

The BETHLEHEM STAR



March 2024

Thanking God and You for Bethlehem's Leadership

I'm impressed and grateful for you who take on the responsibility of leading our congregation in the mission and ministry God puts before us. **Thank you!** Your dedication is inspiring, and your skill and generosity enables us to do much in Jesus' name to proclaim the gospel, and to help and heal the world God loves. As we celebrate those whose terms conclude in May, and elect new board, committee, and council members in April, please consider, pray, and say yes to your call to serve!

~ Pr. Jay

Lent and Easter

Join us for worship **each Wednesday at 6:15** in the season of Lent as we share the series *Gathered Into One--Reflections on First Corinthians*. Area pastors will proclaim Paul's message of hope and unity for the Corinthians and for us.

February 28—Pastor Sarah Deutsch, Epiphany in Eagle Lake: 1 Corinthians 10:23-31

March 6—Pastor John Odegard, Grace in Mankato: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

March 13—Pastor Jay: 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

March 20—Pastor Jacie: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Holy Week and Easter Services



Come Worship With Us!

Our Holy Week schedule begins with the children and Praise Band leading us in Palm Sunday worship on March 24 and culminates with the celebration of Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday, March 31.

March 24—Palm Sunday Worship at 9:30

March 28—Maundy Thursday Worship at 6:15

March 29—Good Friday Worship at noon and 6:15

March 31—Easter Sunday Worship at 9:30

Please join us for the **ALS walk!** It will be Saturday, April 27, at Spring Lake Park. Check in is at 8:30, and the walk starts at 10:00. Let's walk in honor of Pastor Don and in memory of Jon Nelson! We're hoping for a sunny April day. The walk around the lake is very easy and comfortable.



If you can't join us but would like to donate, please go online at ALS.org, or you can stop in the office and pick up a form and a postage-paid envelope. If you have any questions, please contact Ginger Erlandson.



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.

March 6

Ham or turkey sandwich, potato salad, chips, pickles

March 13

Hamburger/cheeseburger, pickle, chips, pasta salad

March 20

Grilled chicken on a bun, potato salad, baked beans

March 27

NO SUPPER — HOLY WEEK



Daylight Saving Time



Family Faith Formation Updates

Anna Wencel, Family Faith Formation Director



Thank you, Bethlehem, for your wonderfully generous support of Fat Tuesday!

Once again, you made Fat Tuesday a success by donating and bidding on the silent auction and buying tickets to join us for jambalaya, mac and cheese, and king cake. With your help, we raised over \$3000 to support youth attending the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans this summer. We couldn't have done it without you!



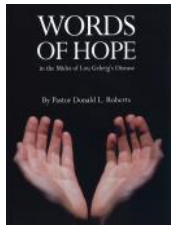
Coming Up in March

- 6th: Stolemaking Workshop for 9th Grade confirmands
- 10th, 12-3 p.m.: 4th Grade Communion Retreat
- 23rd, 10 a.m.: BLC Family Easter Egg Hunt
- 24th: Palm Sunday - Kids & Youth Lead Worship + 4th Grade Communion Recognition
- 27th & 31st: Holy Week & Easter - No Education



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.



***For the kingdom of God is not food and drink
but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ~ Romans 14:17***

In baptism, we are part of the kingdom of God. That means our sins are forgiven. Our guilt is forgiven. It means we love others even if they disagree with us or they annoy us. The Holy Spirit is highlighted in this text. We don't have forgiveness without the Holy Spirit. We don't have peace and joy without the Holy Spirit. In fact, we can't believe in Jesus without the Holy Spirit. Luther said in the third paragraph of the Apostles' Creed that speaks of the Holy Spirit:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the last day, He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

If you believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is already working in you. You have peace and joy in Christ. Sometimes, due to our circumstances in life, we don't experience peace and joy. But, we have to remember this: Jesus loves us enough to die on the cross and the risen Christ is always with us. He feels the same things that we feel. We will have peace and joy in eternity. This is possible in this life, too, if we pray about our circumstances and worship the risen Christ. **Thanks be to God!**



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



Here are the “highlights” of the Bethlehem Council meeting held on February 20. Meeting minutes with details are posted at 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: The new year has started on many positive notes. The 2023 year-end deficit of **-\$16,923.49** was reduced to **-\$4,701.80** by January 31. With another advance principal payment, the mortgage balance is now **\$483,337.13**. This compares to the \$1.1 million starting balance targeted by the 2022 capital campaign. BLC members continue to be generous! The BLC Finance Committee met to address budget issues and develop appropriate plans to advise the Council in the future.

Legacy Giving: The BLC stewardship board will conduct its annual mailing in March to promote BLC member legacy giving to support church “dream projects”. Check your mail!

Strategic Plan Update: Goal #2, “We will empower our members to share the gifts God has given us,” was highlighted with positive progress taking place on the 9 objectives and practices.

REACH: BLC facilities representatives met with REACH staff to explore options for additional space at Bethlehem for individual client confidential meetings. Youth Room space is being explored to accommodate this request. More discussions to be held to finalize arrangements.

