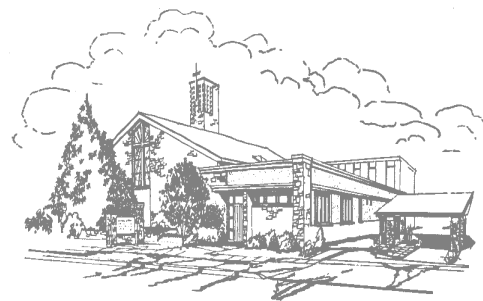


# Bethlehem Star

Lutheran Church Lansing



Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church - Lansing, Michigan

**Pastor Matthew A. Smith**

**February 2024**

## Life of Faith Initiative



Dr. Craig Nesson joined us for our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Bethlehem's history from 1949 to 1974, on Sunday, January 14. He shared with us in detail about the Life of Faith Initiative. If you were not with us for his class that Saturday, please watch the presentation on our YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/@bethlehemplansing>.

The purpose of the Life of Faith initiative is to stir up a culture change that frees us to make the service by the baptized in the arenas of daily life the central focus of the church's mission.

This initiative seeks to intentionally focus congregations on the many and varied forms of service to neighbors through family, workplace, school, local community, and world. Each expression of the church is encouraged to develop approaches and resources in order to make the Life of Faith initiative a vital part of its reason for existence.

Starting in the fall of 2024, Bethlehem will be assigned a Life of Faith Coach to lead us into this paradigm shift. If you are interested in serving on our Life of Faith Task Force who will work with our coach, please see me as soon as possible.

## Annual Report

At the Annual Meeting of the congregation on Sunday, January 21, I began my Pastor's Report by saying that I truly believe that I am wonderfully blessed to serve in God's mission with the people of Bethlehem! My purpose is to master myself as a child of God, serve with heroic love as God gives me the ability, and empower others to do the same.

I will do this at Bethlehem through five areas of emphasis in 2024:

1. Continuing to encourage our celebrations through this 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.
2. Regular contact and visitation with our members.
3. Continue to lay the groundwork for the Life of Faith Initiative here at Bethlehem as we continue our revitalization.
4. Preach in an engaging style on the Gospel and the Ministry of the Baptized (the priesthood of all believers as Martin Luther understood it). And,
5. Help plan and lead our 2024 National Youth Gathering (Created to Be) to New Orleans, July 16-20, for five of our wonderful youth.

## Lent

*Lent begins* with Ash Wednesday on **February 14**, as we begin our Lenten Worship Series – Holy Lament, with worship at 7:30 pm. Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday worship will all be at 7:30 pm on their respective days.

New this year, our 'midweek' worship in the series, "Holy Lament", will happen on **Tuesdays at 7:00 pm**, February 20 – March 19. While some may lament the loss of Wednesdays for our mid-week service this year, you may still find joy in the fact the **Potlucks are back!**

Our **Tuesday** evenings will begin with a potluck for ALL at 6:00 pm, followed by worship at 7:00. The Board of Worship Life has made this change to honor the time commitment of our dedicated volunteers, for whom we are grateful!



## Family Growth Resource Center Donations

On **Food Bank Sunday**, February 4, canned goods and other non-perishable items and gifts of money can be brought up to the altar in worship during the "Offering of Gifts".

Please wait to come forward until instructed by the pastor. This special offering will be used to

feed hungry people in our community through the Food Bank center in our church. Food that is donated will be distributed to the community through the Family Growth Resource Center, using our Food Pantry space. The pantry will be

GREATER LANSING  
**foodbank**



supplied by our donations and food from the Greater Lansing Food Bank. Monetary gifts will support the Greater Lansing Food Bank and our Mobile Food Distribution.

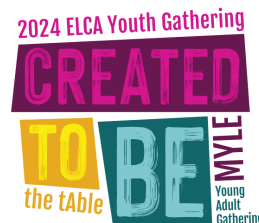


As part of Child and Family Charities, the Family Growth Resource

Center is *also* accepting donations of gently used clothes, shoes of ALL sizes, full size toiletries, and small household items (sheets, pillow cases, etc.). If You have items from some Spring cleaning, and you simply can't wait until the Rummage Sale in the fall, just take those items to the Lower Social Hall.

