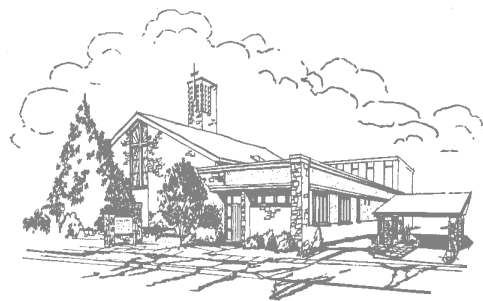


Bethlehem Star

Lutheran Church Lansing



Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lansing, Michigan

Pastor Matt

February 2021

***Is not my word like fire, says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?
~ Jeremiah 23:29***

Fire

You may have had a bad experience in your life with fire. My first traumatic experience with fire was burning my nose when I was just five or six as I tried to blow out a flaming hot marshmallow I was roasting in a fire. The second, and most memorable, was our neighbor's house burning in the middle of the night about ten years ago. No one was injured in the fire. And, after they finally removed the burnt remnants, they did eventually rebuild, though the emotional scars lingered. A third comes to mind, but I will leave it at two.

So, when we hear that God's word is like fire, those unpleasant memories might be rekindled. But, fire is not all bad. On the contrary, the vast majority of my memories of fire are more than positive. I remember my nephew around the fire at Stony Lake as a counsellor, sharing his faith story with my grandfather's cross around his neck. And I remember lying in front of a fireplace in my parent's house when Michelle proposed to me. Those are just a few of my positive memories associated with fire. There are so many.

Fire brings warmth. It refines. It makes things workable. Without fire a blacksmith is just a frustrated person with a hammer. Fire is a tool. God's word is a tool, reshaping things. Fire can burn us. God's word can be painful to hear when it reminds of (as it should) of our sin. And fire brings warmth. God's word, the good news of what God has done for us in Christ, warms us with the news of just how much God loves us.

God's word, God's burning fire, is summed up in just this one word, *love*. So, when Jesus Christ declares that he, "came to bring fire to the earth," and that he "wishes it were already kindled (Luke 12:49)," we can hear that first and foremost as LOVE. Christ brings a message to reshape our lives, but he also brings a message to warm and comfort our souls. And this love is ours to enjoy and to share.

Health

A bit of a health update from me: I have switched to a new MS medication (Ocrevus). It is an IV once every six months. The first dose is administered in two parts, two weeks apart, and I tolerated it quite well. The next dose will be some time in July. I have also started a new round of advanced physical therapy to improve my core strength, balance, and walking. I am not ready to run a marathon yet, but the results have been encouraging!

Worship

We all want to be back to in-person worship. The Board of Worship Life has begun working on a survey for the congregation to find out just how many of our members will be comfortable returning when we do offer limited in-person services with groups of less than 50 people, no singing, six-foot distancing between family groups, and mask wearing. When we are first back to worship it is not going to look and feel much like you remember worship feeling, but we want to know how many of you would be comfortable attending, so we know how many services to plan for. Our Congregation Council will decide, using the best science and input from our bishop.

Lent

Plans for Lent will include a (video) service on Ash Wednesday, February 17, where people will be encouraged to have burnt wooden matches that they can rub and make the sign of the cross on their foreheads. Our Lent Theme will be 'Lutheran Heroes', using Lent as a time for us for 'hero' training. Midweek services will be me on video with prayer, scripture, a message and a training practice.

"Let us pray. Consuming Fire, we desire to be united as believers who put you at the forefront of our lives. Fill us with the fire of your grace. Remain by our side as we go about this day. Amen."

Pastor Matt

549 E. Mt. Hope Ave.
Lansing, Michigan 48910
Phone: (517) 482-3225
FAX: (517) 482-2458

Ministers

*All of the members of
Bethlehem Lutheran Church*

Pastor Matthew A. Smith
pastormattsmith@gmail.com
(517) 881-9890

Pastoral Assistant
Pastor John Burow
pastorjburow@yahoo.com
(517) 614-4559

Church Secretary / Star Editor
Tracy Baker
bethlehemplansing@gmail.com
(517) 482-3225

Congregation President
Jim Whitman

Organist
James Schippers

Choir Director
Sue Nelson

Handbell Choir Director
James Schippers

Contemporary Worship Director
Laurey Wyble

Office Hours
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (M-F)

Visit our website at:
www.bethlutheran.org

Worship Schedule

9:30 - Live Streaming
Worship Service
On Facebook
BELC Worship Group

Worship in February

Assisting Ministers

February 7 - Bob Meeker
February 14 - Nancy Holderread
February 28 - Don Telles

Children's Sermons

February 7 - need someone
February 14 - Pastor Matt Smith
February 28 - need someone

Resources to Nurture Faith and Spirituality

In our June/July newsletter we included a short list of resources you can use to strengthen your faith and spirituality, to deepen your relationship with God, especially in this time of crisis.

