



The Bethlehem STAR

May 2025

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.

Jesus says, *“Whoever confesses Me before men, I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny before My Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 10:32-33, NKJV)

On May 4, we will celebrate Youth Confirmation. While Confirmation is not a sacrament or sacred rite commanded by Christ, it is closely tied to Christ’s gifts of baptism and the Lord’s Supper and the teaching of God’s Word. The very first question I ask our youth confirmands (and any adult who joins Bethlehem through confirmation, public affirmation of faith, or transfer) is this: “Do you this day in the presence of God and of this congregation acknowledge the gifts that God gave you in your Baptism?” (LSB 272)

I love this question. God has given all who have been confirmed excellent gifts in their baptism. The new birth of water and of the Spirit “works the forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this as the words and promises of God declare” (Small Catechism, Baptism, Second).

Confirmation recognizes the completion of the basic level of Christian instruction. Christ’s great commission includes two things for making disciples: baptizing and teaching. The baptizing has happened. The basic teachings from the Word of God summarized and presented in Luther’s Small Catechism have been taught and learned. For youth, this includes two years of instruction, complete with homework, memory work, projects, and examination. Of course, Catechism class doesn’t mark the end of our Christian instruction. We regularly review the catechism as a congregation in a question and answer format once a year, and one section at a time before Sunday School. Pre-marriage counseling is based on the small catechism. And whenever I offer an adult class, anyone is welcome to join as a “refresher.” Our ongoing instruction takes place in our daily devotions, weekly worship, and Bible Study attendance (small and large groups). This way, we are equipped to remain firm in the word and in faith until we die, according to the good and gracious will of God.

(continued on page 2)

Confirmation also looks forward to receiving the Lord's Supper at Bethlehem for the first time. Confirmation is the normal way that we affirm that we have been taught the Small Catechism and that we publicly confess that we adhere to its teachings, which is a key part of who should commune at Bethlehem.

This year, we celebrate the confirmation of 6 young people:

Kayden Leigh Baker started her instruction in our church catechism class and finished her instruction as a student at Bethlehem Lutheran School. Her confirmation verse is John 8:12: *Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life."*

Bradley William Hooper joined our school catechism class as a guest over the last 2 years. His confirmation verse is Matthew 7:12a. *Jesus says, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them."*

Elayna Kate Humphreys was catechized in our church class on Sundays after the 10:45 service. Her confirmation verse is Romans 1:16a. *I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.*

Victoria Diana Lindsey is a student at Bethlehem Lutheran School. Her confirmation verse is John 15:9-10. *Jesus says, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."*

Erik James Nelson joined our school catechism class as a guest over the last 2 years. His confirmation verse is Psalm 139:14. *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it well.*

Zoe Christine Witte is a student at Bethlehem Lutheran School. Her confirmation verse is Psalm 100:2-3. *Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

Looking to Jesus,

Pastor Chaplain Keith Witte





PRINCIPAL'S PAGE



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

As we step into the month of May, we celebrate the conclusion of our school year with gratitude and joy. This month is filled with opportunities to honor God's blessings and reflect on the wonderful journey we've had.

Teacher Appreciation Week (May 5th - 9th)



We take this time to express our heartfelt thanks to the incredible staff at Bethlehem. These devoted educators pour their hearts into their work daily, guiding our students to grow in grace and knowledge. We thank God for the gift of their dedication!

Spring Band Concert

Under the leadership of Mr. Beeker, our 4th-8th grade band will perform their spring concert on May 15th at 7 p.m. at Maple Heights Baptist Church. Join us to celebrate the beauty of music and the talent God has given these young musicians.



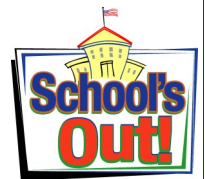
Baccalaureate Service



On May 18th at 3 p.m., we invite the entire congregation to join us in worship for our Baccalaureate service. This is a special time to rejoice in the gifts God has given to our graduates and reflect on how He has worked in their lives during their time at Bethlehem.

End-of-Year Celebrations

May 23rd marks a joyful day of milestones, including kindergarten graduation, 8th-grade graduation, and our final chapel service. We celebrate the journeys of these students as they prepare for their next steps in education and life. While we bid farewell to our 8th graders, we trust in God's presence as they embark on their high school journey.