## National Youth Gathering Fundraising

We will be relying on the congregation's support of our fundraising efforts that will begin with a pancake breakfast on Sunday, March 17, after church. We will be accepting a free-will offerings at the door. The youth will also be collecting noisy offerings after the Worship Talk for Children on the Third Sunday of every month beginning in February.



## Worship in February 2024

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  
jim.whitman@whitman  
managementgroup.com

Organist  
James Schippers  
jameschippers@gmail.com

Choir Director  
Sue Nelson  
ntimothy1@att.net

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](http://www.bethlutheran.org)

### Worship Schedule

10:00 - Worship - Holy Comm.  
Sanctuary - in person  
And LIVE Streaming on  
YouTube

[https://www.youtube.com/  
@bethlehemworship126/streams](https://www.youtube.com/@bethlehemworship126/streams)

### Assisting Ministers

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

### Children's Sermons

February 4 - Pastor Matt Smith  
February 11 - Pastor Matt Smith  
February 18 - Pastor Matt Smith  
February 25 - Pastor John Burow

## 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

BELC will be celebrating the third '25' year segment of its centennial (1974-1998) on **April 14, 2024**. Please bring in pictures and memorabilia commemorating these special occasions. Please label photos with the event, the year, and the names of the people in the photo. Materials can be placed in the designated containers in the front office at the top of the stairs off of the lobby. Please identify the people in your photos, the dates and the occasion/activity. Please contact the church office, or Committee Co-chairs, Keitha Snider or Dorothy Martin if you have any questions. Thank you! This continues to be an exciting time for our church. We will keep you updated as to activities as they develop.

**Thank you, The 100th Anniversary Committee**

### **CELEBRATION DATES TO REMEMBER:**

1974-1998: Sunday, April 14, 2024  
1999-2024: Sunday, September 15, 2024

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2024:  
GRAND CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**

### **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

# BETHLEHEM CHURCH NEWS

## THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Thank you all for a wonderful celebration of BELC's second 25 year period of the life of our congregation. Your wedding pictures, dresses, and memorabilia brought back so many wonderful memories. The wedding cakes, baked by Laura Halbakken, were delicious and the 90 year old porcelain cake topper was lovely. The service with the Rev. Dr. Craig Nesson, our guest pastor, gave BELC many faith initiatives to "Sail into the Future".

Now on to the next 25 years! On April 14, 2024, BELC will celebrate its third 25 year period — 1974-1999. Please bring pictures of baptisms, confirmations, activities, and memorabilia representing that period. You can place them in the plastic bins in the front office at the top of the stairs. Label them with names, dates, and the activity represented in the photo. We would love to have any of you join us in planning our next activities for our next celebration. Please see Keitha Snider or Dorothy Martin for more details.

Thank you.  
The 100th Anniversary Committee



Dr. Nesson standing with the font where he was baptized.



Dr. Nesson's Confirmation Class, May 15, 1966.  
He is pictured in the top row next to Pr. Koeplin.

## THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY QUILT HAS BEGUN!!

Each block will have 1-3 crosses to equal 100 crosses total.

Everyone is welcome to make a block or two or more!

Connie Meeker will have a tutorial after church service on Sundays in the social hall on February 4, 11, 18 and 25.

The next step is to put all the blocks together during March.

Contact Connie with any questions at: [conniemeeker20@gmail.com](mailto:conniemeeker20@gmail.com) or (616) 902-0369

# STEWARDSHIP

## Life of Faith, Paradigm Change, and the Future

### Life of Faith

Our life of faith is rooted in the belief that God is always with us, and that we need to listen to what we are being led to do. I always pray that I listen to what God would have us do when I pray for Bethlehem in my position as President. He is always there waiting for us to ask for His direction, and we need to make sure that we remember that. It is easy to get caught up in worry's, and what if's, but that negative energy takes us away from the work that we should joyfully do for the church. 100 years of history here at Bethlehem has seen its share of ups and downs, but our faith and perseverance has shown that there is a greater force for good leading the way. May we continue to look and listen for God's direction as we move into the next century of Bethlehem.

