



BETHEL MESSENGER



Bethel Lutheran Church Newsletter

December 2023

FROM PASTOR SUSAN ENGHOLM

Dear Siblings in Christ,

During the season of Advent and Christmas, we often become attuned to the needs of others. We share our generosity by donating to causes and special drives. We purchase gifts for our loved ones for Christmas. We become more aware of those who go with less.

With the spirit of generosity towards neighbor in mind, a prayer practice that can be fruitful in this Advent season is something called the "Lovingkindness Meditation." Originally rooted in Buddhism, it is a prayer practice that turns our hearts towards our neighbor. (Christians have borrowed from many traditions. The rosary was also borrowed from Buddhism!) In John 15:12, Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." This meditation helps us cultivate the kind of love and compassion that Jesus invites us to have for ourselves, our loved ones, our neighbors, our enemies, and the entire world.

First, let your body rest and be relaxed. Feel your breath going in and out of your body. After each petition, you are invited to say this simple prayer:

May I/you/they be filled with lovingkindness.

May I/you/they be safe from inner and outer dangers.

May I/you/they be well in body and mind.

May I/you/they be at ease and happy.

1. **Begin with yourself.** Without loving yourself it is almost impossible to love others. Breathe gently and recite the above prayer.
2. **Think of a person who has been loving and kind to you.** Perhaps it is a caregiver or a close friend or partner. Think of someone who helps you feel safe and at ease. Picture this person and recite the prayer.
3. **Recall a person toward whom your feelings are neutral.** Maybe it is the grocery store clerk you saw today, or your mail carrier, or a coworker you don't know well. Think of this person and recite the same prayer.
4. **Turn your mind now to someone who has hurt you in the past.** Without feeling the need to condone or approve of their actions, you are invited simply to see them as a human being who has the same need to be loved as you do. Recite the phrases toward this person.
5. **Now, imagine your neighborhood, your town, the Twin Cities Metro, and beyond.** Picture all of the countless beings in this world. Again, recite the prayer.
6. **Finally, focus once again on yourself** so the feeling of loving-kindness fills you completely; breathing in peacefully, breathing out peacefully; at peace with yourself and the world.

Jesus preached a radical kind of love that guides us to pray for our neighbors and even for our enemies. May this practice cultivate the love of Christ in you during this season of Advent!

In Christ, Pastor Susan Engholm

MISSION & MINISTRIES

Driving Away Hunger

Designed to reduce transportation and mobility issues associated with food access in our communities. The Mobile Outreach vehicle is stocked with shelf stable pantry items, fresh produce, frozen proteins, grains, dairy, and bakery treats. STOP & SHOP THE BUS at no cost to you! Please bring bags and a cart to carry food. Staff are not permitted to carry food inside residence. Full grocery distributions available (1) one visit per month, per household, across all distribution sites. Produce available weekly. Staff will accommodate anyone not able to safely enter the vehicle for shopping. Questions? Call 320-664-2088. For other locations see the schedule on the bulletin board.



MEFS Mobile Outreach

When: Thursday

December 14
1:30 pm-3:00 pm

Where:

Bethel Lutheran
Church parking lot

Multigenerational Birthday Party for Jesus!



WELCA's Advent Project: "A Multigenerational Birthday Party for Jesus"! Bethel will sponsor three families through the Lester Prairie School Outreach Program. We have a Giving Tree in the narthex with various items to purchase for our families. The "Birthday Party for Jesus" will be on Sunday, December 17, during the Sunday school/

Adult Education time. Bring your gifts to wrap, play some games, enjoy treats, and make some crafts! All ages are welcome!

Treat bags for the youth will be given out on this day. If you would like to give a monetary donation toward the bags, contact Diane Horsman. Thank you! *Bethel's youth will be presenting a short Christmas program during the worship service on Sunday, December 17.

Poinsettia sign-up



Help beautify the sanctuary for Christmas by ordering a poinsettia. Sign up on the bulletin board and check your size option. There is also a spot to dedicate your plant in celebration, honor, or memory of loved ones. Make checks out to Bethel Lutheran Church. Give your payment to Judy Angvall. The deadline to sign up is Wednesday, December 13.

Lester Prairie Lions Community Breakfast



Sunday, December 10, 2023 at the Lester Prairie City Hall. Serving: pancakes, eggs, sausage, toast, juice, and coffee from 9:00 am to noon. Free will offering. Proceeds from this event will support local Lions projects. Please come, enjoy, and support!

Light of the World

Evening Prayer:

Wednesdays at

6:30 pm

December 6

December 13

December 20

The choir will practice at 5:45 pm during Advent.



Candlelight Christmas

Eve worship 5:00 pm.

*There will not be Sunday morning worship at 9:00 am on December 24.

