



Bethlehem Lutheran Church

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025

Birthdays: December 2- Betty Resch; December 5- Andrew Lundsgaard, Mary Ann Miller, Dayn Simonsen, Grace Woodall; December 7- Steve Thomas; December 8- Lynn Friedrichsen; December 9- Kamie Crum; December 13- Kaysie Johnson, Kerry Ludwig Midland; December 14- Maliyah Ebert; December 15- Taylor Woods; December 16- Shirley Bright; December 17- Justin Smith; December 18- Rhonda Reinholdt; December 19- Jim Nelson, Coleen Truxell; December 20- Bob Hahn, Floyd Enstrom; December 21- Andrew Peterson, Kaleb Sleezer, Janice Woodall; December 23- Connie Mohn, Jerry Woodall; December 24- Quinn Woods; December 25- Lawrence Selgeby; December 26- Dennis Nelson; December 27- Carole Selgeby; December 28- Monica Kennebeck; December 29- Arlene Hultman



Anniversaries: December 1- Joe & Linda Peterson; December 16- Dan & Audrey Pitts; December 19- Dana & Nicky Sleezer; December 21- Mark & Marlys Segar; December 27- Bill & Jenny Boger



Christmas Cookie Decorating: On Saturday, December 13th from 9:00 – 11:00 AM, Bethlehem will be having a Christmas Cookie Decorating event in the Fellowship Hall. Each child will be given several cookies to decorate using frosting and sprinkles. It is hoped that each child will consider donating one of their decorated cookies to a ‘pool’ of cookies that will be distributed to Bethlehem’s

members residing in care facilities. In addition, hot chocolate will be served and there will be videos shown on the big screen TV. This event is open to the public so please bring your children, grandchildren, neighbors, and friends. Parents and care givers are encouraged to stay for the fun.

Bethlehem on the Air: BOA is the radio ministry of our congregation. The program is aired at approximately 8:15 AM on Sunday mornings on KCHE. During the past 2 ½ years, Harry Bradstreet, Lynette and Pat Hyndman, and Connie and Jim Mohn have been preparing and doing the program. If possible, you are encouraged to tune to KCHE each Sunday morning to listen to this ministry.



Bell Ringers Needed in Cherokee! The Salvation Army is looking for volunteers to ring bells this holiday season. Locations are Hy Vee and Bomgaars. For more information, please see the flyer on the bulletin board outside of the office, or call Glenda Parrish at 712-221-9801.

Christmas Poinsettias: 21 poinsettias have been ordered for Christmas this year. Cost is \$20 per poinsettia. There is a sheet on the sign-up table for those who would like to order one.



YouNite Live Nativity: There will not be a children’s Christmas Program this year, instead will be joining with the Presbyterian Church for a live nativity on December 14th at 4:00 pm in the Bomgaars building at the Cherokee County Fair Grounds. Everyone is welcome!

YouNite Christmas Party: There will be a Christmas party for YouNite on December 17th. This is the last time that YouNite will meet at Bethlehem for the year. Starting in January, YouNite will meet at the Presbyterian Church on Wednesday nights.



Evangelism In Action

Our November Welcome Plate meal was held on **Saturday, November 22, from Noon-1:00 pm.** It was a full Thanksgiving meal with turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, roll, butter, cranberry sauce, a choice of pumpkin dessert or apple cake, and drinks. Many hands were there to help serve our hungry crowd of 134 guests, including 26 deliveries and 25 carry-outs. Thanks to so many of our BLC members who prepared and helped serve this wonderful outreach meal to our community and church family. Vicky B. lead devotions with a YouTube video which was a unique way of sharing the Word of the Lord! We were blessed to have lots of food from the HyVee bakery and Papa's Pantry to send home with them! The ladies were very busy in the Caring Closet with many items of clothing going home with our guests. You are all wonderful servants of God!

Thank you so much for your generous donations to Papa's Pantry, as many are looking to us for assistance. Their concern and need is great right now!! If you are out shopping consider donating some items: cereal, pasta sauce, peanut butter, jelly, juices, pickles, Hamburger Helper, soups, canned spaghetti, snack crackers, pudding mixes, cake mixes, frosting, pickles, ketchup, mustard, canned veggies or fruit, or anything you choose. The container is in the Narthex, so you can place your items in the container or in Classroom B downstairs. HyVee is also offering a sack of preselected groceries for \$5 or \$10 for you to purchase. You can bring it to the church, or tell them to deliver it to Bethlehem Church, which they will gladly do at your request. It is important that you not bring any perishable food and check the dates on each item, so that it is not close dated or out of date! Those who are attending our meals are very grateful for the tables full of food items ready to take with them each month!