### Paradigm Change

On Saturday, January 13, 2024, Bethlehem was privileged to host Reverend Dr. Craig Nesson for his presentation of the Life of Faith Initiative. Dr. Nesson is a son of Bethlehem who has gone on to be a prolific writer and professor in theology. His insight was a wonderful opportunity to hear from another voice that things are very different for organized churches of all denominations. Our message over the past several years has been that these changes in attendance and involvement in organized religion are not exclusive to Bethlehem. As evidenced by the changes we have seen at Bethlehem, things will not return to the days of yesteryear when the church was overflowing with young families and continued growth. Times are different and we need to be open to the changes that are occurring and do the most we can to maintain vitality at Bethlehem. We are still doing great things at Bethlehem and yes, it is with fewer people, but we are still making a difference. We should gratefully remember and celebrate the history of this church, while understanding that we need to adjust to the changes in the world and continue to do our mission work. Things will not be the same as they were throughout the history of Bethlehem, and we cannot dwell on it because if we do, we will not be able to see the future God has in store for us.

(continued on page 8)

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## Bethlehem Lutheran Church Finances - Quarterly Update

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### Offering and Budgeted Needs:

*OFFERING* includes all monies given for *BUDGETED* items such as heat, power, water, salaries, repairs, maintenance, ELCA Mission Support, local benevolence and board spending. *BUDGETED* needs is what is needed to cover all of our *BUDGETED* expenses. These figures are current as of the last Sunday prior to printing the newsletter (or of the year) as the figures are available reported by our Financial Secretary.

*BUDGETED needs through December 31, 2023:*  
\$345,140.00

*OFFERING received through December 31, 2023:*  
\$296,684.89

### Income and Expenses:

*INCOME* includes all contributions, rent, and interest income received by Bethlehem (including the sale of the Mission Home). *EXPENSES* are what we have spent on budgeted needs as well as the allocation of Mission Home sale proceeds into restricted accounts for specific purposes. These figures come from the Income and Expense Report presented by our Treasurer to Council for the last *COMPLETED* month prior to printing the newsletter.

*EXPENSES through December 31, 2023:*  
\$389,259.38

*INCOME through December 31, 2023:*  
\$396,738.59



# 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

*Bethlehem Evangelical  
Lutheran Church Women*

### **Exciting Opportunity to Serve as Vice President for BELCW**

As a board, we are reaching out to our incredible faith community of dedicated individuals because BELCW is currently seeking a passionate and committed volunteer to serve as Vice President. As Vice President, you support the President while learning the role. This is a wonderful opportunity to contribute your skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm to our women's ministry that empowers and uplifts women in our church, the community, and in the world. If you are enthusiastic about making a positive difference in the lives of women and are ready to take on a leadership role, we invite you to talk with any of our board members listed below. Our board meets via Zoom once a month and does a little work behind the scenes. Mostly we have fun and support one another!

- President – Laurey Wyble
- Vice President – Vacant (Please prayerfully consider being part of this wonderful mission)
- Secretary – Susan Sterling
- Treasurer – Peggy Teter
- Mission Action – Kelly Carpenter
- Mission Growth – Tosha Brisbo
- Publicity – Michelle Smith
- Circle Chairs – Laura Halbakken (Harmony), Cindy Marsh (Friendship), and Susan Mahoney (Rainbow)

### **Quilts to Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center**

Our women's quilting ministry sent 12 quilts to Pine Ridge last month that were handed out immediately. Our quilting ministry touches the lives so many people around the globe. If you would like to help out, our quilters meet on the second Wednesday of every month. Stop by to see the fabulous work being done each month.

**Offerings to BELCW** – If you would like to make an offering to the BELCW, please send checks to Peggy Teter, Treasurer, 1854 Creek Landing, Haslett, MI 48840.

### **Upcoming Events:**

|          |         |                             |
|----------|---------|-----------------------------|
| 02/03/24 | 9:30 AM | FAB                         |
| 02/05/24 | 6:30 PM | Board Meeting               |
| 02/08/24 | TBD     | Bible Study Leaders Meeting |
| 02/14/24 | 9:00 AM | Quilting                    |
| 02/14/24 | 6:30 PM | Harmony Circle              |
| 02/19/24 | 6:30 PM | Friendship Circle           |
| 02/20/24 | 1:00 PM | Rainbow Circle              |

## COMING EVENTS TO BETHLEHEM

### CHILI COOK-OFF

The BELCW is busy! We have been meeting in our Circles, in Bible Study and Fellowship. With circles meeting, as well as FAB and Quilting, there is a lot going on! Not only are groups meeting regularly, the BELCW is once again hosting a **CHILI COOK-OFF**, with activities for children and youth hosted by some of the Luther League youth. This event is for the entire church on; **Saturday, March 16th at 6:00 p.m.** Please sign up on the sheet in the gym if you would like to compete. We hope to see you all there!



