

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



May 2024

Confirmation

On May 5, six of our young people will stand before God, their family and friends, and you, their community in Christ, and say, "I believe," and "I promise." We call the rite confirmation, and it's been a part of our Lutheran tradition for a long time. Each of these young people were brought by their parents to the baptismal font (one of them is the first child I baptized at Bethlehem!), and now it's time for them to claim their baptismal faith for themselves.

I have spent the last nine months with them. A few years ago, we rethought what we felt our young people needed in order to have a vibrant faith that connects them to community, and brings hope and life to the world God loves. We settled on the following:

—They need to know the story of Jesus, and what Jesus means for the world and for them.

—They need to know what it means to be Lutheran, and our emphasis on grace.

—They need to know what others believe—both other Christians and other religions.

—They need to know how to practice their faith and develop a prayer life, participate in a Christian community, serve the needs of our neighbor, and work to make the world more equitable and peaceful.

—They need to have fun doing this.

Like our confirmation program, our young people are a work in progress. They deserve your prayers and support, and in the confirmation liturgy we will together promise to pray for them and support them. On May 5, we will ask them:

"Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

—to live among God's faithful people,

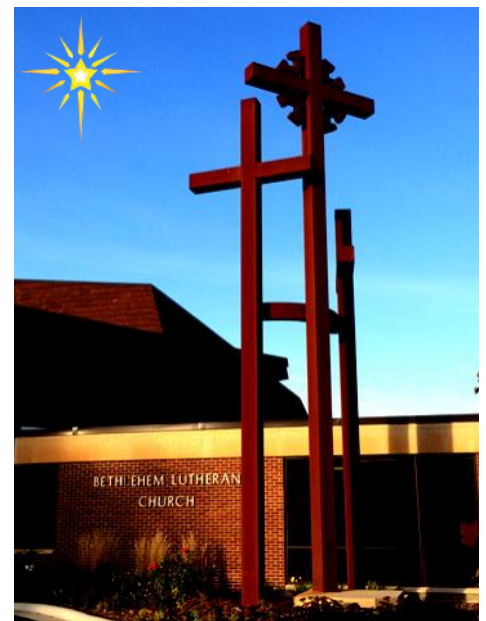
—to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper,

—to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word & deed,

—to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,

—and to strive for justice and peace in all the world?"

They can't, nor should they even try to, keep their promises without us. ~ *Pr. Jay*



Join us for Wednesday Night Suppers!



JD Truffles Catering will prepare the meals, and Bethlehem volunteers will greet and serve you.

**All are welcome!
Join us between
5:00 and 6:15 p.m.**

May 1

Dave's Delight with roll & salad
*(this is the final Wednesday
night supper in the dining room
until early September)*

May 8

5:00 — Year-end picnic,
with 6:15 worship at
Spring Lake Park!



Thank you, Bethlehem family, for keeping us close to your hearts. There's nothing sweeter than feeling loved. The cards, beautiful prayer shawl, and visits were appreciated. Our love to each and every one of you.

~ *John & Donna Engles*

Matthew 8:7 —

And Jesus said to him,
"I will go and heal him."



**We need radio broadcast
sponsors for the rest
of this year. Please
contact the office if you can
sponsor one (or more)!**



Family Faith Formation Updates

Anna Wencel, Family Faith Formation Director




Celebrate Good Times, C'mon! We've nearly reached the end of another program year! As we wind down our weekly programming, I'm giving thanks to God for a wonderful year and preparing to transition to summer. We have a variety of celebrations over the next month that will mark endings and new beginnings for many of our youth and young adults. **On May 5**, our 9th graders will confirm their faith together during worship. **On May 8**, we will celebrate our last Wednesday of the year with a Year-End Picnic at Spring Lake Park. **On May 19**, we will recognize and bless our seniors as they prepare for graduation. During our Year-End Picnic, we will also celebrate Ascension Day with a butterfly release during worship. We have been reading the stories after Jesus' resurrection with our kids and youth, and butterflies are a perfect way to say goodbye to a memorable year as we make way for the newness of summer. All are welcome to join us whether or not you're a regular Wednesday attender!