Accreditation Update

With the completion of our Validation Team visit in April, we are excited to complete this step in the accreditation process. We will take some time to reflect on all that we accomplished this year through the creation of the self-study and the analysis of our school program. We will soon begin work on strengthening areas where we can improve student outcomes through our schoolwide action plan. Please keep our efforts in prayer as we continue to build upon this important work.



Staff Transitions

As the school year closes, we thank God for the faithful service of Mrs. Morley (IT specialist and middle school health), Mrs. Raby (3 year old and 4 year old preschool), Mrs. Weaver (K-5 reading tutor), Mrs. Kootstra (1-8 grade Spanish), and Mrs. Kearns (7th and 8th grade ELA and Social Studies) as they move into new chapters in their lives. We are grateful for their impact on our students and excited to welcome the newly hired staff who will carry forward Bethlehem's mission to help students grow in grace and knowledge.



We are deeply grateful for your continued prayers and support for our students and staff.

In His Service,

Mrs. Ferguson

NEWS from SIXTH GRADE

The sixth grade has enjoyed being in the spacious new classroom this year. It is particularly nice to have six windows! The students did their first history fair project and learned so much about research and time management. In math, we have moved on from arithmetic to more in depth



algebra and geometry. We will be working on statistical measures next. We are currently studying space in science and will soon be doing an escape room relating to this topic. The escape room will require students to use skills they have learned this year and use logic to unlock containers, solve puzzles and finally unlock the final cryptex. We have done two novel studies and some of the students commented how much they enjoyed reading the books. That's our goal!

Mrs. Strong



Vacation Bible School will be held this year from Monday, June 9—Friday, June 13 from 9 am to noon. We will learn how Jesus is with us throughout our lives: He calls, leads, teaches, saves and send us.

There will be a planning meeting on Sunday, May 18 at noon for all the volunteers and helpers. This will be in the Fellowship Hall.

The registration QR code is on the cover of the Star. Children ages 3 (and potty trained) through those who have just finished the fifth grade are welcome to come join us "down under."

If you have any extra ribbon, yarn or fabric that you don't like, we can use it in the crafts area. They are also collecting paper towel tubes. Please bring it in a bag marked for VBS. See Paula Fiepkke with questions.

Matthew 22 ³⁵ "...a lawyer, asked [Jesus] a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

I had always assumed that the lawyer in this passage was asking Jesus which of the Ten Commandments was the greatest. The fact that Jesus' response is often taught as a summary of the two tables of the commandments—loving God and loving neighbor—reinforced that belief. Since it's clear that neither of Jesus' responses are found within the Ten Commandments themselves, it is more likely that the lawyer was asking which of the 613 mitzvot—the commandments or religious obligations found throughout the Torah—was the greatest. Like all of the mitzvot, the Ten Commandments were considered divinely inspired but were not necessarily held in higher regard than the rest.

Exodus 10:28 and Deuteronomy 10:4 both refer to the decalogue—the "ten words" that God inscribed on the tablets given to Moses. The actual commandments appear in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, but, as convenient as it might have been, neither passage provides a numbered list. Traditional Jewish teaching identifies the "ten statements" as beginning with Exodus 20:2–3: "I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." The next statement forbids having other gods and includes the prohibition against making graven images. The list continues, culminating in the commandment not to covet.

Different traditions number these commandments in slightly different ways. We share the first commandment with the Eastern Christian and Reformed traditions—"You shall have no other gods." In those traditions, the second commandment explicitly forbids the making of graven images, and the tenth commandment encompasses all forms of coveting. While the ordering differs, the content remains consistent across Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and other Christian groups.

Unfortunately, the church in which I was raised didn't provide the youth catechism offered in the Lutheran church. I learned obedience to the commandments primarily through the lens of fear—fear of God's wrath, both temporal and eternal. God seemed like an authoritarian bully to me. My attitude toward the commandments started to change when my children left for college. I found myself wanting to send a list along with them—a guide for others on how these beloved kids of mine should be treated. That list, to my surprise, looked remarkably like the Ten Commandments. Jesus tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves—but what exactly does that look like? We live that out by keeping the commandments. We don't harm, exploit, or steal from others. We don't lie to them or about them. We don't covet what they have. Instead, we protect, honor, and respect them and what belongs to them, regardless of how we may feel about them.