### BELCW RETREAT IS COMING!!!

This is the year for our 29<sup>th</sup> annual BELCW retreat! We are in the early stages of preparing this weekend for you but want you to mark **April 19-21** on your calendars! We will be at Little Pine Island again this year and will again be using the main lodge only and preparing our own food. We will be getting in touch with those who have already signed up for a committee and calling on others to help fill in the rest. We will be preparing and serving our own food again this year solely due to the number of women attending. Please spread the word, ask friends and we'll have the rest of the information to you in the next newsletter and through your circle chairs. Sign up will begin on Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup>. In the meantime, put this weekend on your calendar and prepare to have a wonderful faith-filled time with your sisters in Christ!!

# Lenten Worship Series – Holy Lament

Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday worship will all happen at 7:30 pm, *on their respective days*.

**New** this year, our ‘midweek’ worship in the series, “Holy Lament”,

will happen on ***Tuesdays*** at 7:00 pm.

Our Lenten and Holy Week Worship will explore the various kinds of lament found in Scripture. We will discover that many faithful believers have struggled with sorrow. This series understands lament as one of the more faithful things we can do. When we approach God with honesty and humility, and we admit that some things are too big for our hearts to bear, we will find that God weeps with us. We will find a God who can take our grief and disappointment and transform them into holy joy and renewed hope. We will learn, ultimately, that Jesus’ death on the cross—the place to which the season of Lent leads us—is the reason we never mourn as those without hope.

Adapted from Sundays & Seasons c 2023 Augsburg Fortress

While some may lament the loss of Wednesdays for our midweek service this year, you may still find joy in the fact the ***Potlucks are back!***

Our Tuesday evenings will begin with a potluck for ALL at 6:00 pm, followed by worship at 7:00. The Board of Worship Life has made this change to honor the time commitment of our dedicated volunteers, for whom we are grateful!

**2/14/24 Ash Wednesday “Lamenting Sin, Death and the Power of Evil”**

**2/20/24 Tuesday, Week One – “What Is Lament?”**

**2/27/24 Tuesday, Week Two – “‘Little’ Laments”**

**3/05/24 Tuesday, Week Three – “Laments from the Depths”**

**3/12/24 Tuesday, Week Four – “Individual Lament”**

**3/19/24 Tuesday, Week Five – “Communal Lament”**

**3/24/24 Palm/Passion Sunday**

**3/28/24 Maundy Thursday – The Living Last Supper**

**3/29/24 Good Friday – “A Tenebrae of Joy in the Midst of Lament”**

(With the Adoration of the Cross)



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# Prayer Corner

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**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 Grand Haven Living Center-Senior Care in Lansing  
Rhoda Hunter in Prestige Way on Keller Road in Holt  
Marilyn Bass-Huyser in Independent Village, Grand Ledge  
Betty Strother in Independent Village, East Lansing  
Joe & Audrey Skidmore in Assisted Living, Sedona, AZ

**Those at home:** Kaye Alden, John Bartel, Virginia Bauman  
Tosha Brisbo, Lois Cairns, Crystal Collins, Joann Dyer  
Emma Hicks, Nancy Jackson, Michael Mahoney  
Linda McClellan, Yvonne Nelson, Tharin Palmer, Gloria Robbins  
Sandy Rollis, Carol Roush, Connie Scott, Betty VanConant  
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, Morgan Schafer and other first responders.



**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  
Isaiah Castellanos – 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  
Dayton Tucker – U.S. Marines



(continued from page 4)

## The Future

The future of Bethlehem is directly related to the involvement and willingness to serve in the various capacities available to all members. In a few short months, we will be holding elections for Officers, Board and Committee members, and Council. All these positions have a significant impact on how much work and mission that Bethlehem can take on. We will begin the task of identifying open positions that will be available and making outreach to the membership to fill those needs. Two positions that will be open are President and Treasurer. These officers are an integral part of the leadership structure of Bethlehem and will be a focus of our efforts.

I would ask that you prayerfully consider serving in some capacity and especially in the leadership positions mentioned above. Feel free to contact me, Pastor Matt, current officers, or any member of Council with any questions you may have. There is a tremendous amount of talent and heart in this congregation and your willingness to serve is needed and appreciated.