Coming Up in May

May 5: Confirmation Sunday, Camp Cinnamon Roll Fundraiser, & Last Day of LIGHT
May 8: Year-End Picnic & Ascension Worship at Spring Lake Park **May 15:** Youth Gathering Trip Meeting **May 19:** Graduating Senior Recognition & Reception

MARCH & APRIL HIGHLIGHTS

1) BLC Family Easter Egg Hunt 2) LIGHT & NightLIGHT kids build a resurrection snack 3) Torchlight & Confirmation youth playing an opening game in the Youth Room 4) BLC kids and youth wish our Muslim neighbors a blessed Eid at our Eid Celebration

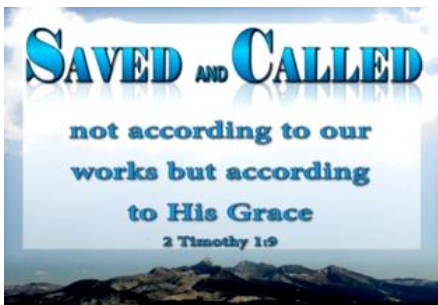
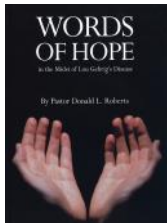



Blue Earth Taxi is now available for members in need of transportation to and from Sunday worship. Members can call **507-388-2227** on Saturday to arrange their pickup for Sunday. The ride will be billed to Bethlehem.



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.



...who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began... ~ 2 Timothy 1:9

As kids, the captain chose the team. We all hoped that we would be chosen first. That is not the way it works in the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of God, we all receive grace. The captain and the last pick are equal. Jesus loved us all, so he died on the cross to forgive our sins. We are all equal in the Kingdom of God. We all sin, so we are all equal. Jesus on the cross bore our pain. Whether it is an illness, a divorce, or a tax audit, Jesus bore our pain. We all have pain. Jesus is always with us and bears our pain. We receive this holy calling in baptism. We are all equal in the Kingdom of God and look forward to eternal life with Jesus.

Isn't it awesome that Jesus chose us to be part of the Kingdom of God before time began? If we wonder if we are worthy of the Kingdom of God, Jesus chose us to be on his team. We are equal in the Kingdom of God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said we all should consider ourselves the worst sinner. That way we don't judge each other. We are all parts of the Kingdom of God. **Thanks be to God!**





