



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

February 2026

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.” (Galatians 3:13)

Dearly beloved of Bethlehem,

The season of Lent begins on February 18. For our Lenten journey, the Wednesday midweek and Holy Week services will focus on various trees in the Bible. The THEME is entitled, “Living among the Bible’s Trees.” We’ll start with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Genesis chapter 3 where the curse for breaking God’s law had begun. But we will also hear of God’s mercy and His promise of salvation at the foot of various trees. We’ll make our way to the tree of the cross on Good Friday and heaven’s Tree of Life on Easter Sunday.

After Ash Wednesday, the Wednesday evening services will utilize a lesser-known gem in our hymnals, the order of Compline (LSB 253). Historically, this was part of a series of daily prayer services held at monasteries, Christian universities, and large parishes. God’s people could gather for hearing the word and prayer every three hours per day. In our hymnals, Matins (wake up) and Vespers (late afternoon/evening) are part of this series. Compline is traditionally used as bed-time prayers. So, for those who’re going home after Lenten Midweek services and putting kids (or yourself) to bed, Compline is great for you. But even for those staying up later, you can still “rest in peace” whenever you do go to bed.

One of Compline’s unique features is a mutual confession and absolution. As the leader of the service, I will speak the general confession of sin and the congregation will respond with absolution. The congregation will also speak a general confession of sin and I will respond with absolution. The absolution spoken in Compline is not as “official” as in the Sunday Divine Service. Not even I will say, “In the stead and by the command” nor “as a called and ordained servant of the word,” but the absolution still communicates God’s forgiveness. This mutual confession and absolution in Compline does not require an ordained pastor. Anyone can use this in various settings: husband and wife, parent(s) and child(ren), fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, etc. It’s worth trying on for size not just in worship but at home or other devotional gatherings.

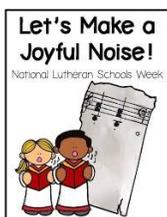
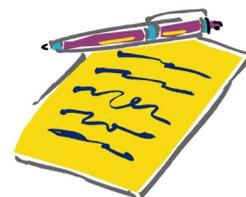
Turn to page 2

For the Sundays in Lent, we'll focus on the Epistle Readings. Most of the Epistle readings will be from the book of Romans. These readings highlight the deep depravity of mankind that has plagued us since Adam's fall into sin. But at the same time, they also highlight God's abundant grace in Christ. To paraphrase Rev. C.F.W. Walther, our first synod president, the preaching of the Law in its full sternness allows the Gospel to soothe our souls with its fullest sweetness.

This Lenten Season, let us understand more the depths our of cursed condition, turn away from its fruits, and cling to God's richest grace through His Son, Jesus, who became a curse for us on the cross. He alone can make a bad tree into a good tree.

Your dear pastor,

Pastor Witte



Bethlehem Lutheran School 2025—2026 School Year News

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus! February is a month of celebration and connection here at Bethlehem Lutheran School. We are so grateful for the support of our congregation as we all grow in grace and knowledge together. Here are the highlights of what is coming up!

VIP Day - February 13th: Our students don't walk their educational journeys alone; they are cheered on by "Very Important People". On February 13th, we invite these mentors, grandparents, and family friends to join us on campus. This special day allows our students to work side-by-side with their VIPs on various activities, showcasing their school home and the people who make it special.



**Honoring
Grandparents**

Military Connected Parent Coffee & Catch-Up - February 24th: We are proud to serve many families who serve our country. On the morning of the 24th, we are hosting our first-ever Military Connected Parent Coffee and Catch-Up. This is a time for fellowship and support for our service-member parents. Any members of the congregation who are, or were, connected to the military are invited to attend. We especially want to thank the Fellowship Committee for their help in organizing and participating in this event. Your hospitality makes our parents feel truly at home!



