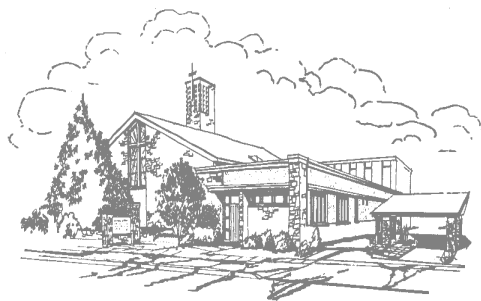


Bethlehem Star

Lutheran Church Lansing



Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lansing, Michigan

Pastor Matt

September 2020

Sunday Morning Outdoor Worship

Starting **Sunday, September 13**, we will be worshipping together, in-person, hopefully under a large tent in our parking lot. The service will start at **11:00 am**. This later time will increase the odds of us having decent temperatures outside as we move into the fall. Starting at **11:00 am** will also allow me as pastor to be fully present with our virtual community for our live stream of worship on Facebook at 9:30 am. Everything that we are doing online with Facebook and YouTube will continue as it has.

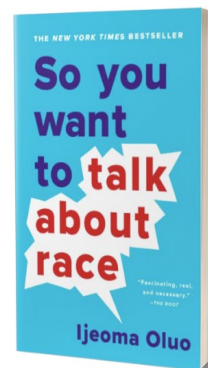
Masks will still be worn by those gathered, and 6' physically distancing is strongly encouraged. Simply bring your own lawn chairs. Spots will be marked on the pavement to give you a general sense of what a safe distance might be. We are limited at this time to 100 people, but this means that when capacity is reached in the tent, you can set up chairs outside the tent, under your own, or stay in your car and tune to 102.3 FM.

Our service in the parking lot will include Holy Communion. Prefilled cups and wafers will be distributed by a deacon of the day or communion assistant wearing gloves. They will place them in your hands so that there will be no contact. An usher or other assistant will have printed copies of the bulletin to also place in your hands (if you haven't already downloaded it). The lyrics for the songs will be printed, and we encourage you to hum or sing quietly along in your masks. And there will be more instructions on Sunday mornings.

Until then, drive-in worship as we have been doing, will happen on Saturdays it will happen twice more, on 8/29 and 9/5 at 4:30. Please come and fellowship with your community of faith IN PERSON.

Book Study

Our next book for our Racial justice book study on Wednesday evenings at 6:30, via Zoom, will be the book *So you want to talk about race* by Ijeoma Oluo (Seal Press, 2019). The book is widely available. I bought a copy from Target for less than ten dollars. I am sure that Shuler Books will have copies available, or just about wherever you buy your books. The book is written in a conversational style that will help us answer the difficult questions as we continue to develop our antiracist selves. We will look at questions such as, 'What is Racism?', 'Is police brutality really about race?', 'What is the school-to-prison pipeline?', 'Why can't I say the 'N' word?', and much, much more (including planning for practical steps that we can all take).



The study will begin Wednesday, September 16 at 6:30 pm. Please email me if you would like to join the study at pastormattsmith@gmail.com so that you can be included in the Zoom invite on Wednesdays.

T.N.T.

Our first session of Confirmation classes (Tuesday Night Thriller) for youth in the ages of 6-8th grade will begin via Zoom on Tuesday, September 15, at 6:15 pm. Initially we plan to meet for a class session on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of every month, but families will be receiving a tentative schedule for the program year as soon as it is complete.

WHEN WILL WE BE BACK IN PERSON? BACK TO NORMAL?

I wish I knew, but in all of this, what I do know, is that Jesus still reigns! And we have HOPE that our future will be brighter than our present. May God bless you and keep you!

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

Parish Administrator
Vicki Leighton
belcparishadm@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
8:30 a.m. - 2:30 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 September

Assisting Ministers

September 6 - Nancy Holderread
September 13 - Susan Mahoney
September 20 - Don Telles
September 27 - Bob Meeker

Children's Sermons

September 6 - Liisa Whitman
September 13 - Pastor Matt Smith
September 20 - Pastor John Burow
September 27 - Vicki Leighton

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.

