-12, and waterproof gloves or mittens.** If possible, choose outerwear that is **not pink or purple** because boys generally don't like those, which limits who can receive those items.

Clothing can be left in the tubs in the church entryway through Sunday, December 4.

Everything will be delivered to the school during December, before the holidays. Look for an update on exactly what Bethlehem donated this year in the January newsletter!

Thanksgiving Food Baskets

Thank you to all who donated so generously to Bethlehem's Thanksgiving Food Basket Project. Forty Food Baskets were distributed serving more than 150 people, many with young children. Many families expressed their gratitude. With your generosity there was an abundance of canned goods and these will be used for the Christmas baskets.

Christmas Family Food Baskets

For those who would like to participate with the Christmas Food Basket Project, suggested donation options are on a table in the Lobby. Options will include purchasing either a turkey or ham, or there will be bags with a list of items that can be purchased. These donations will need to be brought to the church by Tuesday, December 6th.

Volunteers for the Christmas Baskets will also be needed during the week of December 6th. Please sign-up on the sheet on the table in the entryway if you are willing to help!



Dear Bethlehem Family,

We wish to give a heartfelt **THANK YOU** to everyone, for all the prayers, cards, and calls for John during his healing time. He is doing better. Thank you!

John & Mary Bartel

BETHLEHEM NEWS and COMING EVENTS

Please join us for the

SENIOR DINNER

December 11th • 3:30PM

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

**RSVP TO THE CHURCH OFFICE
BY DECEMBER 7TH
517-482-3225**

**Mark your Calendars!
Senior Dinner – December 11th**

60 years and older?

Join us for the

**Annual Senior Dinner
on December 11th at 3:30PM,**
here at the church.

We will have dinner prepared by Jim Whitman and served by volunteers, including some of our youth. We look forward to bringing this tradition and opportunity for fellowship back to the church.

**Please RSVP to the
church office
no later than December 7th.**

HELP WANTED!!

The Boards of Congregational Care and Congregational Life and Activities have been put on pause over the past year due to the inability to find candidates willing to serve in those capacities. While both boards are important to Bethlehem, I feel that Congregational Care is vital, as the responsibility of the board is related to membership and taking care of BELC members.

The following are the official Duties and Responsibilities per the Constitution and By-Laws:

The Board shall see to it that visitors and guests are welcomed to services of worship and that the proper follow-up be accomplished. Shall work with the pastors in providing a ministry to the sick and homebound members. Shall encourage and promote worship attendance by all members. Shall review, at least once a year, the membership roster and recommend to the Church Council changes in membership status. Shall develop programs to minister to the active and inactive members of this congregation. Shall consider complaints and grievances of members. Shall exercise church discipline in accordance with the biblical standards of faith as expressed in the constitution. Shall encourage programs and activities that increase the spiritual growth of members.

Serving on the Board of Congregational Care can serve as a critical component of our Revitalization focus that Pastor Matt is leading. It is also a way to engage with the members of Bethlehem and let them know that they are important and cared about.

If you have any questions and you are considering serving, feel free to contact me. Please prayerfully consider serving on the Board of Congregational Care.

Thank you,
Jim Whitman Congregation President

Bethlehem Star

Lutheran Church Lansing



549 E. Mt. Hope Ave.
Lansing, Michigan 48910

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Newsletter Deadline is **December 15**
for the **January 2023** Bethlehem Star.

Also available at
www.bethlutheran.org

In-Home Date: Saturday, December 3, 2022
Mailed on November 30, 2022

Christmas Eve Worship Service
Saturday, December 24 at 7:30 p.m.

Christmas Day Worship Service
Sunday, December 25 at 10:00 a.m.
No Sunday School or Adult Forum



2022