GOD has a MINISTRY for YOU in this CHURCH and a MISSION for YOU in the WORLD.

The National Lutheran Choir Tuneup

The choir will attend the National Lutheran Choir Tuneup on January 20 from 9:00 am to noon at Roseville Lutheran Church. The Tuneup will be led by their new Artistic Director, Jennaya Robison, who will teach participants repertoire and vocal techniques to enhance their home church services. Anyone who enjoys singing is welcome to join us! Please RSVP to Emily Koehler or Jan Smith.



The National Lutheran Annual Christmas Festival 2023

New Hope: finding light in unexpected places

In Christ's birth we see, hear, and feel a sense of renewal as Christmas connects us to the roots of our faith. Join the National Choir at the magnificent Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis for the beloved Christmas Festival tradition!

This year's festival, title *New Hope* will celebrate old beside new; the program will include works from the 16th century to the present, including Gabriel's *Hodie Christus natus est*, Randall Thompson's *Ye Were Sometimes Darkness*, and an arrangement by our new Artistic Director, Jennaya Robison. Carols, readings, and music from brass, oboe, harp, and organ will sound throughout the Basilica to ring in another Christmas.

In Person Concerts

Friday, December 8 at 4:30 pm

Saturday, December 9 at 1:30 pm and 8:00 pm

Adults & Seniors: \$35 | Students: pay what you can | 18 & under: free
Discounts for groups of 10+ call the NLC office at 612-722-2301 for more information

Livestream

Saturday, December 9 at 1:30 pm CT

Free to all | Visit [NLCA.com](https://www.nlca.com) to watch!

Endowment Fund year-end giving

The Church Endowment Fund is an excellent place to give your year-end gift, the gift that keeps on giving, expanding Bethel's outreach abilities. The yellow Endowment Fund envelope assures your gift goes to the intended fund. Please make checks out to Bethel Endowment Fund and place your envelope in the Endowment Committee's mailbox. Thank you in advance!



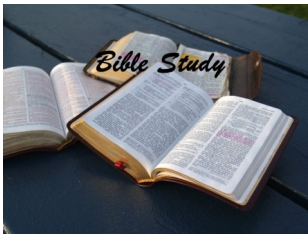
Bethel's newly painted cross going back on the bell tower on November 1. Thank you to those who worked on this project! Check it out!

FAITH & FELLOWSHIP

Adult Education

Adult Education is offered during coffee hour. Join us for a time of education and conversation! We will have education every Sunday except the last Sunday of the month. The focus will be frequently asked questions about being Lutheran. Speak to Cathy Houg or Mitch Overbye if you have any questions.

Monday Bible Study-December 4, 11 & 18



Join us for Bible Study on Monday mornings at 9:00 am on December 4, 11 and 18. We will review the sermon from the day before and look at the Gospel for the coming week. Looking forward to seeing you there!

Created To Be—Summer Camp 2024



Online registration opens on December 14, 2023. Online registration is the best, most streamlined way to register for camp and is highly encouraged. Register by February 16, 2024 to secure the early bird discount and get \$50 off each registration. There are programs for youth, families, and adults. Check out all the opportunities in the brochures provided in the narthex.

We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to do the good things God created us to do from the beginning. Ephesians 2:10

Youth Task Force Social



Bethel Lutheran Church will host the monthly [Sept.-May] Youth Task Force Social on Wednesday, January 10, 2024. This is an opportunity for area youth to get to know supportive adults in the community. Students will arrive at 12:45 pm to enjoy a Hot Chocolate Bar and activities. If you are willing to help with this event contact Mary Lou Teubert. All are welcome!

Thanksgiving Pie Social, Nov. 19



Happy Birthday!

- 12/1 LuAnn W.
- 12/2 Amber S.
- 12/11 Riley C.
- 12/18 Jen B.
- 12/21 Ed E. & Ron F.
- 12/26 Sara R.
- 12/31 Lisa K.

Celebrate your Baptism!



- 12/4 Amy Z.
- 12/7 Jane L.
- 12/14 Luke P.
- 12/15 LuAnn W.
- 12/22 Abigail C.
- 12/25 Nancy K.
- 12/30 Amber S.

FINANCIAL CORNER

3 convenient ways to give

1. Simply Giving

Use *Simply Giving* for making regular offerings—contributions are debited automatically from your checking or savings account. **Simply Giving offers convenience for you and much need donation consistency for our congregation!** No more checks or envelopes! And, when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending services, this program will allow your offerings to continue on an uninterrupted basis. Contact the church office for an application or go online at www.lpbethel.org under Give. Return completed applications to the Financial Secretary church mailbox.

2. Text + Give

Give in seconds with a text message. Text giving is fast, easy and versatile. Give in the moment, make your weekly offering or respond to special appeals—all in a matter of seconds. Easy card registration on your phone. Option to make your gifts recurring. To give, text the dollar amount to [866-298-7547](tel:866-298-7547).

