

# BETHEL MESSENGER

Bethel Lutheran Church

January 2026

## FROM THE PASTOR

Hello Beloved Bethel members,

Two full years have passed since you called me to be your pastor. What an amazing two years it has been! This year has been blessed with excitement, joy, and sharing the good news. New people were invited to and attended worship, VBS, Harvest Festival, Community Garden gardening and sharing of the harvest, and more. At Lester Prairie Days, Bethel had a visible presence to the community throughout the day as I started off the day with a vending table, then members worked the burger stand, and then more members walked and rode with the Bethel float in the evening parade. And though many of us may have been stung by wasps at our Harvest Festival, the joy in the day was not dampened by the stings!

Every time I talk to each of you or watch you talking with others, I see God's love. It is so very abundant, bright, and visible in the relationships that have been built, deepened, and grown within this congregation and within the community as we reach outside our walls. I am so honored to be a part of this congregation. It is both humbling and joy-filling to see, experience, and participate in sharing God's love with you, with one another, and with the community.

On top of the incredible sharing of God's love, I am awed that we raised \$30,000 to fix our parking lot within just nine months, and on top of that, giving to the general fund went up! Though expenses in our individual lives and within the church have gone up, we should still take a moment to celebrate and appreciate the amazing work of the Holy Spirit within this place.

God is truly present here among us, working within and through us. I can't help but wonder what it would look like if we all were able to give the additional \$30,000 we did this year next year to the general fund. What amazing things could we do to share God's love and praise God's name? Maybe a fence could be put up around the community garden to keep out the hungry rabbits? Maybe more could be given by the church to Poolside Plates to see it expand? Maybe the big expanse of grass space could be turned into a prairie grass labyrinth with stations of the cross along it for the community to use, to meditate, to experience the wonder of nature and the mystery of God? Maybe we could alter the altar area to make communion at the railing more accessible for all? Maybe there is some idea resting within one of you just waiting for a nudge from the Holy Spirit to be shared and utilized. So many possibilities await us, and the world opens up before us when we put our trust in God and act as the good stewards God calls us to be. I can't wait to see how the Holy Spirit works through us this new year!

Blessings to you all,  
Pastor Molly B. Wills

# MISSION AND MINISTRIES

## COMMON CUP AND FOOD SHELF



### WEEKEND FOOD PROGRAM

Our plan for 2026 is to continue collecting granola and protein bars for the Weekly Food Program in McLeod County. (One of these items is placed in every bag that is packed.) If you wish to participate in this ministry, please leave the items in the basket located in the Common Cup Corner. Currently, about 350 bags are packed weekly for the food program in McLeod County. (Children who qualify receive bags of food, sent home in their backpacks on Fridays, to have for the weekend and long school breaks, discreetly and confidentially.)

Each month, a team from Bethel will also continue to pack the Weekend School bags for students in need at the Lester Prairie High School. If you have any questions about the program, would like to donate, or are interested in volunteering to pack the bags, Jan Smith would be happy to visit with you.

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE WEEKEND FOOD PROGRAM!

Twenty-two boxes of granola and protein bars were collected from Bethel and delivered to Common Cup Ministries in December! In addition, with the help of a Thrivent Action Team grant written by a Bethel member, nine cases of protein bars and seven cases of granola bars were purchased for our collected donation! Wow!

### DRIVING AWAY HUNGER!

**Driving Away Hunger is dedicated to addressing transportation and mobility issues related to food access in our communities.**

Full grocery distributions are available once a month for each household, from the Mobile Outreach Bus. Additionally, you may visit the food shelf in Glencoe or Hutchinson once a week. All sites are open to the public.

The bus will stop at Bethel's parking lot once a month, during the winter, specifically on the first Wednesday of each month, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. To place an order, you must complete a form online at our website, [www.mcleodemergencyfoodshelf.org](http://www.mcleodemergencyfoodshelf.org), or pick up a physical copy from the church office. To ensure you receive your order by the distribution date, please submit your form by the specified deadline.

Check the schedule on the bulletin board or the front door for distribution dates and deadlines. For updates, follow us on Facebook <http://facebook.com/McLeodFoodShelf>. If you have any questions, please visit our website.



