

# The B E T H L E H E M S T A R



October  
2023

## “The Lord Has Done Great Things for Us”

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy. The Lord has done great things for us and we rejoiced. ~ Psalm 126:1,3*

The Lord has indeed done great things for us at Bethlehem! We have a gifted and devoted staff in place, leading us in a variety of exciting programs and initiatives, including our new Young Adult Group. We enjoy community partnerships with LSS/The Reach, VITA Tax Service, WELCOME, Connections Ministry, and Crossroads, and global friendships with Rev. Kristin Engstrom in Zambia and Iambi Secondary School. We feed dozens at our community meal in the dining room each week, pack school kits and make quilts, and worship our Lord with gladness each Wednesday and Sunday. We hear the shouts of joy of our children and the laughter of our seniors.

The Lord does this through you. Thank you! As we enter the fall season, it’s not unusual for us to get behind in funding the mission we agreed to support with our budget dollars. This year, though, our budget deficit is especially daunting (see financial report on page 3), and we will need a faithful and generous response from you to meet our obligations and finish with a positive general fund balance for the fifth consecutive year. I know we can do this!

### *As you pray:*

—Consider all the opportunities God is putting before Bethlehem, and our responsibility to serve our Lord by supporting the community and world God loves.

—Reflect on how good God has been to you, and out of that goodness, take a step of growth in generosity.

I’m looking forward to continue to share with you all the great things the Lord will do for us! ~ *Pr. Jay*

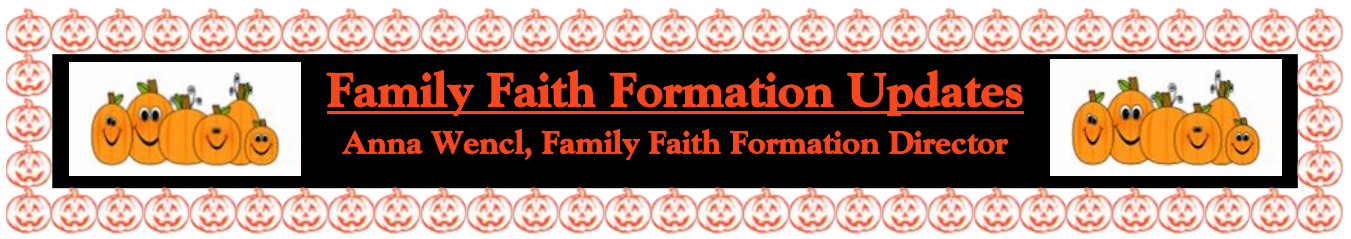


  
**Could you sponsor  
a radio broadcast?  
December 17 and 31  
are still available.  
Broadcasts are \$100 each.**  


## Celebrate Our Staff

Bethlehem is blessed with 13 outstanding staff members who contribute to our mission and ministry in so many positive ways. Let them know personally how much we appreciate everything they do for us! Future 5-year anniversaries will be celebrated by the congregation.

<u>Staff Member</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Start of Bethlehem Employment</u>	
Christine Schulz	Office Assistant, Organist, Accompanist	September 1990	33 years
Elizabeth Ruiz	Financial Secretary	August 8, 1999	24 years
Marci Rossow	Nursery Attendant	May 1, 2008	15 years
Kevin Liebl	Custodian	July 24, 2012	11 years
Anna Wencl	Family Faith Formation Director	August 15, 2016	7 years
Charlie Leftridge	Director of Music & Worship	September 1, 2018	5 years
Kellen Schaefer	Weekend Janitor	August 31, 2019	4 years
Kaitlin Carter	Children & Family Associate	May 31, 2021	2 years
Alayna Bruns	Nursery Attendant Substitute	October 1, 2021	2 years
Molly Nelson	Congregational Services Coordinator	June 30, 2022	1 year
Alexa Bolstad	Weekend Janitor	August 1, 2022	1 year
Amy Haigh	Wednesday Night Supper Coordinator	August 1, 2022	1 year
Benny Montalbo	Weekend Janitor	August 1, 2023	New



## Family Faith Formation Updates

Anna Wencil, Family Faith Formation Director



**“Your job is to help our children and youth remember they are beloved children of God.”**

Bishop Hassanally shared these words during a Bethlehem forum not long after her installation in 2019, and I have continued to carry them with me. On the days when my role as your Family Faith Formation Director seems daunting or difficult, I remember this statement of purpose: *let’s help each other remember we are beloved. It’s really that simple.*

As our Children’s and Youth Boards reviewed our Comprehensive Plan for Family Faith Formation this past summer, these words again floated into my heart and mind. We’ve cultivated a plan hoping it will make space to help our children, youth, and families remember their belovedness, starting with baptism through high school graduation and beyond. We know this plan will likely need to change or adapt in the years ahead, but I’m hopeful it will lead us forward toward remembering our belovedness.