Drive-in Worship

I wrote about this on the front page, so I am not going to go through all that again, just know that we are continuing to find ways to be together, even though we are apart.

When I ask myself, "What might God be inviting us to do?", my first response is one of joy, because God IS continuing to seek us out in this time. Next, I believe that God is inviting us to continue to be faithful, in our love toward God and one another. So keep being faithful, know that you are loved, and keep reaching out with God's love for others.

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

Stewardship



Sharing the blessings we receive
from the Lord will surely give us joy!

**Make a gift to the
Bethlehem Evangelical
Lutheran Church
Endowment Fund**

We have not been talking consistently about finances recently and it is something that we need to keep close to our hearts and thoughts. There has been a lot going on behind the scenes during the past few months to keep Bethlehem functioning, but it is also very important to communicate the on-going financial state of the church.

In April we reported that Council had authorized our application for the Payroll Protection Plan funding from the federal government. We were approved for a forgivable loan in the amount of \$38,700.00. These funds were allocated and used for payroll, utilities, and Pastor Matt's health care and pension contributions. Since we are utilizing the funds in compliance with the federal guidelines, we will not have to repay the loan. The decision to utilize the program was a proactive approach to make sure that Bethlehem could keep staff employed and paid. In addition, the program allowed us to maintain reserves in saving's and CD's.

The regular offerings have been fairly consistent and the following provides a comparison year over year from 2019 to 2020:

2019 average monthly offerings---\$28,438.57
2020 average monthly offerings---\$24,313.02
Decrease of \$4,125.55/month

With regards to the overall financial position, the actual deficit as it relates to operating income and expense is currently \$22,184.17. Through the end of July we had also reduced our set-aside for dedicated accounts by \$8,117.88. Looking at the Balance Sheet, our cash reserves have been reduced by \$30,335.59, but this is more than offset by the PPP funding. The net effect is an increase in our cash position of \$8,397.95. It should be noted that since we are not meeting in-person for worship and other activities, we are not spending many of the line items in the budget. Certain things that we would normally expense are not happening and that is what is helping the deficit remain low during this time. It should also be noted that as we begin to open to activities, we will have additional expenses as a result of the pandemic. Our Treasurer, Vicki Leighton is monitoring the financial situation very closely in conjunction with the Board of Stewardship and Finance.

Through your continued giving and generosity to Bethlehem, the church is in a solid financial position.

Thank you for your servant and loving hearts,
Jim Whitman
Congregation President

2020 Designated Giving Recipients (top 3)

Pine Ridge	\$5,721.44
Food Pantry	\$7,084.28
Lansing SAVE	\$5,878.94

September Birthdays

Don Cairns	Sept. 3
Cynthia Dolan	Sept. 3
Laura Halbakken	Sept. 3
Marilyn Kosloski	Sept. 6
Marcia Cummings	Sept. 8
Gayle Boyd	Sept. 9
Sandy Rollis	Sept. 14
Yvonne Nelson	Sept. 16
Jim Schalkhauser	Sept. 16
Candy Barnes	Sept. 17
Dorothy Martin	Sept. 17
Chuck Gaus	Sept. 19
Louella Danbrook	Sept. 20
Carol Pride	Sept. 20
Mary Jakubiak	Sept. 24
Don Olson	Sept. 28



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.

Altar Flowers

The Altar Guild is able to order Altar Flowers for Sunday worship services. We are grateful to those who are willing to sponsor the floral arrangements as they enhance the worship experience for all. Given that few of us are making visits to the church building, if you would like to sponsor flowers for a selected Sunday, **please text or email Kris Burow to 2bakrisjohn@gmail.com or call (517) 599-7685.** Please include information for your preferred date and if there is a special reason for that Sunday (birthday, anniversary, etc). We will add your name to the Flower Chart. Floral arrangements are \$35. Kris will contact you to confirm your order. After worship service is taped Pastor Matt will deliver the flowers to your home or you can request to have them taken to another member.

