

Bethel Lutheran Church

Rev. Molly Wills, Pastor | Jan Smith, Accompanist
Second Sunday of Christmas | Sunday, January 4, 2026
ACS Holy Communion Setting 11

Bethel's 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.

Welcome! We're glad you're here!

If you are new to Bethel, here is some helpful information about worship services.

We use the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (red hymnal) and the supplement *All Creation Sings* (purple hymnal), which contain liturgy and hymns. Liturgy pages are at the front of each hymnal, with the page numbers at the bottom and in the bulletin as (red ELW p.) or (purple ACS p.) Hymn pages are in the back two-thirds of the hymnal, with the page numbers at the top and in the bulletin as (red hymnal #) or (purple hymnal #). The songs from the *Green Book* are in the bulletin as (green binder #). **Hearing assistive devices are available; speak to an usher for assistance.**

Spirit Art

A meditative study of scripture through art.

Ephesians 1:3-14



Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

MEDITATION TIME “O Come All Ye Faithful” arr. by Mary Parks Royal
 “Once in Royal David's City” arr. by Thomas Keesecker

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP SONG “Glory to God” (purple hymnal #911)

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Savior, Abiding Comforter. **Amen.**

Trusting in God’s steadfast love and faithfulness, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God, **we yearn for your presence to transform our grief, pain, and despair. We confess that we have not always prepared room in our hearts for your love; we have not always recognized your presence among us; and we have not always embraced your message of peace. We cry out, weary with the burden of violence, oppression, division, and fear. We confess our failure to make room for those seeking refuge; our participation in causing others pain; our reluctance to embody your good news. Overcome our failures and reluctance, be born in us today, and teach us to sing the joyful song of your salvation. Amen.**

God’s grace upon grace flows over us all and + Christ’s presence redeems the whole creation. Through God's abundant mercy, love, and salvation our sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad! **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG “When Long before Time” (red hymnal #861)

GREETING (purple ACS p. 12)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

KYRIE (purple ACS p. 12)

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (purple ACS p. 12)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace, empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Sirach 24:1-12

¹ Wisdom praises herself and tells of her glory in the midst of her people. ² In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth, and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory: ³ “I came forth from the mouth of the Most High and covered the earth like a mist. ⁴ I encamped in the heights, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud. ⁵ Alone I compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depths of the abyss. ⁶ Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway. ⁷ Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose inheritance should I abide? ⁸ “Then the

Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator pitched my tent. He said, 'Encamp in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.' ⁹ Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be. ¹⁰ In the holy tent I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion. ¹¹ Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my domain. ¹² I took root in an honored people; in the portion of the Lord is my inheritance."

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Wisdom 10:15-21 (responsive reading)

¹⁵ A holy people and blameless race; wisdom delivered from a nation of oppressors.

¹⁶ **She entered the soul of a servant of the Lord, and withstood dread kings with wonders and signs.**

¹⁷ She gave to holy people the reward of their labors; she guided them along a marvelous way,

and became a shelter to them by day, and a starry flame through the night.

¹⁸ She brought them over the Red Sea, and led them through deep waters;

¹⁹ **but she drowned their enemies, and cast them up from the depth of the sea.**

²⁰ Therefore the righteous plundered the ungodly; they sang hymns, O Lord, to your holy name, and praised with one accord your defending hand;

²¹ **for wisdom opened the mouths of those who were mute, and made the tongues of infants speak clearly.**

SECOND READING: John 1:1-18

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (purple ACS p. 14)

GOSPEL: Ephesians 1:3-14 The holy gospel according to Ephesians. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY "In a Deep, Unbounded Darkness" (purple hymnal #1093)

NICENE CREED (purple ACS p. 16)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION Hear us O God. **Your mercy is great.**

PEACE The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING "In the Bleak Midwinter" (red hymnal #294, verse 3)

OFFERING PRAYER

Lord of abundance, we return to you a portion of what you have given to us. Turn us to set our hope not on the uncertainty of riches, but on you, who richly provides for us. Multiply what we have gathered to bless all who are suffering and in need, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING (purple ACS p. 20)

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

PREFACE

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (purple ACS p. 20)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE (purple ACS p. 21)

Holy God, you alone are holy,...with every breath. **We praise you, O God.**

Generations rejoice in your faithfulness...into the future. **We rejoice in you, O God.**

We give you thanks...with us now. **We thank you, O God.** In the night...proclaim the mystery of faith: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

We pray for the gift of your Spirit...without end. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (purple ACS p. 24)

COMMUNION

COMMUNION SONG (purple ACS p. 25)

SONG DURING COMMUNION "He Comes to Us as One Unknown" (red hymnal #737)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

May the triune God, glorious Mystery, holy Incarnate One, abiding Comforter, + bless you with endless grace, peace, and joy. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG "He Came Down" (red hymnal #253)

DISMISSAL Glory to God in the highest! **And peace to God's people on earth!**
Embody God's redeeming grace. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE "Love Has Come" arr. by Thomas Keesecker

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NEXT SUNDAY'S READINGS: Is 60:1-6; Ps 72:1-7, 10-14; Eph 3:1-12; Matt 2:1-12

This week at Bethel

Sunday, January 4, 2026 (2 Christmas)

- Worship: 9:00 a.m.
- Intergenerational Sunday school: following worship

Wednesday, January 7

- Bible study: 11:30 a.m.
- Quilting: 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Choir practice: 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, January 10 (Annual Financial reports due)

Sunday, January 11 (Epiphany)

- Worship: 9:00 a.m.
- Sunday school & Intergenerational Sunday school: following worship

QUESTIONS OR REQUESTS? Contact the church office at 320-395-2125 or bethellutheranlp@gmail.com. If you need emergency pastoral care, please call Pastor Molly Wills at 320-339-8169 or email her at pastor@lpbethel.org.