Personnel: Ray Beckel and Pru Gushwa approved for new 3-year terms on the BLC personnel committee. The updated Personnel Handbook, incorporating the new state employee sick and safe leave law, has been shared with BLC employees. A positive 6-month performance review was completed for weekend janitor Benny Montalbo.

MN River Conference: Our 2 pastors and Bob Ihrig represented BLC at the February 18 synod conference meeting to conduct leadership elections, approve the 2024 budget, and hear reports on synod activities. Bethlehem will host the 2025 conference meeting on February 16. The SE MN Synod office will move from Rochester to St. Peter’s Lutheran Church in Northfield in April.

Synod Assembly Delegates: Amy Haigh and Bob Ihrig were approved as BLC delegates to the May 11 SE MN Synod Assembly to be held in Mankato. They will join the 2 pastors to conduct synod business. BLC members are welcome to observe and learn about synod activities. The synod represents 117,000 baptized members in 168 congregations in southeastern Minnesota.

Nominations: 8 of the 39 BLC Council/board/committee positions up for election at the April 21 semi-annual meeting have identified candidates seeking continued or new terms.

Fat Tuesday Fundraiser: The February 13 event was another success with nearly \$3,000 in net income from dinner tickets, silent auction baskets, a Thrivent action grant and other financial donations. Thanks to the 35 youth and adult volunteers for stepping up to prepare and serve! Funds will support our 8 youth attending the summer ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans.

Wednesday Night Suppers: A positive report was provided on participation, volunteer serving teams and financial support for Wednesday night suppers. Amy Haigh provides effective coordination and planning. Serving team volunteers will be recognized at a May 15 supper.

Board/Committee Reports: BLC board/committee representatives will be invited by the Council to share their activities and news at future Council meetings.

Next Council Meeting: Tuesday, March 19.

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



Helping Forgive Medical Debt for Pennies on the Dollar

Can Bethlehem help address the serious issue of medical debt? More families declare bankruptcy from accumulated medical debt than any other reason. Americans owe billions of dollars in medical debt, and those with serious debt often don’t seek needed medical care.

Bethlehem’s March Mission Partner is a faith-based organization in Minnesota called **THEE Alliance Medical Debt**. Pastor Peter Geisendorfer-Lindgren, an advisor to THEE Alliance, will be the Adult Forum speaker on March 3. He will help us understand how to forgive medical debt for pennies on the dollar. Read more at theealliance.org.

THEE Alliance is the Minnesota affiliate of RIP Medical Debt, a national faith-based non-profit organization that buys medical debt from medical providers and debt collectors for pennies on the dollar. They forgive the debt—\$10 billion since 2014— instead of pursuing collection. This includes over \$49 million in medical debt forgiven for over 50,000 Minnesota families. Read more at ripmedicaldebt.org.

Please come to the Adult Forum at 10:45 a.m. on Sunday, March 3 in Grounds for Joy to hear Pastor Geisendorfer-Lindgren from THEE Alliance explain the medical debt forgiveness effort of Minnesota faith communities. The Endowment Fund will provide additional support to enhance the generous contributions of the Bethlehem community designated for this March Mission Partner.

Very big thank you to Jim and Gail Christensen

for taking me to church every Sunday this past year after Roger passed away in January of 2023. I appreciate them so much and they deserve a break! I am wondering if anyone would be willing to pick me up for church during the month of March. Please give me a call if you are interested in driving at (507) 388-6756. And if you see the Christensens, please say “Thank you!” —*Dee Saman*



March 20



Financial Report
Elizabeth Ruiz, Financial Secretary



January 2024 was a rally month. Due to generous general fund contributions, the deficit has been reduced to \$4,600. A principal payment of \$100,000 was made on the mortgage, leaving a principal balance of \$483,337. If you need a printed copy of your 2023 contribution report, or if you would like offering envelopes for 2024, please contact the church office.



**We need radio broadcast sponsors
 for the rest of this year.
 Contact the office if you can help!**

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
720 South Second Street
Mankato, MN 56001

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(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



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

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

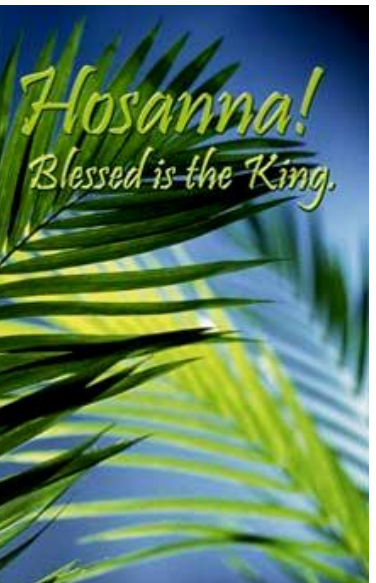


Choir,
Gospbells,
BLC Brass,
Praise Band

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



*Hosanna!
Blessed is the King.*



OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

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

*All calendar details can be
found on our website at
blcmankato.org/calendar.*