



# The Bethlehem STAR



## January 2023



### The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

As we get more accustomed to living with the risk of the COVID-19 pandemic, mitigated by the effectiveness of vaccines and boosters, we regain more of our customs and practices. This includes how Christ meets us in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. At the beginning of the pandemic, when we returned to worship, we used the individually wrapped packages. We then moved to using individual plastic cups each Sunday. There are cost and environmental concerns with using so much plastic. In consultation with the Worship and Music Board, we have decided to return to intinction as our customary communion practice.

Intinction means the first server will hand you bread, and the second server will hold a chalice for you to dip the bread before placing it in your mouth. For those who are not comfortable with that practice, we will have the individually wrapped packets available for you at the communion stations. You also may receive the bread only. On the first Sunday of each month, we will return to kneeling and receive individual cups of wine.

Thank you for your patience and prayers! God continues to be faithful and bring healing and restoration to us.

### Imagine: A Vision of Hope

We are so grateful for your faithful response to our capital campaign. We received pledges of over \$850,000 to pay off our mortgage once and for all! Thank you. The council voted to keep one year of mortgage payments in reserve, but to use all of the rest of your designated capital campaign gifts to pay down the principle. We will celebrate milestones along the way as we get closer to finishing off our payments.

### Meet and Eat

Looking to get out of the house and be with other Bethlehem people to enjoy a great meal? Our Meet and Eat groups are forming anew in January. We match up three Bethlehem couples/individuals, and you set up three different get-togethers over a meal, hosted by each member of the group one time. We ask that each group holds their gatherings before Memorial Day. Sign up by going online or by calling the church office before January 15 and we will match you with your dining partners.

### Sponsoring the Cruz Family

Bethlehem has joined with Christ the King, Grace, and Messiah to sponsor the Cruz family as they have been settled in Mankato and apply for asylum. Pastor Jacie, Amy Haigh, and Carrol Myers-Dobler are leading us in this ministry. Look for more information to come on how you can help.

~ Pr. Jay



### Wednesday Night MENU

#### Join Us For Wednesday Night Suppers!

JD Truffles Catering will prepare a variety of delicious weekly meals, and Bethlehem volunteers will greet and serve you. **All are welcome!** Join us between 5:00 and 6:15 p.m.

**Menus for January were not available at the time of this printing.**

Free will donations are welcomed to cover supper expenses.

Instant  
**EPIPHANY**  
Program  
for all ages

**Wed., January 4th at 6:15 pm**

Join us for a playful, interactive worship to tell the story of the Wise Ones coming to Bethlehem as we prepare for this new season.

Save the date!

**FAT TUESDAY**

Dinner & Silent Auction for Youth  
February 21st

 **Monthly Mission**   
**Notes from the Community & Global Missions Board**

Bethlehem's monthly mission for January is **The REACH Resource Center**. This important organization reaches out to youth who are experiencing homelessness or other life trauma and provides them with a safe, nonjudgmental place to receive a variety of services centered on their individual needs. Youth ages 16-24 gain knowledge from caring staff to be healthy, independent, and successful — looking beyond their past and planning for hopeful futures. You can support The REACH through the "wish list" on Amazon, through volunteering and donations, and financially to help provide basic necessities, shelter, education, and preparation for employment and healthy, independent living. Your generosity is welcomed and appreciated. Our goal for The REACH is \$6,000.

**ADULT EDUCATION**      **Adult Forum Schedule**  
**10:45 a.m. In Grounds for Joy**

**January 1:** NO FORUM

**January 8:** Meet the Pastors, with Pr. Jay & Pr. Jacie

**January 15 & 22:** NO FORUMS


**January 29:** Reconciling in Christ — More Understanding

 **Lefse Success!**

Thank you so much to everyone who made our lefse making day a HUGE success! We made over 450 pieces of lefse and sold every one! The new addition of a bake sale only enhanced the fun on Sunday. Should we do it again next year? With the money we made from the sales, donations were given to the ECHO Food Shelf and Holy Grounds.