Science Fair & Festival of the Arts - February 26th: Please join us for an evening of discovery and creativity! Our students have been working very hard, and the entire church family is invited to see the fruits of their labor:



- Scientific Inquiry: View individual projects from our 5th - 8th graders and collaborative class projects from 3rd and 4th grade.
- Musical Joy: Each grade (K-3) will perform a selection of patriotic songs in the Fireside Room throughout the evening.
- Visual Arts: Explore student artwork from every grade level throughout the building. K-2 will also have curricular projects for viewing in the hallway outside their classrooms.
- Cultural Flavors: Our Middle School Spanish Class will be hosting a special presentation featuring foods from various Spanish speaking countries.



Support Our Students: The LSGO Tax Credit Opportunity: Did you know you can support our students' education while potentially paying \$0 for your donation? Through the Lutheran Scholarship Granting Organization (LSGO) of Ohio, you can receive a dollar-for-dollar state tax credit (up to \$750 for individuals or \$1,500 for married couples filing jointly)

We have a goal to raise \$45,000 for tuition assistance for the upcoming 2026-2027 school year. Your support allows more families to choose a Christ-centered education for their children, regardless of their financial situation.

Act Now for 2025: You can still make a donation today and have it count toward your 2025 Ohio tax return.

How to give? Visit www.lsgoohio.org to make a secure online donation. Be sure to designate Bethlehem Lutheran Fairborn as the recipient!

Thank you for all of your thoughts, prayers, and deeds in support of our students. Your generosity ensures that our hallways remain filled with children learning of His love.

Making a Joyful Noise,

Mr. Ferguson

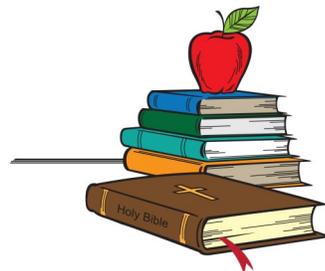


Are you (or someone you know) interested in becoming a member of Bethlehem or exploring what we believe, teach, and confess as Lutherans? Would you like a refresher on what we believe?

Pastor Witte has assembled another Adult Catechism Class starting this Thursday, February 5th at 7 pm in the church library.

Please email pastorwitte1@gmail.com to let him know you're interested.

Second grade is learning and growing everyday! We spent the first half of the year learning how to be second graders and reviewing all we learned in first grade. Things are getting a bit trickier now that we are building upon the skills we learned in kindergarten and first grade. We have just finished learning how to add and subtract three digit numbers in math. Right now, we are reviewing and learning all about money in math and social studies. Throughout the chapter, we are earning ‘money’ that we responsibly have to keep in our wallets. After our test, we will get to spend our hard earned cash on special rewards in a classroom store! We have also started working on our animal research projects. From jellyfish to black widow spiders, armadillos to sand cats, we are learning how to research our own animals and organize our findings. The best parts: we get to type our final paper instead of writing and make a diorama out of shoe boxes! Make sure to check out our final projects at the Festival of the Arts on February 26!



*Thank you for your continued support,
Miss Zulfer*

In cooperation with Versiti (formerly known as the Community Blood Center), we will sponsor a blood drive on President’s Day (Monday, February 16th) from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. This year, we will again have the full drive in the Fellowship Hall. We will need volunteers to donate blood and provide food for the donors. There is a sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall to volunteer. See Sue Saunders if you have any questions. Go to donortime.org to schedule a time for donating. There are plenty of openings.



Over the last few monthly meetings, the elders have been reviewing the quarterly Matins and short communion services. There have been some concerns and practical issues with the short communion service. In their January meeting, Pastor Witte and the Elders unanimously agreed to make a slight change. In keeping with the recommendation of our Strategic Ministry Plan, we will still offer a quarterly Matins service at 10:45. On that same Sunday, the 8:00am service will be a full Divine Service.



Pastor Witte will spend part of Adult Bible Class (either Feb 1 or 15), to further explain the rationale and field questions. The next quarterly Matins services are scheduled for Feb 22 and Jun 7.



11 Red Flags to Spot Scams



Learn how to identify and recognize the clues that may indicate scam and how to help protect yourself from financial exploitation.

This session is hosted by Terry Powers, Financial Advisor, and Scott Leo, Financial Advisor.

Reserve a spot for you and a guest today.