Thank you to all who are willing to be Altar Flower sponsors!



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

Ruth Ferguson in Sparrow Hospital

Chris Ransom in McLaren Hospital



Those at home: *Mary Ann Allen, Virginia Bauman, Mary Brenke, Crystal Collins, Doug Griffin, Ernie Hassell, Rhoda Hunter, Kurt Kollmeyer, Jeff Kosloski Jr., Marilyn Kostrzewski, Michael Mahoney, Linda McClellan, John Nelson, Yvonne Nelson, Tharin Palmer, Gloria Robbins, Bob Robbins, Carol Roush, Audrey Skidmore, Don Spencley, Cheryl VanPatten, 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 and the Baker Neighborhood Partners.

Pastoral Acts:

Baptism

Trevor Keh Smith August 2, 2020

Confirmation

Amaya Marie Fernandez August 30, 2020

New Member Received

Sandra Westover August 30, 2020

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



**taking
faith
home**

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

SEPTEMBER

<u>01</u> Romans 12:9-21	<u>07</u> Ezekiel 33:7-11	<u>15</u> Romans 14:1-12	<u>23</u> Exodus 16:2-15
<u>02</u> Exodus 3:1-15	<u>08</u> Romans 13:8-14	<u>16</u> Exodus 14:19-31	<u>24</u> Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45
<u>03</u> Psalm 105:1-45b	<u>09</u> Exodus 12:1-4	<u>17</u> Psalm 114	<u>25</u> Titus 2:11-15
<u>04</u> 2 Timothy 2:1-13	<u>10</u> Psalm 149	<u>18</u> John 8:1-11	<u>26</u> Psalm 145:1-8
<u>05</u> Psalm 26:1-8	<u>11</u> Galatians 5:13-15	<u>19</u> Psalm 103:1-13	<u>27</u> Matthew 21:23-32
<u>06</u> Matthew 18:15-20	<u>12</u> Psalm 119:33-40	<u>20</u> Matthew 20:1-16	<u>28</u> Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32
	<u>13</u> Matthew 18:21-35	<u>21</u> Jonah 3:10-4:11	<u>29</u> Philippians 2:1-13
	<u>14</u> Genesis 50:15-21	<u>22</u> Philippians 1:21-30	<u>30</u> Exodus 17:1-17

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.

The BELCW is an active women's group within our church and we need to keep it going. Our elections will be coming up in December and we need just two candidates:

Vice-President – 1-year term (second year to serve as President) As VP you will contact new women members, attend Board meetings and observe and learn from the current President.

Secretary – 2-year term As secretary you will take the minutes at each Board meeting, including General Meetings and perform occasional correspondence.

If you are interested or would like more information, please contact President Jamie Andrews at (517) 897-6677 or email her at jamieandrews1307@gmail.com.



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF



We learned that in addition to the devastating loss of life, injuries and widespread damage caused by the Beirut explosion, three containers LWR Quilts and Kits amounting to more than 47,000 items were also destroyed.

These items were at the port of Beirut, on their way to families hit hard by the increasingly dire economic situation in Lebanon, including refugee families who fled conflict in Syria.

For the families who were to receive these items, the loss of a quilt will mean a colder winter. The loss of a kit means fewer resources to keep families and especially children, healthy and safe in difficult circumstances.

We don't know yet how we will be able to replace these valuable items, but we are committed to finding a way while also responding to the urgent needs of families suffering in the aftermath of the explosion.

**Your love will be a lifeline to families living through this crisis.
Please give what you can today.**

Your gift to our **World of Good emergency response fund** will do so much. You'll provide food and shelter for desperate families in Beirut, and get quilts and kits into the hands that need them in Lebanon.