Thanks again for your wonderful volunteering and to the people who purchased the goodies! ~ *Ginger Erlandson*

Thank you, Bethlehem — you always come through! We are doing well, much better now. A big "thank you" to all of you for your prayers, the calls, and the many cards as well as food brought in. We appreciate your concerns and comments. Thank you all again and may you each have a blessed Christmas. ~ *Dee & Roger Saman*



 **Council Corner**   
**Highlights from the Monthly Council Mtg.**

Here are the "highlights" of the Bethlehem Council meeting held on **December 20**. Meeting minutes with details will be posted at [www.blcmankato.org](http://www.blcmankato.org) and also available in the church office notebook. Visit with Council members with questions and concerns! We welcome your conversation & feedback!

**Financial Report:** Continued Good News!! The November 30 general fund balance is a positive \$9,000+ with prospects for finishing 2022 with a positive balance. Thank you!

**Capital Campaign:** \$850,000+ received in commitments thus far from BLC members for payoff of \$1 million mortgage balance. Members may still submit pledges on the BLC website and with written pledge forms to the church office. Contact Molly Nelson with questions & assistance.

**Mortgage Payment Plan:** Action approved to maintain a 1-year balance of \$8,187 monthly mortgage payments in the Mission Investment Fund with all additional capital campaign contributions to be applied in a timely manner to mortgage principal payments. Plan to celebrate mortgage payoff benchmarks during the next 3 years.

**Financial Reviews:** 2021 financial review completed with written report to be submitted. Plans being made for 2022 review by Financial Secretary & 3-member Financial Review Committee.

**Refugee/Asylum Seeker Resettlement:** Bethlehem is working with 4 other local churches to host individuals & families seeking to resettle in the U.S. as refugees and asylum seekers. First effort began this month by providing emergency assistance to a family of 4 from Nicaragua. Stay tuned for more details. Financial assistance is needed for gift cards, transportation & cash-paying jobs. Contact Pr. Jacie for more details and how you can help!

**2022-26 BLC Strategic Plan:** 5 goals and 37 supporting objectives & practices have been finalized for implementation by BLC members & staff. These will be posted on the BLC website for member review. Learn and get involved to move us forward as a congregation and make a real impact with our members and in our community.

**Pastor Jacie & BLC Youth:** Pr. Jacie is moving into her new ministry at BLC by meeting with the Youth Board to pursue our 1<sup>st</sup> strategic goal of better engaging our youth, their families and youth adults. Expect to hear more about this new initiative in our new 5-year strategic plan.

**New Member Orientation:** Meeting scheduled for January with Pr. Jay. Contact him if you are interested in participating and joining Bethlehem. We welcome all!

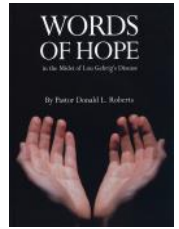
**Next Council Meeting:** Tuesday, January 17.

 **Financial Report**   
**Elizabeth Ruiz, Financial Secretary**

Offering envelopes are available in the narthex for those who wish to take a pack. These envelopes **do not** have assigned numbers. Please be sure to write your name on the envelope each time you use one so that you can receive proper credit on your giving statement. **Giving reports will be e-mailed by mid-January.** If someone needs a paper copy, please contact Elizabeth in the church office or by e-mail at [elizruiz@blcmankato.org](mailto:elizruiz@blcmankato.org).