We will have the opportunity to brighten the Christmas for the residents of Careage Hills, again this year. You will notice the **Giving Tree** in the Narthex adorned with tags with each residents' name and gift ideas on the back. Please take one off the tree and purchase an inexpensive gift for that person. Wrap and bring it back to the church office. Those will be taken to the care center for them to open during their Christmas party. Watch for details in this newsletter and the weekly bulletin. This is another way that we can share the Love of the Lord with those around us!

Our **December Welcome Plate Meal** will be held on **Saturday, December 27th from Noon- 1:00 pm.** We will be serving a variety of soups as our main entree'. We urge you to invite your friends and neighbors to attend. Come and join us in welcoming our guests and showing them that God loves them and so do we! Invite them to come to church. We are so blessed, so let's be a blessing to them!

If you'd like to join our committee, we meet on the **first Thursday of each month at 3:00 pm** in the Library. We'd love to have additional members who would like to become involved in the events that we plan each month.



December Volunteers & Sponsors

Sunday Lectors:

Dec 7: Kelley Clausen
Dec 14: Todd Anderson
Dec 21:
Dec 28: Leah Niemeier

Altar Flowers:

Dec 7: Todd Anderson
Dec 14: Bob & Karen Ferris
Dec 21:
Dec 28:

Bethlehem On the Air:

Dec 7:
Dec 14: Bob & Mary Hahn
Dec 21: Jim & Connie Mohn
Dec 28: Filmore Gustafson

Mission Support:

Dec 7: Dave & Connie Ladwig
Dec 14: WELCA
Dec 21: Bruce & Deena Jones
Dec 28:

World Hunger:

Dec 7:
Dec 14:
Dec 21: WELCA
Dec 28:

Pulpit Supply:

Dec 6/7: Don Tisthammer
Dec 13/14: Deb Mechler
Dec 21/22: Don Tisthammer
Dec 24: Don Tisthammer
Dec 27/28: Sarah Morphew



December 2025 MEETING DATES:

Executive Board Meeting- December 7- After the church service in the library.

All Groups and Guests- All women are invited to a **Christmas Gathering on Wednesday, December 10, at Noon** for a Holiday Potluck. We will have a Christmas Program and divide the bread loaves to be delivered to our Special Friends. Everyone is invited and you may bring a friend. Merry Christmas!

All are welcome at our group meetings. We'd love to have more fellow Christians participate.

Quilting- December 17, 2025 9:00, Church Basement- We have lots of fabric that has been donated. Please let us know if you'd like to sew quilt tops or bottoms for us. Thanks to all who have done this for years.

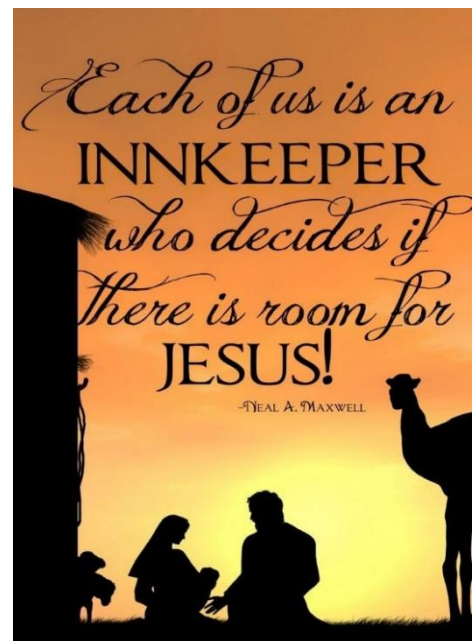
Personal/Health Kits - Please help us make some personal/health kits. Bath towel- dark in color and 2 bath size bars of soap, fingernail clippers, comb, and a toothbrush. Thanks to Jim Mohn's Christ Care group for putting together many kits.

School Kits- Backpack, notebooks, ruler, eraser, unsharpened, pencils, pens, scissors, crayons, pencil sharpener

Baby Kits- Socks, gowns, sweater or jacket, cloth diapers, diaper pins, receiving blankets, towels, T-shirts, soap. Watch for sales! Thanks to Lori Thomas for putting together many kits!

Thanks to all who helped at the Welcome Plate in November. If you'd like to help in the kitchen in December, please contact Pat Friedrichsen. We are all God's Hands and Feet! Let's help our neighbors in need. If you'd like to help in the Caring Clothing Closet, please contact Lynette Hyndman. We will take excess clothing to New To You two times in December.