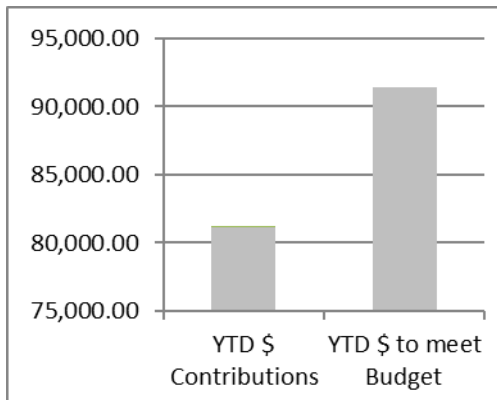
3. Bethel offering envelope

Offering envelopes are available—contact the church office if you would like offering envelopes mailed to you. We ask that you completely fill out the front of the envelope, including your assigned envelope number—contact the office if you have forgotten your number, and mail it to Bethel Lutheran Church, PO Box 207, Lester Prairie, MN 55354 or place in the offering plate. Any further questions can be directed to the Financial Secretary, Stacy M. at 320-395-2869 or finsec@lpbethel.org.

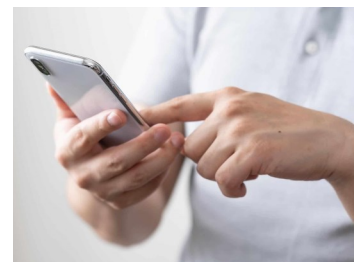
“Noisy” offering

A second “Noisy” offering will be taken on the 4th Sunday of the month toward our Youth Summer Camperships at Green Lake Bible Camp. On your way out of the sanctuary, drop your loose change into the metal can with a clang! Although paper bills and checks won't have the same “noisy” effect, they will be accepted and appreciated!

For the Month of Oct 2023	
Weekly Av. Attendance	68
\$ Contributions	9,776.90
\$ to meet Budget	9,141.22
\$ Difference	635.68
For the Year 2023	
YTD \$ Contributions	81,142.99
YTD \$ to meet Budget	91,412.20
YTD \$ Difference	-10,269.21



Simply Giving offers convenience for you and much needed donation consistency for our congregation!



To GIVE Text the dollar amount to 866-298-7547



Bethel's Financial Update

DECEMBER 2023

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
					1	2 Equipping Congregations Day (Vinje) bp Resplandor de Gloria
3 (Advent 2) 9a worship 10a Congregational meeting-pastor vote Sunday school/ confirmation class	4 (office hours) 9a Bible study	5 6:30 WELCA mtg.	6 (office hours) 5:45p choir 6:30p Light of the World Evening Prayer	7 (office hours)	8	9 6p Resplandor de Gloria
10 (Advent 3) 9a worship 10a Sunday school/ confirmation class/ adult education	11 (office hours) 9a Bible study 6:30p council mtg.	12	13 (office hours) 4p w & m mtg. 5:45 choir 6:30p Light of the World Evening Prayer	14 (office hours) 1:30-3p MEFS mobile outreach	15 Annual reports due	16 6p Resplandor de Gloria
17 (Advent 4) 9a praise worship w/ youth Christmas program 10a multigenerational Birthday Party for Jesus!	18 (office hours) 9a Bible study newsletter deadline	19	20 (office hours) 5:45p choir 6:30p Light of the World Evening Prayer	21 (office hours) First Day of Winter	22	23 6p Resplandor de Gloria
24 Christmas Eve 5p Candlelight worship w/communion	25 Christmas Day	26	27	28	29	30
31 9a worship						

- **Online Worship:** <https://www.facebook.com/lpbethel/live> or <https://www.lpbethel.org/worship/watch-Sunday-livestream/>
- **Worship CDs:** Contact the church office if you would like a weekly copy sent to you.
- **Bulletin Submissions Deadline:** Wednesday Noon | **Newsletter Deadline:** 25th of the month
- **Most up-to-date Calendar version:** Go to www.lpbethel.org
- **Church Directory:** Go to www.lpbethel.org, Contact Us, Member Directory, then enter the Password. Contact the church office if you need the password to view online. Contact the church office if you would like a hard copy.
- **Seeking volunteers of all ages!** Check out the bulletin board outside the church office. Sign up for a month or be a substitute! No experience necessary! Questions? Contact the chairperson.

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH | COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES | MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2023

Council Members Present: President: Ron Foust; Vice President: Peggy Wick; Secretary: Cathy Houg; Treasurer: Matt Krull; Financial Secretary: Stacy Meyer; Finance Board: Mitch Overbye; Education Board: Pete Hallberg and Emily Koehler; Trustee Board: Brian Duncan; Interim Pastor Susan Engholm

Guests: Lloyd Wortz, Endowment Committee and Jean Hallberg, Call Committee

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 by President Ron Foust followed by a prayer led by Pastor Engholm.