### MCLEOD EMERGENCY FOOD SHELF MOBILE OUTREACH

**NEXT DISTRIBUTION DATE:**

**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 4**

**BETHEL'S PARKING LOT**

**2:30 PM – 4:15 PM**

To **receive** your food box by **FEBRUARY 4<sup>th</sup>**, place your order by **JANUARY 14<sup>th</sup>**.

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

## LEFSE MAKING

A group of Bethel members used potatoes from the Community Garden to make lefse on December 16. Socializing was fun for everyone!



## EMERGENCY PASTORAL CARE CONTACT

During Pastor Molly's vacation, January 1- 2, please contact Pastor Cathy Jones at 763-528-1784, House of Grace, Montrose.

## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING JANUARY 25, 2026, FOLLOWING WORSHIP

Please make every attempt to attend this important congregational meeting! Endowment grants will be announced during the meeting.

## NOMINATION COMMITTEE SEEKING VOLUNTEERS!

### OPEN POSITIONS INCLUDE:

#### **Congregation Council:**

**Vice-President:** 2-year term

**Finance Board:** 2-year term

**Education Board:** 2-year term

*The Finance and Education Board members partner with another board member, and only one member needs to attend the monthly council meeting.*

#### **Congregation Committees:**

**Endowment:** 3-year term/need one

**Audit:** 3-year term/need one

**Representatives for ELCA Synod Assembly: June 5-6,** /need two (one male/one female)

Contact Peggy Wick [sully72828@gmail.com](mailto:sully72828@gmail.com) , Ron Foust

[rfoust@lesterbuildings.com](mailto:rfoust@lesterbuildings.com) , Cathy Houg

[cathy.houg@gmail.com](mailto:cathy.houg@gmail.com) , Emily Koehler

[emily.e.koehler@gmail.com](mailto:emily.e.koehler@gmail.com) , or Tamie Foust

[tamfoust@gmail.com](mailto:tamfoust@gmail.com) with questions or if you are interested in serving!

## YOUTH TASK FORCE SOCIAL

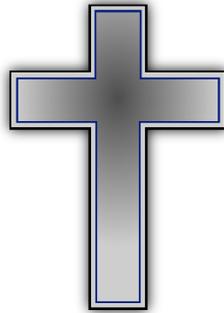
Bethel will host the 7th-12th-grade youth of Lester Prairie High School on Wednesday, January 21, from 12:40 p.m. to 1:40 p.m. We're looking for volunteers to set up, serve hot cocoa, and get to know the youth of our community! Volunteers, please arrive by 11:30 a.m. to start setting up and stay after to help break down and clean up. If you'd like to help, please let Pastor Molly know.

# FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP

BETHEL OFFERS LEARNING OPTIONS TO PROVIDE VARIOUS WAYS TO DEEPEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

## WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL

Resumes January 11, 2026, following worship!



## INTERGENERATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH PASTOR MOLLY

Everyone is welcome!

January 4 & 11

February 1 & 8

March 8 & 22

April 19

May 3 & 10

## “WOMEN IN THE BIBLE” - A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN IN JANUARY!

All women are invited and encouraged to attend a women's Bible study on Thursdays, January 8, 15, 22, and 29, from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Each session will take a personal look into the life of one of the Bible's most faithful women. The God to whom they were so committed is the same God who continues to mold and use ordinary people like us today. What can we learn from them? If you have questions, please ask Jan Smith. [kay\\_peterson69@yahoo.com](mailto:kay_peterson69@yahoo.com) or 952-261-4380 (John MacArthur's book, *Twelve Extraordinary Women: How God Shaped Women of the Bible and What He Wants to Do with You*, will be used as a resource and guide.

## JANUARY

### BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Shirley W.
- 6 Livie S.
- 10 Arla H./Lloyd W./ Oliver A.
- 15 Tom G.
- 19 Emily K., Cheryl S.
- 20 Jean H./ Logan M.
- 23 Cathy H./ Grant S.
- 24 Evie K.
- 28 John S.
- 30 Emillie F.

### BAPTISMS

- 1 Tom G.
- 6 Ron F.
- 12 Dean S.
- 17 Sam R.
- 21 Lloyd W.
- 22 Connor R.
- 24 Lachlynn S.
- 26 Riley C.
- 28 Daved A.
- 30 Emillie F.
- 31 Jean H./Max P.