- Lutheran Hour Ministries <https://www.lhm.org/covid-19/> Daily Devotions, Learning Resources, and even kid's activities.
- Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>.
- Centering Prayer App from <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/> available on Google Play and the App Store.

As you explore these resources, or engage in your own time of pray, ask yourself, "What is God inviting me to do in this time? What is God inviting Bethlehem to do?" My deepest prayer for all of you is that you will continually find ways to abide in God's love (John 15:9).

Virtual Worship

As a community we are continuing to worship at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/belcworship/>. The service is also uploaded to our YouTube channel each week.

Our Website

There is a button on the Home page for prayer requests and there is so much other information on our website. It is a great resource to keep you connected to the community of faith. I also encourage you to text "belcprayer" to 81010 to join our Prayer Corner 2.0.

God's Peace and Love,



Pastor Matt

Statement of Purpose and Guiding Principles for Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

God's purpose for our church, as disciples of Jesus Christ, is to share with all people God's word, love and saving grace.

We will pursue this purpose by:

1. Being a Christ-centered, joyful community of baptized believers who gather regularly for worship, the Lord's Supper, study and prayer.
2. Inviting, accepting, and supporting all people as we build attentive, respectful relationships.
3. Taking action and risks with bold faith, acknowledging our imperfection, while trusting in Christ.
4. Actively engaging in community outreach near and far.
5. Being faithful stewards of our time, talents, possessions and all of God's creation.

Adopted January 29, 2017

Prayer Corner

Please Note: Hospitals do not notify churches when a member has been hospitalized; even if you inform them at registration of your church membership. If you would like a visit from the pastor, please call the church office at 482-3225 or call Pastor Matt directly at 881-9890.

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS and with your cards and visits:

Shelby Waters in The Willows at Okemos

John Nelson in Grandhaven Living Center-Senior Care in Lansing

Those at home: *Mary Ann Allen, Virginia Bauman, Mary Brenke
Lois Cairns, Marv Cole, Crystal Collins, Ruth Ferguson, Doug Griffin
Jim Hicks, Rhoda Hunter, Kurt Kollmeyer, Marilyn Kostrzewski
Michael Mahoney, Linda McClellan, John Nelson, Yvonne Nelson
Tharin Palmer, John Ransom, Gloria Robbins, Bob Robbins
Carol Roush, Jeanne Smith, Audrey Skidmore, Don Spencley
Cheryl VanPatten Dorothy Weber, Ron Wescott, Matthew White*



If you know of a member you would like us to include on this list or remove from this list, please call the church office.

SEMINARY STUDENT Jason Mills, from BELC, is studying at Gettysburg Theological Seminary. Please keep him in your prayers.

MISSION PARTNERS Pray for the people and ministry at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Pray for the Baker Neighborhood Partners and Officer Jake Kocan, LPD Community Police Officer and other first responders.

PRAY for those who are on active duty in the United States Military Services:

Chris Browne – U.S. Air Force

Darian Doan – U.S. Army

Andrew Devine – U.S. Nat'l Guard

Carson Kosloski – U.S. Marines

Joshua Kosloski – U.S. Army

Rusty Landry – U.S. Air Nat'l Guard

Christopher Morgan – U.S. Marines

Ben Painter – U.S. Air Force

Ryan Schiffner – U.S. Air Force

Jake Sonnenberg – U.S. Army

Eric Wheeler – U.S. Army



Altar Flowers for 2021

Thank you to all who have sponsored Altar Flowers
for Bethlehem's Sunday Worship Services.

The 2021 Flower Chart is posted in the lobby.

For those wanting to sponsor Altar Flowers for a special occasion, please contact the church office (call or e-mail) and ask Tracy to assign your name to the selected Sunday. Let her know how you would like your sponsorship noted in the bulletin.

All checks should be made payable to Kris Burow and sent to her home address.

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church Women



**Women of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
in America**

All women of Bethlehem Lutheran Church are members of the Women of the ELCA and are invited and encouraged to participate in all activities listed in the newsletters, bulletins, flyers or on the bulletin boards.

GREETINGS FROM YOUR BELCW BOARD

Happy Valentines Day to all you beautiful women. We are praying that 2021 will be a much better year with the Corona virus vaccine and a new Administration in our Capitol. Thanks to all who completed the survey that your Circle chairs sent out. We have a complete board and a new budget (same as 2020).

