

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



2023



I've been reflecting recently on facing hardship and how it impacts our faith life. A lot of this has been driven by my own experience this fall. A lot has happened, and even though I won't go into details here it has given me a lot to reflect on in my relationship with God. All the typical questions come up -- Why me? Am I being tested? What am I supposed to learn from this? What is going on, God?

As I have been wrestling with those questions and facing certain challenges, one thing that has consistently got me through is community. Community has shown up to support me in a myriad of ways. Community has supported me through hugs and kind words, through encouragement to take time off and rest as I have needed it, through helping me with work when I have had to miss some events, and helping me with tasks at home when I have struggled to find the time to complete them. Community has lifted me up when I have needed it most. You have all been the community that has lifted me up when I have needed it.

Community is a gift from God -- we all need it, and we have literally been created to function this way. In the book of Genesis, God says, "it is not good for [Adam] to be alone..." so God creates another human being and creates community for the very first time. We are not meant to go through life alone, despite what our culture and wider world would have us believe. Even so, community is one thing that is majorly lacking among so many people right now. Studies have shown that we are one of the loneliest cohorts of people right now, and the impacts of this are being felt on a larger society wide basis. A New York Times article written by the Surgeon General Vivek Murthy back in April 2023 gave some key actions that we can do to help each other heal from loneliness. He listed things like serving other people, talking with friends and coworkers for 15 minutes each day, or simply introducing ourselves to our neighbors. These are not super strenuous tasks and they do not take up tons of time. They are also things that happen at churches and in faith communities on a regular basis.

Now I am not going to guilt people into coming to church if you have not for a while. That is not my style, and frankly it is not loving. What I will say, though, is that if you are feeling lonely and seeking community, know that there is a place for you here and there is hope to end your loneliness. I pray that you find yourself receiving support from community when you need it and knowing that there is a community here at Bethlehem who will love and support you always.

God's peace, *Pastor Jacie*



**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.**

**November 1**  
Chicken alfredo with salad & roll  
**November 8**

Meatloaf, mashed potatoes,  
mixed vegetables & roll  
**November 15**

Roast turkey, mashed potatoes,  
vegetable & roll  
**November 22**

**NO SUPPER —  
Thanksgiving break**

**November 29**  
Lasagna, salad, & garlic toast



**Semi-Annual Meeting  
Sunday, November 19  
after worship**



## Family Faith Formation Updates

Anna Wencil, Family Faith Formation Director



### Who are your safeties? For whom are you a safety?

Both before and since the Covid-19 pandemic, mental health has been an important issue, especially among young people. Too many suffer alone and the stigma of mental illness remains, even if mental health is just another form of health.

Later this month, we will host a new youth milestone called Brave Conversations. We will invite 5th-8th grade youth and their parents to discuss an important but difficult topic together with facilitation from Pr. Jacie and me. Our first Brave Conversation will be about– you guessed it!– mental health and suicide.

One of the tools we will use together is called “Blessed Youth: A Survival Guide”. Tucked inside the guide is a place to write down three people who are “safeties” for each young person. These are three adults to reach out to when things get hard or you are filled with despair or suicidal thoughts. This is an important exercise, but not only for our youth. So I ask you, dearest *Star* readers, *who are your safeties? For whom might you be a safety? Who are the people who lift you and support you in difficult times? Who can come to you when they need a listening ear or a person to hold space for them?* I encourage you to write them down as we will ask our young people to do. I pray our youth can find the safety they need in difficult moments, but I pray you can, too.

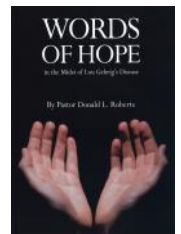
### Coming Up in November:

- 11th: Rake the Town with Confirmation Youth & Men’s Group (*Morning*)
- 12th: Sparks Gathering for Littles 0-2 (*10:30-11 am in the Nursery*)
- 12th: Laser Tag H.S. Youth Event (*Afternoon at Wow! Zone*)
- 15th: Winter Warm-Up 6th-9th Grade Youth Event (*6:15-8 pm at Messiah Lutheran*)
- 12th & 15th: Christmas Program Practice Begins
- 22nd & 26th: No Education - Thanksgiving Break
- 29th: Brave Conversations: Mental Health & Suicide w/ 5th-8th Grade Youth & Trusted Adult (*7-8 pm*)



### 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.**



Come now, and let us reason together,  
saith the Lord: though your sins be  
as scarlet, they shall  
be as white as snow;  
though they be red  
like crimson, they  
shall be as wool.

Isaiah 1:18

This prophecy from Isaiah was fulfilled by Jesus. Sometimes our sins are scarlet. Though sins feel like scarlet, Jesus’ sacrifice for us makes our sins like snow. Jesus makes it personal in our baptism. Have we sinned after our baptism? Of course we have. That is why we have communion that Jesus gave us.

On the first Sunday in November, we celebrate All Saints’ Sunday. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead. Because Jesus died on the cross and after his resurrection, our sins are like snow. There is more good news. Jesus never remembers our sins. Resurrection promises a beautiful future when we die. The risen Christ is always with us whatever we are going through in this life. As saints of God, let’s make the kingdom of God real in this world. Our sins have been changed from scarlet to snow.

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

Here are the “highlights” of the Bethlehem Council meeting held on **October 17**. Official 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!

**New BLC Members:** Welcome to the following new BLC members who were approved by the Council: Gloria Butler, Megan Monahan, Dustin and Kortni Pizel, Bob and Peggy Sorenson and David Tap.