Reserve a place for yourself and a guest by calling 937-878-0651 or emailing terry.powers@thrivent.com. A light lunch will be served.

Saturday, February 28, 2026
10:00 a.m.
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
1240 S Maple Ave
Fairborn, OH

No products will be sold.
Thrivent and its financial professionals do not provide legal, accounting or tax advice. Consult your attorney or tax professional.
27878A R10-23



Welcome to Tropical Trek VBS (June 1-5 from 9 am to noon). Kids will explore God’s Word (the Bible) and discover how God finds and helps us in every situation we encounter in life. Our world is filled with exciting things to explore and enjoy. But there are also challenges and hardships we face along the way. Our loving and powerful God desires to help us. He seeks us out and leads us to faith. We can trust in Him! At Tropical Trek, kids will learn how Jesus seeks them and all people. He is the Son of Man, who came to seek and save the lost! We will need many volunteers (adults, teens, etc) to make this happen.

There will be a planning meeting on Sunday, February 15th from 12:30–1:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall for all who wish to volunteer in some way.



Pastor Witte 1
 Virginia Huffman 2
 Chris Humphreys
 Jared Johnson..... 3
 Carol Benoy..... 4
 Pauline Barnhard..... 5
 Mackenzie Engel 6
 Victoria Lindsey 7
 Josiah Belli 9
 Lucy Ausserer 12
 Andrew Fry..... 19
 Erma Haggerty
 Donna Oda 21
 Becky Gebhard 23
 Gary Geilenfeldt
 Sam Hensley 25
 Art Casci 28



Rick Thompson 7
 Josiah Belli 9
 Thomas Tressler
 Erma Haggerty 14
 Elizabeth Lindsey
 Jeff Ramsey..... 16
 Virginia Huffman 23
 Becky Gebhard 28

Larry Barnhard
 Nancy Beaty
 Norma Dupre
 Jonathan Fiene
 Erma Haggerty
 Nesta Harris

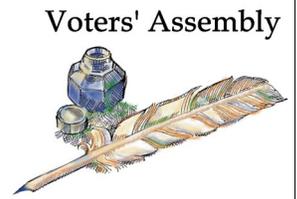
Louise Hellickson
 Helga Hemphill
 Eileen Hitzeman



Doris Humphreys
 Gene Ninnemann
 Jean Robinson
 Marilyn Scheu
 Elaine Schultz
 Robyn Shipman

Pastor & Lynda Viken
 Sue Williamson
 Gladys Zink

The next Voters' Assembly will meet on Sunday, February 22nd at 4 pm. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall for in person attendance and on Zoom for attending via the internet.



Either way you choose to attend, you will have the ability to opine on the business of the congregation. Zoom information will be forthcoming. See Brett Fiepkke with any questions or comments.

Mark your calendars for the annual Pizza Supper on Feb 1st in the Fellowship Hall. All Bethlehem church and school families are invited. We will start 5 pm and end about 7 pm. You can look forward to a great evening of super fun, fellowship and, of course, PIZZA!



Tom & Eileen Hitzeman 3
 Jeff & Jenny Ramsey..... 8
 Nathan & Bethany Huffman .. 11
 Steve & Sue Wolaver 28

The Bethlehem STAR

February 2026

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



February 18, 2026 7 pm Divine Service
Living Among the Biblical Trees

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

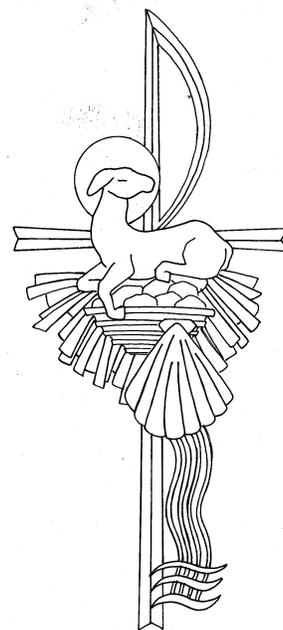
Sunday

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

March deadline: Sunday, February 15th.



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.