May God continue to bless Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Thank you in peace,

Congregation President



# **BETHLEHEM CHURCH NEWS**

**Hello all you generous givers,**

We just wanted to let you know what is currently happening with your food bank donation money. Each month the congregation gives generously to this fund. For years it was the sole income of our food mission. But recently, it was announced that we were not having to pay for those truck loads of food that are piled in our parking lot to serve hundreds of families in the drive-thru food line. As we understand it, this is a temporary reprieve due to some grant monies received by the Lansing Area Food Bank. We do not know how long this will last so we are holding in reserve your money in the expectation that we will once again be required to pay for some portion or even all of that food we are distributing, which could be hundreds or thousands.

Additionally, for the past few years, that food bank account has generously paid for all of the food we put into Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving food baskets that is not donated by you. This years Outreach received \$2,100 which covered all the meat (turkey, ham, chicken, and turkey breast) and dairy (milk, butter, and when we had pie, the cool whip). It paid for fresh produce that we put into the baskets such as carrots and oranges, Sometimes it paid for frozen pies and dinner rolls as well. And finally, it also covered the purchase of extra needed food not donated by the congregation to meet the total items we needed.

The food mission at Bethlehem continues to serve our neighbors and our community in need and is a vital service we have come to be known for. Thank you for your continued support with this mission. Please know that we are committed to using your donations in the most effective manner to best serve those in need now and in the future.

Respectfully,  
Liisa Whitman, on behalf of the Church Council

## **2024 Flower Chart:**

**Thank you** to all who sponsor the flowers for Bethlehem's Worship on Sunday Mornings. The beautiful arrangements enhance the worship experience for all. The 2024 Flower Chart is now posted. Many like to commemorate a special person, date or event with altar flowers. If you have a special date in mind, sign up to save that Sunday. The cost for each arrangement is \$40. The flower order is submitted a month at a time so please sign up by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month for the flowers to be ordered for the next month. Payment may be made in advance or on the Sunday for which the flowers are ordered. Checks should be made payable to Kris Burow.

# taking<sup>+</sup> faith home

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.

## FEBRUARY 2024

01 Luke 4:31-37  
02 Matthew 4:1-11  
03 Psalm 111  
04 Mark 1:29-39  
05 Isaiah 40:21-31  
06 1 Corinth. 9:16-23  
07 1 Timothy 1:12-17

08 Joshua 22:1-6  
09 Acts 20:25-35  
10 Psalm 147:1-20  
11 Mark 9:2-9  
12 2 Kings 2:1-12  
13 2 Corinth. 4:3-6  
14 1 Peter 2:1-10  
15 Colossians 1:3-14

16 Hebrews 5:11-14  
17 Psalm 50:1-6  
18 Mark 1:9-15  
19 Genesis 9:8-17  
20 1 Peter 3:18-22  
21 Romans 14:13-23  
22 Psalm 16:5-11  
23 James 3:13-18

24 Psalm 25:1-10  
25 Mark 8:31-38  
26 Genesis 17:1-16  
27 Romans 4:13-25  
28 2 Corinth. 5:16-21  
29 Psalm 63



## FEBRUARY 2024

|                 |         |
|-----------------|---------|
| Margaret Wright | Feb. 2  |
| Kris Burow      | Feb. 6  |
| Janet Gonda     | Feb. 12 |
| Sue Meyer       | Feb. 14 |
| Joe Skidmore    | Feb. 15 |
| Betty Holmer    | Feb. 16 |
| Sue Nelson      | Feb. 18 |
| Rita Huntley    | Feb. 22 |
| Vicki Schneider | Feb. 22 |
| Kathleen Martin | Feb. 23 |
| Judy Pardee     | Feb. 26 |
| Peggy Parker    | Feb. 27 |

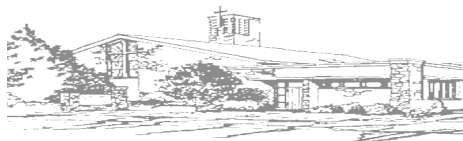


Happy Birthday

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.

# Bethlehem Star

Lutheran Church Lansing



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

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Newsletter Deadline is **February 15**  
for the **March 2024** Bethlehem Star.

Also available at  
[www.bethlutheran.org](http://www.bethlutheran.org)

In-Home Date: January 29, 2024  
Mailed on January 26, 2024