## Pastor Don's Devotion

**Pastor Don Roberts served as pastor at Bethlehem from 1989-1996. He was diagnosed with ALS/Lou Gehrig's disease in 1995 and continues to be an inspiration of life and faith to our congregation.**



**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ~ Romans 15:13**

I believe this is a good text entering into the New Year. God's will is for us to have peace, joy, and hope. Something may happen in 2023 that is not joyful. In a world that is out of sync with the perfect will of God, things may happen that are not in God's perfect will. When these things happen, pray to God, and ask that God's will be done. It may feel strange, but when you are angry, forgive God. It was not God's perfect will that Jesus should die on the cross, but God had an answer, which was the resurrection. God has a resurrection for us, too. "...Abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." We cannot believe in the resurrection on our own. The Holy Spirit helps us to believe. After 28 years of dealing with ALS, some days I have no belief. Perhaps you have had similar experiences. The Holy Spirit helps us to believe in the face of a situation that sometimes feels hopeless. What has helped me is to worship the risen Christ. When the risen Christ is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit helps us to believe. C.S. Lewis said that the Christian's trouble in this life is that we do not think of the life awaiting us. We have a great life awaiting us. God's will is that we have joy, peace, and hope in 2023.

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Bethlehem offers taxi service for members who are not able to drive themselves to and from church. Rides are available for Sunday worship services only. Please call WS one day before and tell them that it is for Bethlehem Lutheran Church. You will be asked to sign a voucher, and the church will be billed.



## Family Faith Formation Updates

Anna Wencel, Family Faith Formation Director



3RD-6TH GRADERS,  
ENJOY PIZZA AND A FRIENDLY  
LEGO COMPETITION AT  
**BLC YOUTH  
LEGO  
MASTERS**  
Friday, Jan. 27, 6-8pm

Happy New Year! We're excited to gather once again after the holiday break. Join us after worship for our educational programming for all ages starting on Wednesday, January 4, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, January 8, at 10:45 a.m.

BLC 7TH-12 GRADE YOUTH.  
WE'RE GOING WEST THIS SUMMER!  
  
**YOUTH ADVENTURE  
TRIP TO MONTANA**  
JUNE 23-30  
\$100 deposit to register.  
Total cost is \$250. Financial support  
available. Look for more info soon!

BLC KIDS & YOUTH.  
Join us for  
**CAMP**  
**BETHLEHEM WEEK:  
JULY 30-AUG 3**  
  
Register by February  
1st to guarantee a spot  
with your BLC friends!  
Visit [GLLM.ORG](http://GLLM.ORG) to sign up.  
BLC will support at least 25% of camp costs &  
coordinate transportation to camp. Additional  
financial support is available.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
720 South Second Street  
Mankato, MN 56001

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

(507) 388-2925  
blchurch@blcmankato.org



*A Reconciling in Christ  
Congregation*

Pastor Jay Dahlvang: (507) 469-3792  
pastorjay@blcmankato.org

Pastor Jacie Richmond: (612) 581-8855  
pastorjacie@blcmankato.org



@bethlehem.mankato

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***Church Calendar – Winter 2023***

**Worship**

**Sunday, 9:30 a.m.**  
*in sanctuary & online*

**Wednesday, 6:15 p.m.**

Our Sunday service is  
streamed live on  
Facebook & YouTube  
and broadcast  
on KTOE Radio  
at 11 a.m.

**Education**

Please check Family  
Faith Formation on  
our website for details  
about children's/  
youth activities.

See the Adult Forum  
schedule on page 2.

**Adult Bible Study**

**Tuesday, 7 a.m.**  
**Lectionary online**

**Wednesday at  
10:30 a.m. in  
Grounds for Joy**

**Small Groups**

Music rehearsals,  
book clubs,  
social groups,  
boards/  
committees, etc.

Please check online  
calendar for times  
& places.

**Fellowship  
With Food**

**Sunday, 10:30 a.m.**  
Join us for  
coffee & treats  
in Grounds for Joy  
after worship.

**Wednesday Night  
Suppers** are served  
from 5-6:15 p.m.

**All calendar details can be found on the website at [blcmankato.org/calendar](http://blcmankato.org/calendar).**



**OUR MISSION STATEMENT:**

*Bethlehem is an inviting community  
that is growing in Christ, loving our  
neighbors, and serving God's world.*

The deadline for submitting  
newsletter articles is the 15th  
of each month.