The second table of the Ten Commandments is, in a real sense, God's list of instructions on how to treat the people He loves. And you will never in your life meet anyone whom God does not love—someone for whom Christ did not suffer and die. I used to think of obedience as a compulsory act of the Law, but I've come to realize that obeying God's commandments is actually how we fulfill the second greatest commandment: to love our neighbor as ourselves.

By His Grace,

Steve Fugate

Elder



May Birthdays

Sue Wolaver.....	1
Logan Green	2
Rick Thompson	5
Mira Sadowski	8
Mackenzie Elliot	9
Elaine Schultz	
Charles Giese	10
Gladys Zink.....	14
Annika Nelson	15
Chris Heed	20
Stella Holcombe	
Mary Smith	
Julia Bell	24
Steve Fugate	
Nathaniel Witte.....	29
Daniel Ausserer	30

May Anniversaries

Dave & Veronica Smith.....	9
Jack & Doris Humphreys	19
Chris & Maggie Nelson	22
Bill & Marilyn Scheu	
Jim & Charleen Carlson.....	25



Linda Hall.....	6
Erik Denlinger.....	10
Paul Thibeault	
Christian Huffman	12
Maggie Nelson	
Charleen Carlson	14
Chris Humphreys	
Tom Hitzeman	17
Jane Jones	18
Riley Zulfer	25

Jonathan Fiene

Matt Greggerson

Nesta Harris

Louise Hellickson

Doris Humphreys

Bob Koogler



Ezra Miller

Jean Robinson

Marilyn Scheu

Elaine Schultz

Robyn Shipman

Alison Witte

Pastor Witte will be spending time in Alabama (May 26th through June 20th) on duty with the Air Force. Pastor England will be handling the pulpit supply and teaching the Adult Bible Class.

Please contact Kevin Green (937-581-5160) or call the church office (937-878-0651) for any help you need.



LWML Spring Rally

Bethlehem will host the Miami Valley LWML Spring Rally on Saturday, May 10th. We will begin registration at 9 am and conclude by 11 am. This is our annual business meeting of the year.

The ingathering will be items and monetary gifts for Montgomery County's Isaiah 117 House. This is a home, staffed by volunteers to assist children who are transitioning through the foster care system. New and gently used luggage, travel sized dental care items and hygiene items are most appreciated.



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Bethlehem Lutheran Church & School
1240 S. Maple Avenue, Fairborn, OH 45324
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Rev. Keith F. Witte, Pastor



June 9-13
9:00am-Noon

[HTTPS://SITES.GOOGL.COM/VIEW/2025BETHLEHEMVBS](https://sites.google.com/view/2025bethlehemvbs)

VBS



REGISTER
TODAY!

Call (937)878-0651
Or
use the code at left

Ages 3 years to just completed 5th grade

Church Office

Phone: (937) 878-0651
FAX: (937) 878-4794
Email: bethlehem7@aol.com
Web Page—www.Bethlehem7.org

School Office

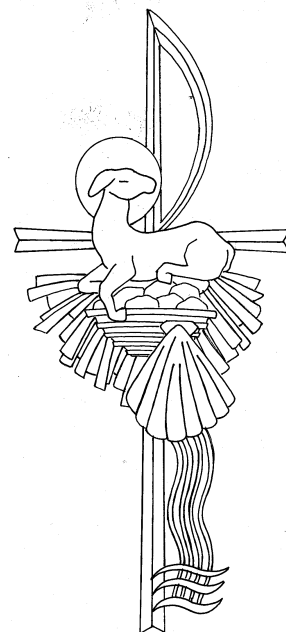
Phone: (937) 878-7050
Email: bethlehemschool@aol.com
Web Page—www.mybethlehemschool.com
Mrs. Melony Marciniak, Principal
Mrs. Michelle Zulfer, Vice Principal

Sunday

Worship Services at 8:00 & 10:45 a.m.
Sunday School & Bible Classes at 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Chapel Service at 8:45 a.m. (when school is in session)
Bible Study at 9:30 a.m.
Advent/Lenten Service at 7 pm



"We seek to honor and glorify the Triune God by sharing our faith in Jesus Christ as man's only Savior."

June/July 2025 issue deadline: Sunday, May 18th.