

PASTOR'S PAGE

"Come, thou Long Expected Jesus"

ELW #254

For children, December is probably the longest month of the year. The anticipation of Christmas and Santa, snow and winter break, a new year in the offing. They long for Christmas to come, the presents, the family visits, the cookies!

For adults, December is probably the quickest month of the year. All the things to be done before Christmas arrives, the shopping, baking, card writing, present wrapping, finding the perfect gift for others. So much is packed into the month and suddenly, it's Christmas.

For Christians, December is the build up to Christmas, but it is also the long nights waiting the coming of the Christ child. It is a time to prepare ourselves for the child to be born among us. We are filled with hope that this child will change our world. We are as filled with awe as the story unfolds before us each week.

For some, this is the hardest time of the year. A loved one is no longer there, a job change, a loss of a home, aging, loneliness sets in and the nights are dark and often cold. A blue Christmas is not just an old Elvis song, it may be the song of some people's holidays.

There is so much packed into this month! There are so many expectations or implied things we 'need' to get done. Advent provides us a space to take a breath, to breathe deeply into the story of the baby to come. For a brief time we can put aside our to-do lists and just relax in God's presence. We can light candles to breach the darkness, we can slowly decorate or make special moments/traditions with our families. We look outside of ourselves and see those who are lonely, lost, sad, who need extra help and care in this season.

I encourage you to do one thing to help someone else this Advent season. A gift to the food shelf, or Project Love, a surprise gift to a neighbor, a Christmas card to someone far away or to a military member. When we look beyond ourselves we make a dif-

ference. Take the time to share and teach your children to share as well. As we wait, we can touch and change another person's life.

Advent Blessings,

Pastor Lori

ADVENT BEGINS

As Advent begins on November 30, you will see some changes to things at worship. We will be doing a liturgy that is sung to Christmas carols, same tunes, different words. We will also have Communion every Sunday in Advent and will be doing it in a different way. Instead of you picking up empty cups and having the deacon pour the wine, the cups will be filled and you will pick up a cup that has wine or grape juice in it after you receive the bread. It will take some getting used to, but hopefully in the four weeks of Advent we can get used to something new!



CHURCH WORK DAY

On December 6th, beginning at 9 AM, we will have a work/project day at the church and parsonage. Some projects include cleaning up landscaping at the parsonage, parsonage basement needs cleaning following remodel of the bathroom. Along with a few lighting, plaster and carpet trim installation at the church—supplies for these projects are available at the church. See one of the trustees or Randy Beyer for more information.



SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The Sunday School children will be front and center at worship on December 14th with their Christmas program. Please come and support them that day and join us for a meal after worship.

PROJECT LOVE

Project Love reaches out to those in need over the holidays, providing food, paper products, gifts and help for those who may not have as much in our area. If you know of someone who could use a helping hand, please let Missy Seachris know. This year we have been asked to provide paper products - paper towels, toilet paper, Kleenex, napkins, paper plates. You may bring your donations to church and leave them in the narthex in the designated container.

FOOD SHELF DONATIONS



Please bring in your donations for the food shelf in December. They can always use protein sources, beans, tuna, peanut butter, as well as soup, chili and canned meals. Instant oatmeal, cereal, rice, pasta are all great things as well. You may also bring in personal care items, like soap, deodor-

ant, tooth paste, feminine hygiene products, shampoo or paper products. Leave your donations under the tree in the narthex. Thanks for your help!

½ PRICE MEAL AT GENERATIONS

Beginning in December, Bethlehem will be sponsoring a ½ price meal one day a month at Generations in Luverne. This is a new ministry we are trying out and encourage you to participate by making reservations for the meal the day we are sponsoring. Watch the Rock County Star Herald or Announcer for more information and we will let you know in the Sunday bulletins. You can also get the meal to go if you don't want to eat at Generations. They encourage you to call ahead. Call Pam at (507)283-9846, ext. 11. Thanks to the Council for being willing to try something new in helping those in need in our community.

POINSETTIAS

We are again asking for your donations of poinsettias to help decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. If you donate one or more, please let the office know if they are in memory or in honor of someone. We ask that you bring them after the Christmas Program on the 14th. Please take your plant home with you after worship on Christmas Eve and enjoy it in your home for the holidays.



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Christmas Eve worship with carols, communion and candlelight will be December 24th. The Tuff Home service will be at 2:00pm and the service at Bethlehem is at 5:00pm. Plan to join us for this service as we celebrate the birth of Jesus together.

LESSONS & CAROLS

Pastor Lori will be on vacation after Christmas, so December 28th, will be a service of Lessons and Carols. Come and join in singing your favorite Christmas songs that day before we put them away for another year. Questions, talk to a Deacon.

PICTURE DIRECTORY

The new directory is out. We hope that you enjoy seeing the pictures and updated information for everyone. If you submitted a picture and it does not appear in the directory, we apologize. We did not have control of that portion of putting the directory together. We hope you will enjoy seeing our growing families! If you haven't picked up your directory, it will likely be mailed to you in the near future.

FROM THE BOARDS:

Trustees: Church Work Day on December 6. Meal after the Sunday School program

Deacons: Services for December 28 and January 4.

Board of Education: Sunday School Christmas program December 14. No Sunday School on December 21-January 4. Trunk or Treat event was successful with approximately 110 children in attendance.

FALL FESTIVAL WRAP UP

Many thanks to all who participated in making the fall festival a success. Many of you made the frozen meals, baked pies and/or baked goods, canned, made jam and spent many hours prepping for the event. The most important part of the fall festival is the working together as a congregation. There was time for fellowship, laughter and sharing with the community. We are thankful for all the planning work done by Dawn Sandager, Nancy Sandager, Pam Sells, Glenda Warner and Wanda Hoyme. Between the bake sale and donations for the meal we took in \$5909.25. This money will go to youth and mission projects. Great job and thanks to all who participated by serving, setting up, cleaning up and making sure food was distributed to those who could not be in attendance.

The Quilters had a great night as well. They sold 17 quilts and took in \$595.00!

Congratulations to Drew Spykerboer who won the GMC Jimmy we raffled off! He and his brother purchased a large number of tickets and were pleased that they won! Thanks to Randy Warner for finding a vehicle for us to raffle off and all who sold tickets! The raffle netted \$ 15,650, which goes to the general fund.

Thanks to everyone who helped in any way. This could not happen without all of you! Together we made this all happen and there were many compliments from those who gathered. Great job, everyone!

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

We are hoping to launch a prayer list, which will encourage us to pray for one another, our families or friends. You are invited to fill out a prayer request form and drop it in the offering plate, send a text or email to the church office with the name and need for prayer, or talk to Brenda or Pastor Lori about a prayer concern. You may include people that you know in the community, or friends or family from far away. We will publish this list, maybe through an email and invite you to spend at least 10 minutes each month, praying for those in need of healing, hope or consolation. Prayer request notes are available by the offering plates on Sunday mornings. You do not have to include last names, or detailed requests. You may just say something like, Scott dealing with depression, or Joe with cancer diagnosis. Or it could be good news too, like a baby birth or a new home, new job or retirement! By lifting up one another in prayer we share the burden and trust them into God's hands for healing.

BUILDING UPDATES:

Just a reminder if you host an event in the basement, please check out the list of things to do before you leave the basement, particularly in the kitchen. Some of them are common sense, like wiping off the counters, but some are reminders so that things will be clean for the next use. Thanks!

We are working on the screen issue and have a plan in the works. The updated system should be installed the first week in December, in time for the Sunday School Christmas program! The current, working screen will be moved to the back of the sanctuary, so those up front can see it as well.

Progress continues on the youth rooms downstairs. Tentative plans to finish by the end of winter/beginning of spring.

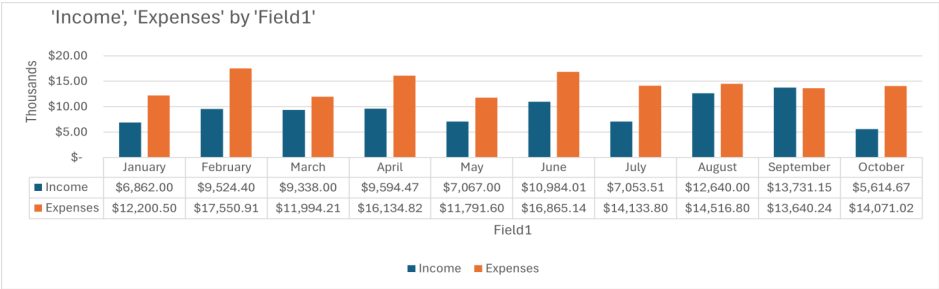
JOYS AND CONCERNS

- + Karen Soehl had surgery on October 31 and had complications with it. She is back at home after nearly 2 weeks in the hospital. She will undergo another procedure on her eyes mid December. Please continue to hold her in your prayers.
- + Doug Boeve spent a lot of October/November in and out of the hospital. He continues to fight cancer. Please keep him in your prayers.
- + Addison Swenson is still in the NICU, but continues to grow and thrive. Please keep the entire family in your prayers as she continues to grow.
- + Mahlon Bekedam is awaiting a heart transplant and is living close to Mayo in Rochester as he waits. Please keep him in your prayers as he anxiously awaits the transplant.
- + Starla Scholten is battling cancer and could use our prayers.
- + Oops! We forgot Paul Page as one of our firefighters. We apologize. Thanks for your work!
- + Congratulations to the Football team and their trip to State! Auston Olson is on the team and Dalton Bass is one of the coaches.
- + Congratulations to the following students named to the first quarter honor roll: A Honor Roll: Mya Erickson, Abigail Harris, Abigayl Olson, Hadley Spath, Haven Kerkove-Brandt, Karissa Kerkhove-Brandt, and Auston Olston. B Honor Roll: Reagan Spath, Jacquelyn Chapman, Raylan Leuthold and Remington Seachris. Great job everyone!
- + Thank You to Ben Sheppard who has allowed us to use his photos of the Northern Lights with the church in the foreground. They are great pictures and now highlight our Facebook page. We appreciate his willingness to share.
- + Thanks to Doug Chapman for repairing the outside light. It's good to have more outside light as the nights grow longer and darker. Thanks to Joel Farrell for helping replace the burned out light bulb in the sanctuary. More light is great!

- + Just a Word: If you are hospitalized, it is helpful if you let the church office know, or have a family member contact us. We want to care for you, but we cannot do that if we do not know what is happening. Thanks for communicating!
- + Thanks to Charlie, Dawn and Lucas Sandager for trimming the bushes at the church before winter sets in!
- + Thanks to Mike Spath for clearing the leaves!
- + Remember to recycle your bulletins on Sunday mornings. We also recycle bottles and cans, so if you are drinking water or so-da, please recycle those items. This applies to the basement as well as the main floor!

OCTOBER STATISTICS

Income \$5,614.67 Expenses: \$14,071.02



YTD Net Income/Loss: **-\$50,976.53**

****Break even for budget requires income of \$16,208 per month.**

As we near the end of the year, please remember to give a gift to the church this Christmas. Also, if you want/need a tax write off, all offerings must be recorded by December 31st. Thanks to all who have supported our congregation financially over this past year. Your gifts are very much appreciated!



1- Haven Kerkhove-Brandt

2- Ron Solberg

4- Joshua Kueter

Molly Hoogendoorn

5- Brad Haak

7- Hadley Spath

10- Wanda Hoyme

11- Nicholas Sandager

12 - Otto Nelson

Holly Metzer

16- Douglas Heintzman

17 - Destiny Brandenburg

Alyson Olson

18 - Juanita Parker

22- Maggie Hecht

25 - ***Happy Birthday Jesus***

27 - Maci Ellingson

28- Dalton Bass

Anna Hoogendoorn

29 - Enid Wertish

30- Myles Bass

LOOKING AHEAD

Annual meeting is scheduled for January 25, 2026, immediately following the church service. Reminder to boards to get your yearly report submitted to the office as soon as you are able.

Bingo night coming February 7, 2026! Everyone is welcome.



Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year
from the

Bethlehem Lutheran Church staff.

Pastor Lori Bonkoski

Brenda Beyer

Randy Beyer

Glenda McGaffee

BETHELMHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER—December 2025 edition

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3 9 - Quilting	4	5	6 9-Project Day
7 9 – Tuff Service with communion 9— Sunday School 9– Board of Trustees Mtg 10- BLC Service with communion	8	9	10 9 - Quilting	11	12	13 2-5—Holiday Fest at Hugo gymnasium hosted by HBCS. Community movie at 5:30
14 9 – Tuff Service 10 – BLC Service- SS Christmas Program	15	16	17 9 - Quilting	18	19	20
21 9 – Tuff Service 9– NO Sunday School 10- BLC Service with communion	22	23	24 2– Tuff Service 5--BLC Service	25 Christmas Day (office closed)	26	27
				Pastor Lori on vacation		
28 9 – Tuff Service 9– NO Sunday School 10- BLC Service	29	30	31 9 - Quilting			
Pastor Lori on vacation						