The Board reviewed our financial situation and decided that we could donate \$200 to Pastor Matt's discretionary fund, that will leave us enough to go forth with. The money has been sent to Pastor.

We are sorry to report we will not have a Women's Retreat again this year. Beechpointe Retreat Center has said they will not be having any groups in this Spring. Also, the WELCA Triennial Gathering which was postponed from 2020 to 2021, will be canceled and the next one will be in 2023 in Phoenix, AZ. No decision has been made about our Rummage Sale at this time.

Please continue to send in your Circle offerings to Carole Kienke, 13625 Pearwood, Dewitt 48820, we are so grateful for your generosity.

Remember Bethlehem women take part in the long standing traditions of Thankofferings. We give in thanksgiving for daily blessings received. Get a canning jar or small box and add change or paper money anytime you are grateful for the small things that God does for you.



Our monthly group Bible study will continue, however, we need Leaders. If you could lead a Bible study on Zoom please contact your Circle chair. Pastor John Burow has indicated that he will help you with the study.

Peace be with you all.

Hello All,

Once again, I want to thank you for your generosity donating for the Christmas baskets. Many of you asked how you could help, and this article lays out different ways going forward for Easter how others can safely volunteer and support this Bethlehem outreach mission. Some procedures can be tweaked to make this outreach mission a success so more people can be involved.

Even though the food basket mission falls under the Outreach Board, the mission is a church wide mission much like Faith Family Fun Day is and therefore needs many hands to make light work.

At this time, I am willing to send the mailers out to families in early March and figure out how much food needs to be purchased. These are the two most time-consuming steps in the process. We have an agreement with a local meat manager to supply the meat at a reduced rate so I will continue communicating with him. Lastly, the Whitman's will pack the boxes the day before as we have got it down smoothly and it eliminates multiple families interacting in close quarters.

NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR EACH:

1. Someone to order all the rest of the food items online and pay. (using church \$) I will give them the need list, totals for each food minus meat
2. Multiple people to pick up the large orders and carry them into the church gym (from Sams, Costco, GFS or Walmart)
3. Someone to pick up any orders of odds and ends not able to be mass purchased the week of
4. Someone to call all the receiving families the day before and remind them to pick up their baskets (use front office phone if you want)
5. Possibly someone to assist in putting the baskets in people's vehicles the day of the event **OR** greeting, checking off and calling out for baskets

Call me if you have any questions or suggestions going forward. Any of these steps are open to adjustment if you are willing to help. We had one suggestion last time - to allow people donating money to sponsor a family for \$30, \$50 or \$70 (small, med, large) If you choose to donate your money this way, please let me know so I can assign a family to you. In this case, please plan on adding at least a personal note or card to the receiver's basket. This money donation option is just that, **an option**, if you would like a more personal touch.

With Easter falling on Sunday, April 4, the pickup for baskets will be Saturday April 3, from 10am - 1pm. That means all food and cards must be at the church by Wednesday, March 31 to allow them time to sit and ensure the virus has perished. We do wear masks and gloves when filling and distributing the baskets. For the ordering of food, I have allowed 2 weeks from the cutoff date for basket requests which is March 17.

I realize this is only February but organizing the feeding of families does take time. Plus, I wanted you to prayerfully consider assisting and this allows you time to ask me questions. There is no time frame on monetary donations, we will accept those at any time. Just make sure you write "food baskets" on the Memo line. Again, thank you for your willingness to serve our neighbors in need.

Liisa Whitman

Here, you will find a list of the scripture readings that are part of the Daily Lectionary which move us from one Sunday to the next. You can also find these readings on our "Taking Faith Home" sheets we distribute after worship. They are also posted daily on our Facebook page. We encourage you to read your Bible every day as you live out your life of discipleship.

<> Pastor Matt

FEBRUARY	08 Isaiah 40:21-31	16 2 Corinth. 4:3-6	24 2 Samuel 24:10-17
01 Deut. 18:15-20	09 1 Corinth. 9:16-23	17 Psalm 51	25 Titus 3:1-11
02 1 Corinth. 8:1-13	10 Psalm 41	18 Genesis 3:17-19	26 Hebrews 4:14-16
03 Acts 16:16-40	11 James 5:13-18	19 James 1:19-25	27 Psalm 25:1-10
04 Exodus 15:22-27	12 Proverbs 3:1-8	20 Psalm 50:1-6	28 Mark 8:31-38
05 1 John 4:1-6	13 Psalm 147:1-20	21 Mark 1:9-15	
06 Psalm 111	14 Mark 9:2-9	22 Psalm 25:1-10	
07 Mark 1:29-39	15 2 Kings 2:1-12	23 1 Peter 3:18-22	

February Birthday's

Margaret Wright	Feb. 2
Kris Burow	Feb. 6
Carol Kinney	Feb. 10
Janet Gonda	Feb. 12
Joe Skidmore	Feb. 15
Betty Holmer	Feb. 16
Sue Nelson	Feb. 18
Rita Huntley	Feb. 22
Kathleen Martin	Feb. 23
Ruth Ferguson	Feb. 25
Judy Pardee	Feb. 26
Peggy Parker	Feb. 27



Happy Birthday!