## BETHEL BOOK CLUB – JANUARY

*Prodigal Summer*  
by Barbara Kingsolver

### Discussion Date:

Wednesday, January 21  
7:30 p.m. at church

New members are always welcome as we read and discuss books presenting themes that are important to us as Christians in the world today. One copy of each book is available in the church library, or you can choose to access the books by any other means. Let Jill Duncan know if you have any questions.

[jillyd58@hotmail.com](mailto:jillyd58@hotmail.com) or  
320-420-6284

# JANUARY 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 New Year's Day  Pr. Molly's vacation	2  Pr. Molly's vacation	3
4 (2 Christmas) 9a worship 10a Intergenerational Sunday school	5 office hours	6	7 office hours 11:30a Bible study 1p-4p quilting 6:30p choir	8 9a Women's Bible study	9	10 Annual Financial Report deadline
11 (Epiphany) 9a worship 10a Sunday school & Intergenerational Sunday school	12 office hours 5p worship & music mtg. 6p council mtg.	13 6:30p WELCA mtg.	14 office hours 11:30a Bible study 1p-4p quilting 6:30p choir	15 9a Women's Bible study	16	17
18 (2 Epiphany) 9a worship 10a Sunday school	19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	20	21 office hours 12:40p-1:40p Youth Task Force Social 6:30p choir 7:30p book club discussion	22 9a Women's Bible study	23	24
25 (3 Epiphany) 9a worship 10a annual congregational meeting 10a Sunday school	26 office hours	27	28 office hours	29 9a Women's Bible study	30	31

**ONLINE WORSHIP:** <http://www.facebook.com/lpbethel/live>

**BULLETIN SUBMISSION DEADLINE:** Wednesday noon | **NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:** 25<sup>th</sup> of the month

**BETHEL'S CALENDAR:** Go to [www.lpbethel.org](http://www.lpbethel.org)

**ONLINE CHURCH DIRECTORY:** Go to [www.lpbethel.org](http://www.lpbethel.org), Contact Us, Member Directory, then enter the Password. Contact the church office if you need the password to view the directory online, if you would like a hard copy of the directory, or if your contact information has changed!

**SEEKING VOLUNTEERS OF ALL AGES!** Check out the bulletin board in the narthex. Sign up or be a substitute! No experience is necessary! For questions, contact the chairperson listed or the church office.

## BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES, DEC. 8, 2025

**Council Members Present:** President: Dave Gohl, Vice President: Peggy Wick, Secretary: Julie Hanson, Treasurer: Jill Duncan, Financial Secretary: Stacy Meyer, Finance Board: Mitch Overbye, Education Board: Katie Radtke, Trustee Board: Jeff Hanson & Bryon Weisenburger and Pastor Molly.

**Call To Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:04 P.M. by President Dave Gohl followed with an opening prayer by Pastor Molly.

### **Council Business:**

A **motion** was made by Jill Duncan and seconded by Julie Hanson to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

### **Pastor Molly:**

- We will be hosting the Youth Task Force Social on January 21st. The time will be 12:40 – 1:40 P.M. Again, if anyone is willing and able to help, please talk to me.
- I attended the Youth Task Force Social hosted at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in November. Discussed my plan for our January YTF Social with the pastors and now plan to send all of them prayers for our youth based on their stresses/worries once they are typed up. Potentially, St. Paul's could take the strips with their worries and hang them at their church after a rotation of ours. The other two churches do not have a good space for it.
- Visited our homebound.
- Led bible studies
- Attended a First Call large gathering in St. Peter where we learned about Bowen Family Systems.
- Helped my daughter walk through the process of writing and preaching a sermon in which she preached on November 30th.
- Advent is underway. The first Wednesday service went well. We are still learning the new songs. It is a beautiful, contemplative service.
- Led monthly worship meeting.
- I was on vacation November 20th to 24th.
- I will be on vacation Dec. 20th -23rd and Dec. 29th – Jan 2nd. I will be here for worship Dec. 28th & Jan. 4th.

### **New Business:**

- Safety First Presentation given by Lester Prairie Police Department, Justin Heldt. Information was shared on suggested safety plans for Bethel Church and what other surrounding churches have in place for safety.
- Budget approval still in the works.
- Pastor Molly's housing allowance: Jill Duncan made a **motion**, and Mitch Overbye seconded that the Bethel church council set Pastor Molly Wills' 2026 housing allowance at \$27,310.36. The IRS requires that the church governing body set this amount annually by December 31. It is not set by some other entity for us to approve. **Motion Carried.**
- The annual meeting is on January 25th.