Council Business:

- A **motion** was made by Mitch Overbye and seconded by Cathy Houg to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.
- Pastor Engholm reported that she made six visits this month. She attended the October Youth Task social and planning meeting. Bethel will host the youth event in January.
- Four confirmands celebrated Confirmation on October 29, 2023. Monday morning Bible Study has restarted.

Old Business:

- A review and discussion of the updated Endowment bylaws was led by Lloyd Wortz. A **motion** was made by Pete Hallberg and seconded by Peggy Wick to accept the bylaws as presented. Motion carried. Final acceptance and approval of the bylaws will be at the congregational annual meeting in January, 2024.

New Business:

- A **motion** was made by Emily Koehler and seconded by Pete Hallberg to pay up to \$90 for registrations to the Equipping Congregations Conference. Motion carried. The conference will be held on December 2, 2023, at Vinje Lutheran Church, Willmar.
- A **motion** was made by Cathy Houg and seconded by Brian Duncan to pay \$250 for Lester Prairie gift cards to be given to the five employees as holiday gifts. Motion carried.
- The Finance Board will begin employee year-end consultations.
- The Finance Board is working on the 2024 preliminary Church budget. They will present at the December Council meeting.
- A **motion** was made by Cathy Houg and seconded by Mitch Overbye to hold the Congregational Annual Meeting on January 28, 2024. Motion carried.
- Jean Hallberg presented the pastoral candidate of choice by the Call Committee.
- A **motion** was made by Stacy Meyer and seconded by Emily Koehler to accept the Call Committee's recommendation, to present Molly Wills to the congregation as our candidate for call to the pastorate of Bethel Lutheran Church, and to extend to her a call at two-thirds time. Motion carried. The congregational meeting will be held on December 3, 2023, following worship for the purpose of the call vote.

Secretary Minutes:

A **motion** was made by Pete Hallberg and seconded by Emily Koehler to accept October's secretary's report. Motion carried.

Treasurer Reports:

A **motion** was made by Mitch Overbye and seconded by Pete Hallberg to accept October's treasurer's report. Motion carried.

Financial Secretary Report:

A **motion** was made by Emily Koehler and seconded by Cathy Houg to accept October's financial secretary's report. Motion carried.

Reports:

Education Board: Confirmation was held on Reformation Sunday. Adult Forum has begun. The Sunday School Christmas Program will be held on Sunday December 17, 2023, during worship.

Finance Board: The Finance Board has recommended the church's insurance be covered by American Church Group with a quote of \$7,922 per year. Coverage will be nearly the same as current coverage. The Finance Board is reviewing the Church's misconduct policy. Background checks are required on all adults who come in contact with children. The Education Board and Tamie Foust will manage this policy and background check compliance.

Trustees: A snowplowing contract has been given to Litzau Excavating. The siding and roof have been completed. The remaining electrical work will be completed this week. Some nails have poked through the ceiling in the sanctuary. Kingdom Builders has graciously said they are willing to do the work-repair, patch, and repaint using Bethel's paint. The cross is now in place. The Trustees will look into cleaning the carpet, especially in the Sunday School room, as recommended.

Communications:

- The Nominating Committee will be activated with openings available for Council, Committees, and Boards.
- Bishop Elizabeth Eaton is taking a leave of absence. Rev. Michael Burk will serve as Bishop Pro Tem.
- Annual Meeting Reports are due to Tamie Foust by Dec. 15, 2023, and Financial Reports by January 10, 2024.
- Endowment Grant Proposals are due by November 30, 2023, with proposal presentations at the January 2024 Congregational Meeting.

The meeting closed with Round Table Prayers and the Lord's Prayer.

The next regular Council meeting will be held on Monday, December 11, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Cathy Houg, Council Secretary

REMINDER: Congregational meeting on December 3 following worship-Vote for new pastor recommendation.
SAVE THE DATE: Bethel's Annual Congregational meeting on January 28, 2024, following the worship service.



CONTACT US

Bethel Lutheran Church

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Lester Prairie, MN 55354

OFFICE: 320-395-2125

bethellutheranlp@gmail.com

Visit us on the web! www.lpbethel.org

www.facebook.com/lpbethel

Pastoral Emergency Contact:

Interim Pastor Susan Engholm
320-293-1811

MISSION STATEMENT

Vibrantly open to the spirit, Bethel Lutheran Church seeks to serve God and its neighbors by joyfully living into the good news of Jesus Christ.



Bethel Lutheran Church

P.O. Box 207

Lester Prairie, MN 55354

PLACE
STAMP
HERE