Each year our birthday list of members 62 and over is updated from the church records. If for some reason you do not wish to have your name appear in the newsletter or if you see someone we have missed, please call the church office.



Thank you to all my Bethlehem Family for the lovely Holiday cards I received.

Thank you,
Marilyn Bass-Huyser

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you for the beauty that you added to my home. Laurie and I loved the lovely red plant. We appreciate it and your thoughtfulness.

I miss seeing all of my dear friends, but while we have to obey the safety rules, we know the importance of them. Bless you all with love and happiness.

Doe Weber & Laurie

To all those who participated in the beautiful candlelight Christmas Eve Service,

A big thank you from Larry and Virginia Bauman. I'm not a fan of "computer" services, but am Grateful that we at least have had those during this tragic year.

Sincerely,
Virginia & Larry Bauman

Thank you Mary Bartel for all the help you've been to me and the church! You are always so willing to help. God bless you! Thanks!!
Tracy

Thank you to the Luther League, Pastor Matt and guides for the beautiful gift box that was sent to me at college. I greatly appreciated it.

Thanks,
Kyra Pohl

Thank you for the beautiful gifts. Enjoying living in Wisconsin. God bless my Bethlehem family.

Love,
Mary Allen

Dear Bethlehem Lutheran Church,

Greetings to you in Jesus Christ's name.

We truly thank you for considering our congregation during your worship services on December 29, 2020.

May God heal all our wounds and keep us healthy as we grow in spirit.

Again, thank you for praying for our congregation.

In our Lord's service,
Paul Mawit
Sudanese Christ Lutheran Congregation

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Please allow us to express the gratitude of Samaritas for your congregation's generous donation of \$1,500.00 on December 24, 2020. Samaritas appreciates your members' commitment to serving people as an expression of the love of Christ.

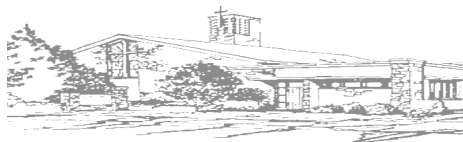
For over 85 years and because of the support of your congregation, Samaritas has been an advocate for so many children and families across Michigan. Your support helps us to empower the people we serve, enabling them to overcome the challenges of trauma, hopelessness, poverty, social isolation and disability.

Thank you!
Pastor Beth Birkholz
Sam Beals, Chief Executive Officer
Kelli Dobner, Chief Advancement Officer

Happy Valentine's Day

Bethlehem Star

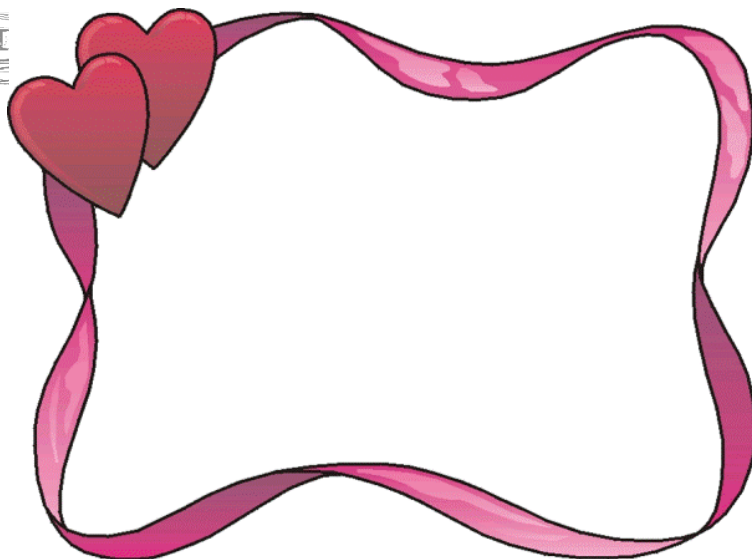
Lutheran Church Lansing



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Newsletter Deadline is **February 15**
for the **March 2021** Bethlehem Star.

Also available at
www.bethlutheran.org

In-Home Date: February 1, 2021
Mailed on January 27, 2021



February
2021