This is a difficult time in the world, but God's love is faithful and so are you. Please give your best gift today, so that we can work to make sure your love reaches every neighbor.

In Christ's love,
Daniel Speckhard

Community Partners:



- August had five Sundays, so Bethlehem again had a chance to positively impact the lives of Lansing School District students who are BELC members or live in the Baker Neighborhood. We have partnered with Lansing SAVE since early 2019 and your generosity continues to affirm and encourage students to strive for a future that holds options for continued education. At printing we have no updated numbers, but we will report soon.

For more information about the program go to: <https://www.lansingmi.gov/674/Lansing-SAVE>

- Partnering with the Lansing School District, the YMCA is serving free meals to our community from the BELC parking lot, Monday through Friday. The partnership with the Lansing School District will continue as it has – distributing lunches in our parking lot weekday mornings. According to their website, the YMCA distributed 127,350 meals (from all locations) between March 16 and August 26, 2020.

For more information about the Healthy Living Mobile Food Bus go to: <https://www.lansingymca.org>

- Walking Wednesdays will be virtual this year, and are scheduled to begin in September. Bethlehem will again be highlighted as a neighborhood anchor, and there will be updates on our outreach efforts during the pandemic and into 2021. If you have a brilliant outreach idea, or if you would just like to be more actively involved in the neighborhood, please contact the Tracy or Vicki in the office, or Liisa Whitman as the council representative for outreach.
- We will have a “God’s Work, Our Hands” event immediately following Sunday worship. We will split into groups and clean up Clifford Park across the street and the park that was created on Isbell Street. We will also clean up the block on which the church sits if time allows. Looking forward to seeing some of you as we show our commitment to the neighborhood.

BELC/Building News:

- The Board of Buildings and Grounds has secured a contract with Boling Janitorial Service, Inc. We are currently month-to-month, and will continue as long as building use is low. There are plusses and minuses to having an outside service rather than a custodian we employ. We are evaluating as we move forward, and will make decisions as they present, keeping the safety of our congregation, and the maintenance of the facility as our first priorities. Please, if you see something that needs attention, email Vicki @ belcparishadmin@gmail.com.
- The triennial Mission Home inspection went well. Other than a furnace inspection, which will be completed when the guys are here installing the new boiler, the called for repairs are minor in nature. We should be able to offer a housing option for Samaritas for many years to come.
- The boiler work is still pending! We have a commitment date of September 2nd. We will have heat before we need it.
- Sanitization supplies are coming! We have started to receive boxes of sanitizer, dispensing stations, and stands. While some items are on back-order, it is exciting to feel like we are making forward progress. Some of these will be utilized for outdoor worship services. Some will allow us to move toward opening the building. Baby steps in the right direction.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

~ Psalm 46:1

Dear Friends,

By definition, a refuge is a safe place. When the Bible describes God as our refuge, it is saying that God is our safe place when we need protection from something. Knowing God is our refuge enables us to trust Him more freely. We need not fear situations or people who threaten our well-being, whether in a physical or spiritual sense. There is no situation we will ever face that is out of God's control, so the best place to be, always, is right with Him.

As this pandemic has now continued far longer than any of us could have imagined, maybe we are looking at the church building itself as our refuge. We have often said throughout this time that the church is really the people and not the building. And we know that the church exists wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name, but the longer we are away from the building we call our church home, the more we want to be able to be inside it. It is a place that holds so many memories and so much promise for the future.