**New Council Member:** Josie Lust was approved to fill the vacant Member-at-Large Council position created by the resignation of Jessica Auel. Her term will run to the spring of 2025.

**November 19 Semi-Annual Meeting Agenda:** The agenda for the November 19 semi-annual meeting was approved. Meeting topics will include: A. Approval of 2024 budget proposal; B. 2022 Financial Review Report Approval; C. Strategic Plan Goals Update; D. 2023-24 BLC Board & Committee Goals. We need **75 members** present for a quorum to complete business. Put November 19 on your calendars for the 10:45-11:45 a.m. meeting after Sunday worship in the dining room.

**2024 BLC Annual Budget Recommendation:** The proposed 2024 annual budget was approved for recommendation to the congregation at the November 19 semi-annual meeting. The proposed budget will be available on the narthex kiosk on Sunday, November 5 and presented for review/discussion with Council members on Sunday, November 12 at the 10:45 a.m. adult forum.

**Financial Review Report Update:** Progress continues on finalizing a standardized annual financial review report form. Council members will study this for future approval.

**Finances:** The September 20 end-of-month financial report was not completed for this meeting. The monthly deficit has increased by an additional \$10,000+ from the August 31-**\$50,844.35** deficit. 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter member giving statements have been mailed. Check this summary and contact Elizabeth Ruiz with any questions.

**WELCOME:** All is going well with the Cruz family this fall as they develop new friendships in the community. Plan on attending the November 9 evening celebration at Christ the King of all the good Cruz news! Check the BLC website or contact the church office to RSVP. Attendance is limited to 350 members of the 5 sponsoring churches. Time to celebrate!

**Strategic Goal 3 Update:** "We will foster a climate of respect and appreciation to nurture the differing perspectives among our members and the greater Mankato community." Objectives focusing on acknowledging contributions and service to Bethlehem; updating the church conflict resolution policy and inviting community members and organization to present diverse voices and perspectives to our congregation were reviewed. We have taken positive steps on these objectives!

**Community Leader Interviews:** Council president Jason Bruns, secretary Bob Ihrig and Member-at-Large Amanda Neubert reported on their interviews with community leaders. Issues addressed included housing, transportation, food insecurity, child care, parenting support, teen foster care support, youth mental health, student study support, teen collaborative activities in the classroom and increasing community activities for youth. Community leaders are interviewed to identify major issues facing the community and how Bethlehem can help to address these.

**Youth Activities:** Expect to see our youth more involved in Wednesday night worship activities. Youth leaders of area churches have been surveyed about how they are engaging youth in their ministries to enhance our own youth program.


**Crossroads Campus Ministry:** Pastor Jenna Couch has come on board as the new campus pastor. BLC Men's Group served Lunch-for-a-Buck on October 3 to 70 students and university staff.

**Stewardship:** Check your mail for the 2024 annual stewardship campaign letter and commitment form. Give prayerful consideration to your financial support of Bethlehem. Pledges may be returned during worship services with a deadline of **October 29**. Help us maintain all the good we do as a church for our members and the community.

**Next Council Meeting:** Tuesday, November 21.

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

Our mission partner for November is **The Reach Youth Resource Center**, a program of Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota. The organization serves youth ages 16-24 who are unhoused or at risk of homelessness. It was formed in 2011, originally as a drop-in center, but now with expanded services that continue to grow. The Reach is housed on Liberty Street on the Bethlehem campus. Their focus is on providing basic necessities, working with various housing and shelter options, preparing youth for employment and independent living, providing support and education, and offering recreational activities. Over the years, The Reach has served over 5300 youth, had more than 28,000 visits to the Resource Center, and provided more than 30,800 meals! They are committed to providing youth with the resources needed to live healthy, independent, and productive lives with self-reliance and community connection being emphasized. Please give generously to help support a program that is making a difference in the lives of at-risk youth.



## Lefse 2023!

Lefse can't happen without you! We're making lefse on **Friday, November 17, at 9:00 a.m. in the downstairs kitchen...** but we can't do it alone! More volunteers mean more lefse. Confirm with Ginger Erlandson **before November 10** if you are planning to help at (507) 380-5268 or [rerlandson2@gmail.com](mailto:rerlandson2@gmail.com). All lefse sales will be pre-sales only. Lefse will be available for pickup on Friday, November 17 from noon-1 p.m. and Sunday, November 19 after worship (we will also have a bake sale that morning).

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### Notes from Charlie Leftridge

**Director of Music & Worship**

- The Gospbells will rehearse on Sunday mornings at 8:15 in the sanctuary.
- **We're looking for special music!** If you'd like to share your gift of music of any kind, please contact Charlie.
- **Bells of the Bluffs handbell ensemble** will be performing a free holiday music concert at Bethlehem on **Saturday, December 2, at 3 p.m.** Learn more about the group at [bellsofthebluffs.org](http://bellsofthebluffs.org).

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Bethlehem is scheduled to serve at Connections on Tuesday 11/28-Sunday 12/3 and the weeks of 1/15 and 2/26. Call or text Derek Brown at (210) 863-4202 if you are interested in helping, or feel free to sign up directly on the Connections website.

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**

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**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

**OUR MISSION STATEMENT:**

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

**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, Gospbells,  
BLC Brass,  
Brass & Sass,  
Praise Band

To join the music  
program, contact  
Charlie Leftridge,  
Director of Music  
& Worship.



*H.S.*