As a part of this new plan, we will be praying for each of our children and youth by name each month in celebration of their baptismal birthdays. Each youth will receive a signed postcard to let them know we’ve prayed for them, too. I hope you’ll join us in prayer for our children and youth, and may it be a reminder that you, too, are a beloved child of God. ~ **Anna Wencil, Family Faith Formation Director**

### Coming Up in October

- 1st & 4th: 3rd & 4th Grade Bible Milestone Class with Pastor Jacie
- 14th: FLIGHT (Family) Event at Pumpkin Junction
- 15th: HS Youth Event at Welsh Heritage Farms
- 18th & 21st: MEA Break
- 20th-22nd: Teens Encounter Christ Retreat in Stewartville
- 25th: Trunk or Treat
- 27th: Halloween Youth Lock-In

# TRUNK OR TREAT!

Wednesday, Oct. 25th, 6:45-7:45pm

Grab your costumes, and join us for a fun evening in BLC’s parking lot. The whole community is invited! Activities include: trunk alley, face painting, games, hot cider, campfire, and more!

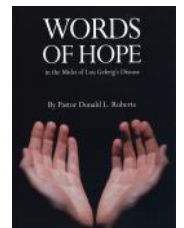
We would LOVE more trunks!

Sign up to host a trunk or donate candy.

Candy should be dropped off in the office by Sun., Oct. 22nd.

### *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.**



COLOSSIANS 1:17 KJV

*And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

***He Himself is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He might come to have first place in everything.***

**~ Colossians 1:17 & 18**

Jesus is before all things. The Father, through the pre-existing Christ, created the world. Jesus holds all things together. God’s will is for all things to work together perfectly. Climate change has brought severe weather, and extreme weather. Our job is to take care of the planet so God’s will is done.

Sometimes we don’t think we are good enough for God. I think that sometimes, too. We are wrong in this thinking. Jesus died on the cross to forgive our sins. He forgives our sins every day that we live. Jesus is the first born from the dead. We will follow Him. No matter what we face in this life, Jesus promises us a glorious new life. Jesus is the head of the body of Christ. What do we receive in the body of Christ? We receive the peace of Christ no matter what we are going through.


~ **Council Corner** ~  
**Highlights from the Monthly Council Meeting**

Here are the “highlights” of the Bethlehem Council meeting held on **September 19**. Meeting minutes with more details are posted at [www.blcmankato.org](http://www.blcmankato.org) and are also available in the church office notebook. Visit with Council members with questions and concerns! We welcome your conversation & feedback!

**Finances:** The general fund balance as of August 31 is a deficit of **-\$50,844.35**. This compares with a July 31 deficit of **-\$36,186.66**. Higher expenses including \$8,200 for a new promised humidity control system in LSS and an 88% member-giving rate contributed to this deficit. 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter giving statements accompanied by a letter from Pastor Jay are being mailed out to inform members of their status. Positive activities by church members continue to happen each day despite these financial circumstances. The **\$1 million mortgage balance** has been reduced to **\$647,381** from pledged capital campaign contributions made since the start of 2023. Another early principal payment of \$34,000 was made this month. **WELCOME:** Good news with the 5-church support of the Cruz family. **\$1,152** was raised at the July Moondogs baseball game. Another fundraiser is scheduled on September 21 at Applebee’s. Plan on attending the November 9 evening celebration at Christ the King of all the good Cruz news! **Strategic Goal 2 Update:** “We will empower our members to share the gifts God has given us” was the focus of a pastoral review of activities being conducted to implement this goal. This includes an enhanced Time & Talent Survey, renewed Care Ministry and commitment to financial giving for the annual budget, mortgage repayment and legacy giving. The Stewardship Board is involved in major ways to fulfill these objectives. **Community Leader Interviews:** President-Elect Marie Slotemaker reported on her interview of MSU-Mankato President Inch as part of a Council objective with the strategic plan. Pastor Jacie met with MSU Vice President of Student Affairs David Jones. Community leaders are asked to identify major issues facing the community and how Bethlehem can help to address these. More interviews to be conducted in September/October. **Council Vacancy:** Council at-large member Jessica Auel has resigned from the Council for personal reasons. The Council identified potential replacements to contact to fill this vacancy. **Facilities:** Sarah Morgan was approved as a new member of the Facilities Board. **2024 Lay Staff Compensation Recommendations:** The Council reviewed recommendations from the Personnel Committee for the 2024 BLC lay staff compensation. These factor in the rising cost of living, positive performance reviews and the need for adjustments to align with national church salary comparisons. These will be considered by the budget committee, Council and congregation in setting the 2024 budget. The **November 19 semi-annual meeting** will act on this budget. **Youth Activities:** Monthly activities for high school youth are being offered this fall. Gatherings for young adults are also being held. **Crossroads Campus Ministry:** A call for a new campus pastor is planned by the Synod with a goal of an October 1 start. Lunch-for-a-Buck attendance is booming with the BLC Men’s Group set to provide lunch on Tuesday, October 3. The Campus Cupboard food shelf has experienced increased use by MSU students. Donations continue to be welcomed. **Next Council Meeting:** Tuesday, October 17.