Invite a Friend- We will be making our new program booklets for 2026. Please ask someone to join us in our Bible study groups. Spread the Word! All are welcome!



Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Cherokee, Iowa

MEETING: **Church Council Meeting**
DATE/TIME: **Thursday, Nov 13, 2025**
MEMBERS PRESENT: **Kevin Tapper, Kelley Clausen, Terry Janssen, Simon Fuller, Karen Ferris, Kaleb Sleezer, Mike Niemeier**
MEMBERS ABSENT: **Bruce Jones, Allen Campbell**
OTHERS PRESENT: **Jim Mohn, JoAnne Tapper**
OTHERS ABSENT: **None**
GUESTS PRESENT: **Bishop Scott Dalen**
PRESIDING: **Kevin Tapper**
RECORDING: **Linzi Bierman**

<u>AGENDA</u>	<u>DISCUSSION</u>	<u>RESPONSIBILITY</u>
Call to Order	Meeting called to order by Chairperson Kevin Tapper at 6:30 pm	
Approve Agenda	Motion to approve agenda by Terry, second by Kelley: motion carried	
Devotions	Devotions by JoAnne based on Jeremiah 33:3, “Call to me and I will answer...” Are you open to new ideas/discovering new things about God? When we spend time in prayer, it is a privilege to put our hopes and anxieties in God’s hands. The Lord delights in prayers of His people – pray continually.	Devotions for Dec by .
Secretary’s Report	Minutes approved electronically	Council members to text approval or email approval to Linzi
Financial Report	Report through 10/31- 83.3% of year. October operating revenue: \$13,140.76; October operating expenses: \$13,897.53; Net for October: (\$756.77). This includes an insurance premium payment of \$4,252. Year to date operating revenue: \$155,674.05 (62% of budget); Year to date operating expenses: \$130,411.46 (52% of budget); YTD Net: \$25,262.59. Capital Improvement expenditures thru Oct 31: \$217,729 – does not include doors and key card system. Thrivent withdraw of \$57,000 for doors and key card system, those invoices will be turned into the accountant to pay. The doors are slightly higher than estimate due to glass instead of solid panels. Motion to approve by Karen, second by Simon; motion carried.	
<u>Correspondence</u>	<p>-Received from: Sweezey’s- has been renovated for fundraising events, have had incredible turnouts. Something to keep on file for possible future fundraising use.</p> <p>Meeting with Western Iowa Synod’s new bishop, Scott Dalen– Has been on the job for 2.5 months now, and wants people to feel heard and seen. He has had a few conversations with Kevin Tapper about worries and hopes for BLC, particularly regarding pastoral leadership. Meeting with council for a question and answer session:</p>	

Has discussion of leaving ELCA been put to bed? All started with questions of possibility of losing property/control of church. Due diligence has been done to get those answers, and now Council is ready to move forward. Some still have worries about the future of our church, but they are personal concerns – not in the capacity of being a council member. Currently biggest priority is finding a pastor. [REDACTED] is open to resuming that conversation now that discussion of leaving has been settled. Available candidates vs churches searching for a pastor is lopsided- in other denominations as well.

What is 2035 going to look like for pastors if already struggling now? We are coming through a period where a lot of Boomers are retiring and the subsequent generations have smaller populations. Previously The Church (in general, not just ELCA) paid for education for clergy, but now candidates pay on their own. Now the church is exploring ways to make the path to become ordained more affordable. Class sizes are going up for the first time in a long time. Different paths to ordination are also being explored, there is hope the trend will begin to reverse itself, but it is probably going to feel worse before it starts to feel better.

We've been looking for a pastor for 2.5 years, other ELCA churches have gotten pastors after a much shorter time, why is that? Every situation is contextually different. Different factors go into a pastor taking a call- location for example. Currently there are approximately 550 churches searching for pastors and less than 300 pastors seeking a call. Of those 300, 2/3 have geographical restrictions while only around 100-150 are willing to go anywhere. Bishop Dalen can't say why our search has taken so long, but there are no longer multiple candidates to consider for one location.

Just getting a new pastor is not enough. We have an older congregation, some change is necessary for church to move forward, but members are not always open to that. Worship and Music Committee has made efforts to move the needle, but there has been some resistance. Cherokee's demographic is older, but other area churches have many young families. Correct, getting a pastor will not fix everything. All churches want a pastor to get young families back, but a pastor can't just make that happen. What else can we do? How can we serve the communities we are in? We need openness to experiment and try new things – churches must be willing to do that to attract more families. A pastor will help, but we have to actively be working towards the goal as well.