If there was ever a time for us to come together as a church family, it is now. We cannot wish our way out of this situation, but we can pray for things to get better. We are all lonesome and restless, but we must keep our minds on each other and not about just what we think we need individually. We are stronger together in spirit than if we think about things on a personal level. We know that there is a very strong desire to resume activities in the church for small groups, even though we are a long way from resuming in-person worship services. There has been a growing desire by small groups within and outside of the church to be allowed to be able to meet in the building. Our Congregation Council has to honor and balance those requests while staying true to the safeguards of our Re-opening Plan (approved unanimously by the Council). A policy draft was written and approved unanimously as well by the Council in April that stated everything that will need to be done to allow small groups to meet. The fact is that we have not gotten to that point with regards to sanitization chemicals and equipment, as well as training and sanitization protocols. There is a national backorder on many of the items we are purchasing, not because we did not order them soon enough, but because every business, school, and church in the world needs the same items. Church leadership and Council have been proactive from the beginning of the pandemic to make sure we would be ready to re-open Bethlehem as soon as safely possible. We are not at that point and it looks as though it will be some time before that hopeful day arrives.

This time we are going through is frustrating to everyone on many levels and the most important thing we can do is to remain unified as a church family and not let individual wants lead to a fragmented congregation. Last month, Council provided the contact information for each council member. We included that information in the last update to the congregation so everyone could have a voice and contact the person they felt most comfortable with to ask questions, voice concerns, offer opinions and solutions, or just to talk. We are including that information again, below, because we do want to hear from you. Church leadership and Council can and will answer every question that is posed because we have done the due diligence to be prepared with everyone's health and safety the number one priority. All the precautions we are taking and policy we have drafted is done out of love for the congregation. We are not working out of fear and anxiety. We are working based on science and the best research we have available to us.

“When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.” (Psalm 94:19)

What this Psalm tells us is that even in rough or desperate situations, we can be filled with the joy of the Lord. He is our consolation and His Word eases anxiety like nothing else can. God can bring joy to your soul even during times when you're most anxious by simply knowing that He's present and trusting in His power.

These are anxious, challenging times. We all want to resume our normal lives and our patience is being tested. We need to take a breath occasionally and remember that we are not in this alone. We have God and we have each other, even though we can't meet inside the church building yet. This cannot last forever, but until it is gone, we must remain vigilant and do what is right for each other's health and safety. We will worship together again, but it won't be on our timeline.

As we 'gather' together virtually around the Word and physically distance around the Sacrament, Bethlehem will persevere and come out on the other side of this a stronger church as we stay united in the goal.

Peace, and may God continue to bless you and Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church,

Jim Whitman
Congregation President

(continued on page 9)



Thank you to everyone who wished me a Happy Birthday and for all the wonderful goodies I received. You are all truly gifts from God!!!! You made my day special!! Thank you

Love,
Tracy Baker

Dear Bethlehem Family,

I just want to thank everyone who reached out to me after the passing of my mom. It's truly a blessing to have such a wonderful and caring church family. The cards and phone calls were a big comfort and much appreciated. I miss you all and can't wait to thank you in person!

Love,
Art Alvera

A big THANK YOU to Mary Bartel!

Thank you so much Mary for coming in each month and helping me put the newsletters together. It would take so much longer without your help and I enjoy your company while we work. You're the best!

Love,
Tracy Baker

Pastor Matt,

It was great to "meet" you last week. I do believe that you were my first Zoom Meeting from the Reservation!

Thank you so much for your support of the Ministry! Your donation of \$1,678.34 for the Job Corp will go a long way in helping people!

Thank you for being a partner!

Blessings,
Pastor Dan
Pine Ridge Reservation

(continued from page 8)

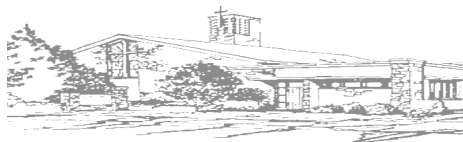
Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church Council:

Susan Mahoney
Joe Shreffler
Liisa Whitman
Carole Kienke
Candy Barnes
Marv Halbakken
Diane Miller
Vicki Leighton
Sherry Bass-Pohl
Pastor Matthew Smith
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Bethlehem Star

Lutheran Church Lansing



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



September 2020

Newsletter Deadline is **September 15**
for the **October 2020** Bethlehem Star.

Also available at
www.bethlutheran.org

In-Home Date: September 1, 2020
Mailed on August 28, 2020