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

Our October mission partner is **Connections Ministries**, which includes a low-barrier emergency shelter as well as outreach services. It originated from a coalition of local churches including Bethlehem and has come to have wide community support. The shelter is seasonal and will be opening on October 2. There are 40 beds available for unhoused men, women, and families. Last year, they served 115 guests in the shelter as well as 700 individuals through the outreach office. In addition to monetary support, volunteers are needed on a daily basis. Connections, along with several other organizations and government entities, is involved in planning an exciting new project of continuous care which will include a year-round 24 hours-a-day shelter as well as a permanent supportive housing complex. The Connections vision statement says it all: “Walking with individuals and families experiencing homelessness by extending a radical welcome that provides dignity, shelter, and community.” Our goal is \$3,000. Please give generously.




## Lefse 2023!

**We are going to do it again!!! Last year we had a wonderful turnout! We will be making lefse on Friday, November 17, at 9:00 a.m. in the downstairs kitchen. All lefse sales will be pre-sales only. (Watch for directions on how to purchase.) The bake sale that we added on Sunday last year was a HUGE success, so we are going to try it again. Any unsold lefse and baked goodies will be sold on Sunday, November 19, after worship and before the semi-annual meeting. We need your help — not only making the lefse but making a few Norwegian goodies and helping to sell them. The amount of lefse made depends on how many volunteer to help. Our Nordic Bazaar has retired, but let’s keep the spirit alive!**


**Please contact Ginger Erlandson at 507-278-3007, 507-380-5268, or [rerlandson2@gmail.com](mailto:rerlandson2@gmail.com) if you have questions or which (or all) areas you can help.**

**All Saints’ Altar:** An altar space will be set up in the narthex in October. As we near All Saints’ Day at the beginning of November, you are invited to contribute photos of loved ones who have died, either recently or long ago. Together, we will hold the memories of the saints.



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\$  
**Financial Report**  
**Elizabeth Ruiz, Financial Secretary**

As we head into the final quarter of the year, the deficit has grown to \$50,844. This is due to a combination of higher than expected expenses and member giving at 88% of budget. Things are happening at Bethlehem. The Fall 2023 Catalog was mailed to all households at the beginning of September. These wonderful programs need the support of all members and participants. Thank you for your continuing support of the ministry and mission of Bethlehem Lutheran Church.



Union Presbyterian Church in St. Peter will be hosting a hymn festival entitled *O Vision Fair: Reflections on Grief Turned to Glory* at 4 p.m. on Sunday, November 5. Christine Schulz will be leading the music portion of the festival, which will also include several inspirational readings. **All are welcome to attend!**

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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 ***Opportunities to get involved!*** 

**Worship**  
**Sundays at  
9:30 a.m.**  
in sanctuary & online  
**Wednesdays at  
6:15 p.m.**  
Our Sunday service is  
streamed live on  
Facebook &  
broadcast at 11 a.m.  
on KTOE Radio.

**Adult Bible Study**  
Tuesdays, 7 a.m.  
Lectionary online  
\* \* \* \* \*  
**Book of Faith:  
Wednesdays at  
10:30 a.m.**

**Fellowship  
With Food**  
Join us for coffee &  
treats In Grounds for  
Joy after worship on  
Sundays!  
**Wednesday Night  
Suppers**  
5:00–6:15 p.m. in the  
dining room

**Education**  
Please check Family  
Faith Formation on  
our website for details  
about children's/  
youth activities.  
Adult Forums are in  
Grounds for Joy  
at 10:45 on  
Sunday mornings.

**Small Groups**  
Book clubs, school  
kit assemblers,  
young adults, Life in  
the Spirit, BLC Men,  
Meet & Eat,  
Women's Circles,  
etc.  
Please check online  
calendar for times  
& places.

**Music Groups**  
Choir, Gospels,  
BLC Brass,  
Brass & Sass,  
Praise Band  
To join the music  
program, contact  
Charlie Leftridge,  
Director of Music  
& Worship.

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



**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.**  
**October 4**  
Scalloped potatoes & ham, salad, & roll  
**October 11**  
Sloppy Joe with chips & Italian cold pasta  
**October 18**  
**NO SUPPER ~ MEA Break**  
**October 25**  
Ham, mashed potatoes, corn, & roll