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



Here are the “highlights” of the Bethlehem Council meeting held on **April 16**. Meeting minutes with details are posted at 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! **Financial Report:** General fund balance changed from February 28 positive **\$1,089.29** to negative **\$5,251.91** on March 31. March member giving was below budget by **\$14,676** while expenses were slightly above budget. March 31 Mortgage Balance: **\$480,454.99**. Additional principal payment to be made in April. Mission Investment Fund Account Balance: \$114,078.42 (used for monthly mortgage payments of \$8,187). **April 21 Semi-Annual Meeting:** Quorum of 75 members needed to conduct official business of approval of annual reports and election of new Council/board/committee members. Updates on BLC strategic plan and WELCOME project also to be presented. Meeting to be held at **10:45 a.m.** after worship service in the dining room. Coffee, doughnuts, conversation & action to be served. **2024 Ballot:** 7 positions remain to be filled on the Council (1), Finance (4), Stewardship (1) & Youth (1) boards. Contact **Bob Ihrig** if interested & available to serve the church. YOU can make a difference with your time and talents!! **Strategic Plan Update:** Positive progress on Goal #4 Community Partnerships: “We will continue to work in partnerships to serve the needs of the community with relevant purpose and meaningful action.” was reported with details shared on the 11 supporting objectives and practices. **REACH Expansion Proposal:** Positive response received from the REACH and LSS to BLC financial proposal for expanded space use in BLC Youth Room in REACH lease. **Endowment Contributions:** Endowment Board approved April contributions of \$4,000 to Pr. Kristin Engstrom; \$2,000 to Thee Alliance to Reduce Medical Debt; \$2,000 to WELCOME/Cruz Family and \$5,000 to Campus Cupboard. College scholarship applications being received. **Youth/Young Adults:** BLC children and youth participated in special Muslim Eid educational event hosted by BLC Family Faith Formation staff. **Cruz Family Update:** Driver’s permit received by Cruz family father with behind-the-wheel instruction being planned. Scholarship approved for family to attend one-week summer camp. Work permit paperwork filed with hopeful approval as well as for pending asylum application. **May 8 Wednesday Evening Worship & Outdoor Picnic:** Plan on attending the final Wednesday evening worship service and supper this spring on May 8. Special dinner church service being planned. Site and schedule details to be announced. Come one, come all! **Synod Assembly:** Southeastern MN Synod delegates will gather on Saturday, May 11 at the Mayo Clinic Event Center in Mankato to conduct official synod business. Our 2 pastors, Amy Haigh and Bob Ihrig will represent Bethlehem as official delegates. Other BLC members are welcome to attend & observe proceedings from 9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Learn about our synod! **June 3 Council/Board/Committee Leadership Orientation:** Members of the Council, boards & committees will meet for the annual leadership supper & orientation on the evening of Monday, June 3. Details to be communicated to all BLC leaders. **Next Council Meeting:** Tuesday, May 21.



Special music slots are available for individuals or small groups in worship this Spring and Summer! Sharing your musical gifts enhances worship for us all — we invite you to share in any capacity and are happy to help you find music. Contact Charlie to schedule a time!



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



House of Hope

Our Mission Partner for May is House of Hope, an organization which provides outpatient services to adult men and women with

substance abuse disorders. This includes a specialized program for people with co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders. They are currently in the process of developing enhanced services for the mental health component. The organization has been in Mankato for more than 50 years and previously operated residential treatment programs as well, but it has had a change in focus in the last year. The current program is probably 50-50 men and women, deals most commonly with cross-addiction, has the contract with the Blue Earth County Drug Court, and is compatible with AA and NA approaches but is not limited to those. Contributions will be used for scholarships as well as start-up funding for new programs. Thank you for giving generously to support those among us who struggle with substance use and mental health problems.



Thursday, May 23
1:00-6:00 p.m.
Grounds for Joy

**Welcome & Inclusion
 Photo Booth**



The Welcome & Inclusion Board is looking to collect as many photos as possible of our members of all ages to be included in a Noah’s Ark themed display to bring visibility to who we are as a church community at diversity events in our community over the next year. Help us show our community that “All are welcome in our boat!”

Grab your family and friends and stop by the Welcome & Inclusion Photo Booth, which will be located in the narthex **until May 8** and snap some fun pictures! A photographer will be present around worship times, or you can snap a photo and text it to Marie Slotemaker at 507-995-5629.



Financial Report
Elizabeth Ruiz, Financial Secretary



At the end of March, the general fund deficit returned. It was at \$5,252. Member giving continues strong year-to-date at 118%, but in March, general fund giving was only 71% of budget. Large expenses included a quarterly insurance payment and some building repairs. No expenses were out of line with the budget.

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

Wednesday, May 1
6:15 in the sanctuary
Wednesday, May 8
6:15 at Spring Lake Park

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.
through May 22

**Fellowship
With Food**

**Join us for coffee &
treats In Grounds for
Joy after worship
on Sundays!**



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 a.m. on
Sundays through
May 12 and in the
sanctuary on May 19.

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.

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.***

MAY THE GOD OF HOPE
FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY
AND PEACE IN BELIEVING,
SO THAT BY THE POWER
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
YOU MAY ABOUND IN HOPE.

ROMANS 15:13