ADDRESS: 77 Lincoln AVE N, Lester Prairie, MN 55354, (Mailing USPS: PO Box 207)

WEBSITE: www.lpbethel.org | **FACEBOOK:** www.facebook.com/lpbethel

BULLETIN SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Wednesday at noon

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: 25th of the month

VANCO GIVING: Scan the QR code or visit www.lpbethel.org

under the "Give" section, or complete an application and submit it to the church office.

TEXT GIVING: To give, text dollar amount to **866-298-7547**



| 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 |

Announcements and Upcoming Events

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

Twenty-two boxes of granola/protein bars were collected and delivered from Bethel 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! Our plan for 2026 is to continue collecting granola and protein bars. Each month, a team from Bethel will also continue to pack the Weekend School bags for our local school!
- “WOMEN IN THE BIBLE”- A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN IN JANUARY!**

All women are invited and encouraged to attend 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 any questions, please ask Jan Smith. (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.
- NOMINATION COMMITTEE SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR 2026 ELECTION:** Open positions include **Congregation Council:** Vice-President, Finance Board, and Education Board (all 2-year terms). *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 Committee 3-year terms/*need one*; Audit 3-year term/*need one*; Nominations Committee 1-year terms/*need four*; Representatives for ELCA Synod Assembly, June 5-6, 2026/*ideally one male and one female*. Contact Peggy Wick, Ron Foust, Cathy Houg, Emily Koehler, or Tamie Foust with questions or if you’re interested in volunteering.
- 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.
- SAVE THE DATE:** Bethel’s Annual Congregational meeting will be on Sunday, January 25, immediately following the worship service. Please make every attempt to attend this important meeting for our congregation.

Thank you to those serving today!

GREETER:

ALTAR GUILD: Helland family

CANDLELIGHTER: Etta & Adderley Helland

COMMUNION ASSISTANT: Adderley Helland

USHER: Helland family

LECTOR: Etta Helland

COFFEE:

TREATS:

Serving next Sunday, January 11

GREETER:

ALTAR GUILD:

CANDLELIGHTER:

COMMUNION ASSISTANT:

USHER: Ron Foust

LECTOR:

COFFEE:

TREATS:

Ways to Participate in Sunday Morning Worship

You can serve with family, friends, or on your own—no experience is necessary!

A **Greeter** welcomes every member and guest at the front door. This role involves making introductions, assisting those with full hands, providing directions, extending invitations, and sharing a warm smile. For questions, please call Ron Foust at 612-201-2351.

An **Usher** greets people at the sanctuary door, lights the candles before the service, distributes bulletins, informs parents about our nursery, collects offerings, guides individuals to communion, answers questions as they arise, and provides a welcoming and helpful presence for both members and guests! For questions, please call the office at 320-395-2125.

A **Lector** is responsible for reading scripture lessons during worship services. Occasionally, you may also be asked to assist with other parts of the service, such as reading prayers or liturgy. For questions, please call Cathy Houg at 320-282-2152.

A **Worship Assistant** helps the pastor during the service, primarily assisting with communion and baptisms. For questions, please call Pastor Molly at 320-339-8169.

The Altar Guild prepares the sanctuary for worship by arranging the sacraments, filling candles, and changing altar cloths. For questions, please call Judy Angvall at 612-501-3233.

Sign up to **Light the Altar Candles** before the worship service. During the Advent season, there are opportunities to light candles for the Advent wreath each week. For questions, please call Pastor Molly at 320-339-8169.

All sign-up sheets are on the bulletin board in the narthex, outside the sanctuary.

Other ways to participate: You could provide special music, offer flowers to decorate the sanctuary, deliver a children's message, or join the Worship & Music Committee. Contact the office if you need more information.

We welcome volunteers of all ages and look forward to your involvement!

Together, we can fulfill our mission and ministry!

CHURCH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: (2 yr. term) David Gohl
952-358-0201; david.g.m.gohl@gmail.com

Vice-President: (1 yr. term) Peggy Wick
612-499-0186; sully72828@gmail.com

Council Secretary: (2 yr. term) Julie Hanson
320-485-7870 or 612-396-8038; j3hanson@tds.net

Treasurer: (1 yr. term) Jill Duncan
320-420-6284; treasurer@lpbethel.org

Financial Secretary: (2 yr. term) Stacy Meyer
320-620-1040; finsec@lpbethel.org

CHURCH COUNCIL BOARD MEMBERS

Trustee Board: (1 yr. term) Jeff Hanson
320-485-7870 or 612-396-8374; j3hanson@tds.net

Trustee Board: (2 yr. term) Bryon Weisenburger
320-282-4747; bryonw@usa.com

Finance Board: (1 yr. term) Mitch Overbye
952-237-3320; moverbye8@yahoo.com

Finance Board: (2 yr. term) Sara Jepsen
605-760-0685; candsjepsen@gmail.com

Education Board: (1 yr. term) Pete Hallberg
507-430-8609; phallberg58@icloud.com

Education Board: (2 yr. term) Katie Radtke
952-215-6878; gemini.radtke@gmail.com