Research shows Gen Z is very spiritually hungry- they want to be known, where the people they encounter care and value them as they are. Younger generation wants to come, feel welcome, hear good music, leave feeling positive. They want a relationship with Jesus more than they care about the structure of man. What can we do with this information to draw more people in? We also have to serve the community we currently have- how do we bridge the two? Highlight our strengths – not what we don't do, but what are we good at and how can we highlight those things? What are the strengths of the BLC community and how can they meet the needs of the larger community? God has given us strengths, how can we build from them?

What is the next step with [REDACTED]? Bishop Dalen will report back about the conversation we had tonight, Kevin will connect with Judy Johnson. Going to try to pick up where we left off, hope is that we may be able to move quickly. March 15th, Bishop will visit.

Old Business

New Business

Door Access Cards- System is up and running, review of applications turned in. Motion to approve all applications received by Simon, second by Terry; motion carried.

Banners- Room is cluttered, difficult to find the correct banners. Would need a way to hang them if moved to a Sunday School room. May be able to get some racks from 360 that are left over from Darren's. Motion to move the bulk of banners to a Sunday School room and leave just the banners for the next 1-2 months in communion room, and inquire into getting racks from Jessica at 360 by Terry, second by Karen; motion carried.

Stained Glass Window – The frame around the outside of the windows is deteriorating. Would need to take the windows out, replace the steel, and put them back in. It is the outside frame that is bad, the inside is what was just done, were not told that outside was in need. There was nothing in the contract about the outside frame. Will probably need to replace with aluminum, could be in \$400,000+ range. Not causing problems now but will eventually. If it gets bad enough the glass will fall out. Is there a less expensive route to take to fix them? Terry will reach out at ISU Extension Office for possible solutions. Perhaps there is a way to give the current frame another twenty years or so of life.

Committee Reports

Property – Windows for the youth room are downstairs, will get two bids for installation. 2 windows on the east wall in the kitchen are getting rotten and will need replaced.

Christian Ed – YouNite is going well, going to do the live nativity with the Presbyterian Church on the 14th. There will be a Christmas party on the 17th for the kids with pizza, games, etc. The Grinch may make an appearance. YouNite moves to the Presbyterian Church in January.

Evangelism/Social Ministry/Missions – Welcome Plate for October – photobooth was popular again. Served 120 in person as well as 25 deliveries and 15 carry-outs. Raised \$300 in donations. November meal will be held on Nov 22- turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes. Roasting turkey on Friday, Nov 21 at 9:30. Next meeting December 11th, note change.

Worship & Music – Christmas Cookie Decorating in December, will have cookies and cocoa. Going to collect some of the cookies to deliver to the shut-ins. Recommendation to just have one Christmas Eve service, going to pass the offering plates around during service. Worship service changes- flexibility in readings- leaving it up to pastoral leadership what readings they would like to include. Changes to the bulletins start this weekend, will include full sheet of readings that can be read and meditated on before service. Worship and Music committee wants feedback- both positive and negative. There will not be a kids' play this year, instead they will participate in the live nativity on the 14th at 4pm at the Bomgaars building at Cherokee Fair grounds.

Finance –

Gifts & Donations Committee –

	<p>Stewardship – JoAnne is creating a business card that says P.R.A.Y and has 4 verses that mention prayer. Going to be more active in encouraging people to sign up for 2026 committees, greeters, etc. Council members could take turns as greeters also.</p> <p>Spiritual Formation –</p>	
<u>Pulpit Supply</u>	<p>Dec 6/7- Don Tisthammer Dec 13/14- Deb Mechler Dec 20/21- Don Tisthammer Dec 24- Don Tisthammer Dec 27/28- Sarah Morphew</p>	
<u>Communion Schedule</u>	<p>Dec 7- Karen, Simon, Kelley, Kaleb Dec 13- Terry</p>	
<u>Adjournment</u>	<p>Motion to adjourn by Karen, second by Kelley; motion carried. Meeting closed with the Lord’s Prayer.</p>	<p>Next meeting Thursday, Dec 11 @ 6:30 pm</p>



Welcome Plate

Free Community Meal



Saturday, December 27 • 12:00-1:00 pm

Devotions • 11:45 am

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

300 E Bow Drive (lower level)*

Everyone is welcome!

Please listen to KCHE for cancellation
information due to weather

Food Pantry and Clothing Closet
will be open during this time

*Handicapped Accessibility Available