### **Old Business:**

- Annual Board reports are close to being completed. They are due Dec. 10th. Financial reports are due January 10th, 2026.
- Nomination committee update: Still working to fill the available positions.
- Social media update for Christmas Service: Christmas service is advertised by means of posters and social media such as Facebook and Life in Lester Prairie.

### **Secretary Minutes:**

- A **motion** was made by Mitch Overbye and seconded by Jeff Hanson to approve the previous month's secretary minutes. **Motion carried.**

### **Treasurer Report:**

- A **motion** was made by Stacy Meyer and seconded by Mitch Overbye to approve the previous month's treasurer's report. **Motion carried.**

### **Financial Secretary Report:**

- A motion was made by Peggy Wick and seconded by Bryon Weisenburger to approve the previous month's financial secretary's report. Motion carried.

### **Board Reporting:**

- **Education:** No report given.
- **Finance:** Insurance options were discussed. Year-end reviews with Pastor Molly and employees. Meet again and discuss the budget before the next council meeting.
- **Trustee:** Received a good report on the energy audit. Both boiler/heating systems are now working properly.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer and Closing Benediction by President Dave Gohl.

Respectfully submitted by Secretary Julie Hanson

**Next scheduled meeting date: Monday January 12th 6:00 P.M.**

# GIVING PAGE

## 3 WAYS TO MAKE GIVING EASIER!

### 1. **VANCO ONLINE**

Discover the simplicity of giving with Vanco Online, our user-friendly eGiving tool! You can make one-time gifts or set up recurring donations to ensure your support continues. Visit our church website at [www.lpbethel.org](http://www.lpbethel.org) and click the “Give” button or scan the QR code to get started.

#### **HOW TO USE VANCO ONLINE:**

- 1. Select Your Funds and Amount**—Choose your fund and click “Donate.” Select your donation amount and frequency, then proceed to payment.
- 2. Enter Payment Method**—Enter your credit card, debit card, or checking account information. You can save your payment information for future donations by creating a free account. (From your Vanco account, you can review your giving history, manage recurring donations, or update payment information.)
- 3. Complete Donation**—Review your gift and click “Submit.”  
How to Have Automatic eGiving Set Up for You: Simply complete an authorization form (forms are on the wall in the Narthex) and place it in the Financial Secretary’s mailbox.

### 2. **TEXT + GIVE**

Donate easily and quickly by texting! Text giving is fast and flexible. You can give right away, set up a weekly donation, or respond to special requests—all in just a few seconds. To register, use your phone; it’s simple! You can also set up recurring donations. To donate, just text the dollar amount to [866-298-7547](tel:866-298-7547).

### 3. **BETHEL OFFERING ENVELOPE**

We encourage you to fill out an envelope and include your assigned envelope number from your church mailbox. You can mail it to Bethel Lutheran Church, PO Box 207, Lester Prairie, MN 55354, or simply place it in the offering plate during service. **If you have any questions, please contact our Financial Secretary, Stacy, at 320-395-2869 or [finsec@lpbethel.org](mailto:finsec@lpbethel.org).**

## SCAN THE QR CODE TO GET STARTED



## NOISY OFFERING

On the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, look for the tin can! All proceeds support Bethel Youth Camperships for Green Lake Bible Camp.

### **MID DECEMBER 2025**

**\$ CONTRIBUTIONS:** 4,335.19  
**\$ TO MEET BUDGET:** 10,262.01  
**\$ DIFFERENCE:** -5,926.82  
**WEEKLY AVERAGE ATTENDANCE:** 60

### **FOR THE YEAR 2025**

**YTD \$ CONTRIBUTIONS:** 101,688.38  
**YTD \$ TO MEET BUDGET:** 123,144.12  
**YTD \$ DIFFERENCE:** -21,455.74

**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.

[www.lpbethel.org](http://www.lpbethel.org)  
[www.facebook.com/lpbethel](https://www.facebook.com/lpbethel)

**CONNECTED!**  
**DON'T FORGET TO STAY**

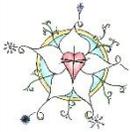
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**PASTOR**  
REV. MOLLY WILLS

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**OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR**  
TAMIE

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**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE