



Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church and School is a community of sinners trusting in the forgiveness given by the crucified and risen Christ, offering peace, joy, stability, and purpose to a despairing and chaotic world by sharing this gospel through our words and deeds.

The Bethlehem STAR June/July 2024

Dear Bethlehem,

I LOVE Summer! The Lord provides so many opportunities for rest and refreshment for me (and for many of you) that are not always available other times of year.

Now that school's out of session, my wife and I don't have to worry about getting our kids out the door by 6:45am for high school or by 7:45am for elementary school. During the summer, I don't have to wake up by 5:30am just to squeeze in some PT (exercise) before the day starts. I look forward to "sleeping in" till 6:00am on weekdays. My calendar contains less regularly scheduled classes and meetings—which means I have more flexible time for other things—visits on members, shut-in calls, filing papers which I dropped in a hurry to get to something else, long-term planning, Scripture reading, reading books, family time, and the like.

If your personal and professional schedules don't allow rest and refreshment during the summer, I pray that you relish the season when you're allowed extra time to recharge! Though, regardless of the season which allows you time to recharge, we all have at least ONE day to recharge every week—Sunday. We find our rest in Jesus! In His word. In His presence. In His Supper. In His declaration of absolution. Make sure to keep this day holy, set apart, for worship and Bible Study. This is important for you in your busy seasons of life and in your less structured seasons of life. Traveling over the summer? Don't forget to plan your worship—search for an LCMS church (lcms.org), top right corner—click on "Locators." Pro tip: It is best to search by Zip code and give a mile radius.

During the summer, my plan is to work on the following:

Finish the end of year items for Bethlehem Lutheran School.

Finish my youth catechism instruction binders which contain all my lesson plans, memory work quizzes, and assignments.

Clean up my study.

Increase visitation of members.

Execute the implementation of the Strategic Ministry Plan.

Let me focus on this last bullet point. We have spent a lot of time and effort on the Ministry Clarity process over the last 20 months. The committees have solicited a lot of thoughtful feedback. Now, it's time to get going. But I need your help. Be ready to say "yes" when asked to serve, especially in one of three ways:

1. Currently, many boards and officer positions are vacant. We are looking to fill these positions in particular: treasurer, secretary, and 1-2 more members for the Board of Evangelism, Board of Parish Fellowship, Board of Young People's Activity, and Board

of Church Property. If you are interested, contact me or congregational president, Brett Fiepke, before June 9.

2. If you feel serving in a two-year official capacity is not for you, I need 4 individuals who can serve for one year to monitor and hold the congregation accountable for making progress on the Strategic Ministry Plan—one person to facilitate the goals for the Worship pillar, one for Education, one for Service, and one for Missions.
3. Each pillar will have various projects to work on—be ready to say “yes” and help our congregation achieve its goals when the time comes to complete certain tasks.

*Your dear pastor,
Pastor Keith Witte*



Bethlehem Lutheran School will once again have a float in the Fairborn Fourth of July Parade. It will be a busy weekend, with float assembly on the weekend of June 29—30. The times are to be determined. If you want to participate in the parade and help hand out the goodies, please meet at the Fairborn Plaza by 9:30 am on Tuesday, July 4th and find our float.



Vacation Bible School June 3-7, 9 am—noon

Vacation Bible School this year is from 9 am to noon on Monday through Friday, June 3-7. Register with the QR code or website below. All children from potty trained three year olds to just having finished grade 5 are welcome to come and hear about God’s Living Water. Join us for Bible stories, games and crafts.

Voters' Assembly in person and virtually



The Voters' Assembly will meet on Sunday, June 9th at 4 pm in the Fellowship Hall and on Zoom.

The zoom meeting information is:

885 2153 0033 on the app or <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88521530033> on the computer.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



June 3-June 7 2024

**REGISTER
TODAY**



<https://forms.gle/qbjmfYqQVkp76sKA>

<https://sites.google.com/view/2024bethlehemvbs>

Bethlehem Lutheran Church and School (BLCaS) Strategic Plan

Worship

Aspirational Target: Every person that comes to Bethlehem Lutheran Church will be intentionally included in every worship service, from toddlers to Golden Agers.

Once a quarter, the Sunday school will intentionally support the worship service with Pastor beginning in the first quarter of 2024.

Identify and schedule which Sunday each quarter the Sunday school children will support, deciding three months ahead.

Pastor and elders identify the parts of the service that the kids can help with in an appropriate way.

Sunday school teachers will help each age group with age-appropriate tasks.

Ushers will train/mentor children of catechism age and above on how to do those jobs.

Once per quarter (on a 5th Sunday when appropriate), Bethlehem reinstates Matins Sunday where every member is encouraged to invite their non-Lutheran family and/or friends (with the goal of 12 being present) beginning in June 2024.

Pastor (and Elders) determine what an appropriate order of service is for such a service.

Develop and distribute postcard-sized invitation cards to members that they can then hand out with information about this service.

Develop and distribute postcard-sized invitation cards to members that they can then hand out with information about all services.

Upgrade technology in the building to make the Wifi signal strong and reliable so that anyone in the sanctuary, in the building, or unable to attend, has full access to all services (and Bible study events) by the 24-25 school year.

A three-person committee will be established to take an inventory of what technology we currently use and how it's configured.

Form a new board as part of the PPC responsible for technology (to include social media, website, physical tech in the building, etc), and for aiding in training those who aren't tech-savvy and dissemination of info on how to access our services.

Investigate Listen Everywhere app.

Every other week, Bethlehem will offer a full divine service on a day and time other than Sunday morning by the end of 2028.

Write and distribute a survey about congregation needs and what time and day of week would be best—if needed.

Call a second pastor if needed (See also Service Pillar Goal 1).

Education

Aspirational Target: Bethlehem Lutheran Church and School will have Bible-centered educational opportunities for every member, and everyone attends to learn and grow in grace knowledge.

1. By September, 2024, Bethlehem will have a minimum of four Fellowship Groups that adequately represent the needs of the congregation
 - a. Parish Fellowship Board will host a Fellowship Group Sunday (during a Sunday with Fellowship Coffee) to discuss small group Bible Study opportunities.
 - b. Organize the date with Pastor.
 - c. Coordinate and begin talking with the existing group leaders to talk at Fellowship Group SundayOrganize fellowship groups under Parish Fellowship (or similar) to make sure they are functioning properly and have what they need.

2. By September 2025, have 1-3 additional official small group Bible Studies with 5 people in each besides Sunday morning.
 - a. Identify 1-3 leader candidates.
 - b. Pastor or called church worker trains and oversees leaders on facilitating Bible Studies.
 - c. Identify topics or age groups for Bible Studies from church and school.
 - d. Communicate dates and times of Bible Studies to congregation and school.Coordinate all official small group studies so that communication about all of them is consistent.

3. Create strategies and procedures that will lead to an enrollment of 145 students in the school by the 2025-2026 school year.
 - a. Increase marketing for the school.
 - b. Increase awareness of scholarships available for students.Increase awareness of Bethlehem Lutheran School in the community.

Service

Aspirational Target: Every member of BLCaS will use their time, gifts, and abilities to joyfully serve our congregation and community.

Work toward calling another pastor who has training and passion for the areas of outreach and ministry to facilitate service within and between the church, school, and community by the end of 2028.

Hire, per guidance from finance sub-committee, a part-time assistant to the pastor for the areas of outreach and ministry by Fall of 2024.

Pray for the Lord of the Harvest to provide workers for the fields, including at Bethlehem.

Start a capital campaign to fund future ministry position(s) at BLCaS.

2026: PPC will review congregational needs and resources to determine next steps.

By the end of 2024, a Task force of Church members and interested school parents will have completed an analysis of needs in our congregation, school, and community that our church can intentionally pursue to fill these needs and become more known for serving our community.

Publicize the intention to pursue analysis.

Church Leadership researches best way to serve congregation, school, and community through a survey, poll, interview process.

Get volunteers to help with data acquisition.

Volunteers compile lists and find common service opportunities (needs).

Develop and maintain a Service Needs Database based on survey responses.

Prioritize needs and decide which are viable services our church can provide.

Teams are developed who implement service targets.

Goals, opportunities, wins shared with congregation through bulletin, website, newsletter

Relationships are developed with area newspaper, chamber, city, to share what we are doing.

Hold a service fair at the church in Sept 2024 which highlights our service opportunities and allows congregants to discuss what needs/opportunities exist and to sign up either to help or to gain further information outside of the fair. Attendance goal is 150 with an end-result goal of 20 new volunteers.

Develop a committee to organize the fair.

Invite current church boards to set up a booth highlighting their board, its mission, and what assistance they require.

Before the fair, ask church members to fill out a survey about their talents and interests so that the committee can help direct people to appropriate service opportunities on the day of the fair.

Develop and maintain a Member Abilities and Talents database based on survey responses.

Develop a team to publicize the event-personal invites, church bulletin, Bethlehem Star, One Call Now, Bible study announcements, church mailboxes.

Form a committee to target the youth.

Have child care and fun for the kids at the fair.

Have refreshments and fun, promotional give-aways.

Follow up with a feedback survey of those who attend on what changes they would like to see in future service fairs.

Gather the committee members together after the fair for an after action review. By the 24-25 school year, Bethlehem will have an improved website to communicate to our church and the community clearly who we are in Christ, what we have done, doing, and will do. This website will allow a platform to celebrate our successes, communicate upcoming service events and opportunities to serve, and invite others to our fellowship.

Church leadership will oversee research of multiple website platforms/apps to consider for price, abilities, ease of use.

Develop content for website (Service Events, Calendar, worship/study content).

Organize team to update and monitor site.

Keep fresh with updated content.

Missions

Aspirational Target: Every member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church and School shares the gospel with their family, neighbors, community, and the world.

Educate and equip 100 members to become confident in sharing the Gospel with others by means of studies such as “Every One His Witness” or catechism within the next three years.

Recruit 10 members to act as mentors.

Have a 6 week Bible-based training class (mentors will attend with trainees).

Have a 3 month practice time (after class is completed) where trainees and mentors work together to share the Gospel.

Work with Pastor and Elders to develop a list of members, shut ins and recent visitors to the church and school to visit.

By 2025, Organize and offer Church and School combined activities at least four times a year centered around sharing the gospel (specific bible message or theme), with at least 3 households from both church and school in attendance.

Appoint a committee to plan group dinners, picnics, or other activities.

Recruit people to host each of these activities.

Encourage church members to use these opportunities to share the Gospel with school families

Publicize each activity in church and school publications.

Twice a year beginning in 2024, hold two events that spotlight world missions; one event will be focused on missions already supported by Bethlehem (Haiti, Chis Pluger in Ethiopia, Erin Mackenzie in Latin America, etc.), and one event will focus on world missions supported by the LCMS and/or the LWML.

Recruit two people to heads up these events that could be presented in Bible class and/or at other appropriate times.

Recruit volunteers to gather information on current things happening in the locations that pertain to any of the above areas including success stories, needs, and cultural information.

Recruit volunteers to create flyers, bulletin inserts, etc.

Work with school to coordinate mission visits and support as schedule allows.



PRINCIPAL'S PAGE

Greetings in the name of our Ascended Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We are officially finished with the school year! We follow the example of Jesus from Luke 2:52, *“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”* It is amazing to see how much students grow from August - May. We have amazing teachers who have worked hard with their students over the course of the year but we remember I Corinthians 6:6, *“I (Paul) planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.”* Thus, we thank God for the growth that all of our students have made in all areas.

I like to call May the “90 days of May” because we fit so many things into the month. We did all the things; teacher appreciation week, state testing, final field trips, a band concert, retirement celebrations, awards chapel, our nifty fifty celebration, field day, our final chapel, and Kindergarten and 8th grade graduations. All went well and were celebrated with family and friends. We have four students; Hannah Holzmann, Elizabeth Lindsey, Ava Ours, and Zechariah Smith joining the over eight hundred alumni of Bethlehem Lutheran School. We pray God’s blessings on their transition into high school.

We have three teachers who will be moving into new chapters of life this summer. Mrs. Johnson, who most recently taught sixth grade, is retiring after six years at Bethlehem. Mrs. Blackman, who most recently taught fourth grade, is retiring after fifteen years at Bethlehem. Ms. Ryan, who teaches first grade, will be getting married this summer and will return to us next year as Mrs. Brewer. We pray God’s blessings on each of these teachers and their transitions.

We still do lots of work over the summer. Mr. Crosby, Mr. Adams, and others work to deep clean the entire school facility and we have some special construction this summer that will result in a larger classroom for our sixth grade students. We are also using some grant money to purchase three Clevertouch boards that will be installed in classrooms (and the lunchroom) in August.

We are still accepting students for enrollment over the summer, so if you know anyone who would benefit from a Christ-centered education ages 3 - 8th grade, please either give us their contact information or have them contact the office.

Thank you for continually lifting up the students and staff at Bethlehem in prayer.

In His Service,

Mr. Ferguson

It has been a fabulous 2023 - 2024 sixth grade school year.

We read and packed our suitcases just like Bud in the book



Bud Not Buddy



We learned about our Solar System



We visited CoSi



We studied about the United States frontier and had our very own Trading Post where we bartered for items that were bought and sold on the frontier, and had S'mores



We learned, we played, we grew and we had a wonderful year.

Endowment Fund

In John 20:19, “Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’” The peace we have with God the Father through Jesus Christ is what makes a life of good works possible. Since we know that it is the risen Christ who saves us - and not our works - we are free to perform them for the right reasons rather than out of self-interest or because we think that it is our path to salvation. We do good works like taking care of our resources and our neighbors out of thanksgiving for all that God graciously gives us. Stewardship of all that we are given is an expression of being saved by grace, proper evidence of our salvation through Christ.

What an honor that God chose us to accomplish the work of His Church on Earth. As Chair of Bethlehem’s School Endowment Fund, I reflect on men that preceded me in this position, humble stewards like Bob Koogler, Gene Ninnemann and Tom Smith. They, along with other faithful individuals, created and managed these perpetual funds that will forever support the mission of God’s Church through the school. Thank you, gentlemen, for all that you’ve done to steward our donors’ gracious gifts.

Beyond our regular tithes and offerings, consider leaving a greater legacy through a gift to the Bethlehem Lutheran School Endowment Fund. An endowment fund is an investment portfolio where the original gift/principal largely remains untouched while only the income generated from the investment may be spent. That interest is used to meet financial needs each year in accordance with the fund’s spending criteria (as set forth by the donor (s)). Endowments accomplish their good work in perpetuity.

In honor of Bethlehem Lutheran School’s 25th anniversary, a generous family from our congregation has pledged to match every dollar given to the school endowment fund up to \$20,000. In other words, you can increase your gift’s impact by essentially doubling every dollar that you give to the fund. You can also receive a tax deduction with a gift* - or bypass tax considerations entirely by giving from your IRA required minimum distribution or other assets. Please contact Art Casci or myself ((c) 937-681-5968) if you are interested in celebrating the school’s milestone by making a gift to the school’s endowment fund. Every gift, whether an outright gift made today or a future gift made as part of your estate plans, will make a difference to the students, faculty, and staff of our school.

We are stewards of all that we have – everything comes from God. Thank you for considering a special gift to the Bethlehem Lutheran School endowment fund in honor of the school’s silver anniversary.

Chris Nelson

Chair, Bethlehem Lutheran School Endowment Fund

**This does not constitute tax advice. Please consult your advisor and your personal situation before considering a special gift.*

A letter from Art Casci in response to our previous Voters Meeting
and Town Hall Meeting discussions.

Dear Saints of Bethlehem,

History reports that when St. John was in his later years, he would be carried into the church service and would say, “Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God.”

Tonight, I feel a bit like John and like John I want to say loudly “beloved let us love one another for love is of God.” It begins with the Holy Spirit words that “God is love.” Love is the one all-encompassing attribute of God. It is His nature. The Holy Trinity deeply loves each other. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have shared love for all eternity. It is no surprise then that Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you.” We receive this love in Holy Baptism and our baptismal union with Jesus and the mystery of the indwelling Holy Spirit mean that we are partakers of the nature of God which is love. Paul underscores the primacy of this love by nearly quoting Jesus when he says, “Now abides faith, hope and love but the greatest of these is love.

In the last few months, we have had a discussion about the Lord’s Day service. It is certainly beneficial that from time to time we renew our understanding of the Lord’s Day. We should search the Scriptures, read our Lutheran Confessions and church history believing the Holy Spirit will lead and guide us.

Sadly, our flesh is at war with the Spirit and this war sometimes leads us to forget the new commandment “love one another as I have loved you.” It is a time for each of us to daily remember our Baptism and daily drown the old man in sorrow and repentance so that the new man might come forth and live before God. Each must earnestly expose our heart to the Holy Law of God and if anger or bitterness has taken root, ROOT IT OUT! Daily prayer, daily meditation on the WORD, regular attendance on Sunday are tools that will enable us to sacrificially love one another as Christ loved us. I have my internal wrestling over this discussion and I am at war in my being but pray the Lord to be merciful to me a sinner. With His help I pray I will act in love toward all of you whether you agree with me or not. As God is merciful, I will put the best construction on your words and actions and I pray you do the same for me and for all.

Like John I say, “beloved let us love one another. If I mean anything to you as your former pastor, I beg of you not let the evil one seize upon this discussion to divide us.

Finally, pray earnestly for our Pastor and the board of elders who are charged with overseeing our worship life. They have a difficult task. Let us not make it more difficult. The Gospel is being preached and the Sacraments are being administered. These gifts alone make us church and will cause us to love one another as He loves us.

Birthdays &



JUNE

Anniversaries

June Birthdays

Jonathan Fiene.....	3
Jacob Rhodes	
Anne Ausserer	5
Joseph Ausserer	
Molly Whitt	10
Jean Robinson.....	11
Laura Card	13
Kyla Miller	14
Kevin Green.....	16
Jamie Hensley.....	17
Alex Giese	21
Mike Hakala	25
Dalton Miller	29

June Anniversaries

Adam & Laura Card	7
Mike & Jane Jones	15
Richard & Lisa Thibeault.....	17
Tyler & Erika Ewing	20
Art & Joyce Casci	22
Steave & Beth Landon	



Dianah Williamson.....	1
Mira Sadowski	2
Jonathan Fiene	3
Raymond Saunders	
Kyla Miller	14
Annika Nelson	
Donna Oda	
Jennifer Ramsey	
Nathaniel Witte	
Tessa Card	17
Mary Smith	19
Charley Houck	27
Doris Humphreys	
Daniel Ausserer.....	28

Birthdays &



JULY

Anniversaries

July Birthdays

Jeff Ramsey	1
Helga Hemphill.....	2
Daylond Hooper	
Ezra Miller	3
Stellan Tangeman.....	4
Richard Thibeault	
Carol Bruesewitz	6
John Nowicki.....	12
Nathan Huffman	13
Brett Williamson	
Charleen Carlson	14
Devon Sadowski	
Aidan Fry.....	19
Christopher Ausserer	20
David Hemphill.....	21
Terri Thompson	
Dianah Williamson	
Pat Woodworth Green	22
Jim Hensley	23
Gregory Campbell.....	25
Eileen Hitzeman	29
Zoe Witte	30

July Anniversaries

Pastor & Alison Witte	2
Joe & Helga Clark	4
Jared & Kerri Johnson	10
Eric & Terri Thompson.....	12
Brett & Paula Fiepke	22



Jonathan Fiene

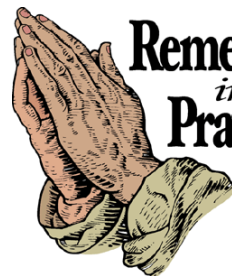
Matt Greggerson

Nesta Harris

Louise Hellickson

Doris Humphreys

Bob Koogler



**Remember
in
Prayer**

Ezra Miller

Jean Robinson

Marilyn Scheu

Elaine Schultz

Robyn Shipman

Alison Witte



Anne Ausserer	3
Elayna Humphreys	5
Emilie Humphreys	
Ezra Miller	
Gladys Zink	6
Kevin Green	8
Logan Green	
Jean Robinson	10
Richard Thibeault	11
Stellan Tangeman	13
Louise Hellickson.....	15
Jamie Hensley	17
Laura Card	18
Helga Hemphill	21
Otha Lowe.....	24
Phil Maffett	
Eileen Hitzeman	26
Aidan Fry	27
Julia Bell	29

The Bethlehem STAR

June/July 2024

Rev. Keith F. Witte

Bethlehem Lutheran Church & School

1240 S. Maple Avenue, Fairborn, OH 45324

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



INDEPENDENCE DAY

9:30 am
Fairborn Plaza

JOIN THE PARADE!

Address Correction Requested

Church Office

Phone: (937) 878-0651

FAX: (937) 878-4794

Email: bethlehem7@aol.com

Web Page—www.Bethlehem7.org

School Office

Phone: (937) 878-7050

Email: bethlehemschool@aol.com

Web Page—www.mybethlehemschool.com

Mr. Scott Ferguson, Principal

Mrs. Michelle Zulfer, Vice Principal

Sunday

Worship Services at 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

**Online: churchstreamer.org (live at 8 am service,
previously recorded services under "Live" tab)**

Sunday School & Bible Classes at 9:30 a.m.

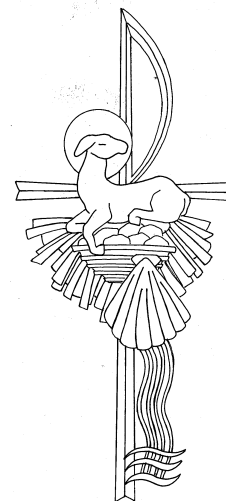
Wednesday

Bible Study at 9:30 a.m.

Chapel Matins Service at 8:45 a.m. (when school is in session)

Advent/Lenten Service at 7 pm

August 2024 issue deadline: Sunday, July 21st.



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