

Annual Report

2025

Bethlehem
Baptist Church

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COUNCIL OF ELDERS

Paul Delahunt
Elder Chairman

Dear Bethlehem,

2025 was another year of God's good blessing on our church. Let us praise him for it!

A few years ago, Pastor Kenny identified his pastoral task as having three key phases: Stabilize, Strengthen, and Transition. During 2025, we continued to be *strengthened* in grace as a body. By grace, we heralded the gospel of Jesus Christ. By grace, we enjoyed strong fellowship in the Spirit. By grace, we felt the love of the Father. By grace, we witnessed to the nations. By grace, we worked in our homes and neighborhoods to the glory of God. By grace, we confessed sin. By grace, we pursued holiness and joy in the Lord.

As part of the Lord's work in "strengthening" us, the church together discerned his call on Mike Lane to transition from serving as a non-staff elder to joining the pastoral team as our new Executive Pastor. Mike has stepped into the role with vigor, joy, and goodwill. What an excellent trio of attributes in a shepherd! It has been a blessing for me personally to partner closely with Pastor Mike over the past year. He is serving us well. Please thank him for blessing us the next time you see him.

Shortly after the congregation voted on Pastor Mike, Pastor Kenny went on a planned three-month sabbatical. What a well-earned time of rest for Kenny & Kathy! They have both blessed our church so deeply since Kenny became our Pastor for Preaching & Vision in 2021.

After returning from sabbatical, Pastor Kenny determined, in consultation with the elders, that it was time to pivot to the next phase: *Transition*. Since that announcement, the elders have been working hard to pursue Kenny's successor as Pastor for Preaching & Vision. What a significant moment this promises to be for Bethlehem! The Elder Council is looking to our heavenly Father for wisdom, guidance, humility, clarity, and unity.

It continues to be a joy for me to serve by leading. The Lord provides energy and vision. It is a blessing to be able to partner with such godly men on the Elder Council. I can say to you with certainty: you are loved by your elders!

There is always more work for leaders to do than can possibly be done. As elders, we know that we are under-shepherds who are called to point constantly to the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, the One who laid down his life to rescue "the people of his pasture" (Psalm 95:7). And we are grateful that the Lord did not give this work only to leaders—not at all! The labors of Christian community and witness are everyone's tasks. Your elders are thrilled by the ministry and gifts we see on display all around us. Indeed, we are blessed to be a church "zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14). May God equip us all the more "with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever" (Hebrews 13:21).

Be much in prayer for Bethlehem in these days, as at all times. The Lord is pleased to guide his church! "He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

With affection in Christ,

Paul Delahunt
Elder Chairman





Chad Geyen



Glen Bloomstrom



Brad Nelson
Pastor for Global Outreach



René González
Pastor for Adult Discipleship



Darin Brink



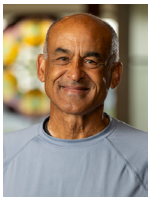
Chuck Steddom
Pastor for Worship & Ministry Development



Charles Kim



Bud Burk
Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship



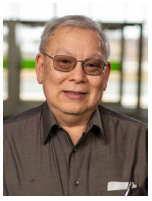
Kenny Stokes
Pastor for Preaching & Vision



Mike Lane



Paul Delahunt
Chair



Rod Takata



John Mielke

PREACHING & VISION

Kenny Stokes
Pastor for Preaching & Vision

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing ... My Father is the vinedresser ... Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

—John 15:5, 1–2

Dear Bethlehem family,

As we begin 2026, I want to report briefly on where the Lord has brought us and where, by his grace, I believe he is leading us. My thoughts are anchored in Jesus' words from John 15 because they help me (and us) interpret the challenges of the last five years with faith. Looking back, we can see that in our hardships the Father was sovereignly pruning us—not to harm us, but, in his wise design, for our good—so that we would be strengthened to keep abiding in Christ, bearing much fruit to his glory, and growing in love for one another.

Thanksgiving

First, I thank Christ for his all-sufficient grace and new mercies every morning across Bethlehem's 154 years. I am thankful for: our staff and pastors and the glad camaraderie we share; our elder council and their tangible love for Christ and the church; and you, the congregation—chosen, holy, and dearly loved by God—and the many evidences of grace among you.

I am also deeply thankful for my wife, Kathy, who has been laboring with me for your joy these last 27 years at Bethlehem. Praise God with me that Kathy and I celebrated our 46th wedding anniversary last month. And by God's kindness, I have begun my 28th year on the pastoral staff at Bethlehem.

Phases of Ministry

Soon after I began serving as *Pastor for Preaching & Vision* in 2021, I sensed—and the elders confirmed—the Lord leading us to three priorities: Stabilize, Strengthen, and Transition.

Stabilize (2021–2023): God carried us through COVID-related disruptions, a season of conflict, and the shift from one multi-site church on three campuses to three separate churches—restoring steadiness in worship, ministry, and life together.

Strengthen (2023–present): We have been refocusing around our mission, "to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ," by making disciples who Worship, Belong, Grow, Serve, and Go. Two encouraging evidences of this strengthening are: ministry and support staff are better positioned to facilitate our discipleship priorities and an increased number of congregants are participating in discipleship through Sunday classes, Bible studies, and various groups.

Transition (present–2028): Now we enter the third phase—"Transition"—a season aimed at preparing for healthy pastoral succession and strengthening Bethlehem's long-term stability and fruitfulness. The fact that several of our staff pastors are in their sixties is not a setback but an opportunity to position Bethlehem on a strong foundation for the future advance of our mission for decades of faithful ministry.

This Transition phase includes five projects:

- **Foundation for the Future**: retire our

remaining mortgage debt. Pray for provision and joyful generosity.
- **Congregational Engagement**: elders listening carefully to the congregation. Pray for unity and discernment.
- **Financial & Staffing Alignment**: align resources for sustainability and gospel impact. Pray for wisdom and clarity.
- **Search for the next *Pastor for Preaching & Vision***: I intend to transition out of the Pastor for Preaching & Vision role by June 30, 2028 (sooner if a successor is called). Pray for a clear, transparent, prayerful process and the Lord's guidance.
- **Future Pastoral Transition Planning**: prepare for additional transitions. Pray for stability and leadership development.

Praise and Prayer

Jesus promises that those who abide in him will bear fruit—and that the Father's pruning is never wasted. As we enter 2026, please pray for wisdom, unity, and humility as we finalize the 2026 proposed budget, clarify the pastoral search process, and prepare to launch a fundraising effort in early 2026 to retire our mortgage debt.

For the advancement and joy of your faith,

Pastor Kenny Stokes,



Kenny Stokes
Pastor for Preaching & Vision

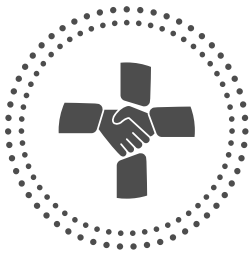
Our Strategy

FIVE DISCIPLESHIP PRIORITIES



Worship

Since God, by his grace, has given us new life to see his glory and know him through faith in Christ, let us devote ourselves to joyfully worship him in all of life, individually and corporately.



Belong

Since God has chosen us and united us by faith into one body in Christ, let us devote ourselves to love one another in covenant community.



Grow

Since God has given us his Spirit to understand the Scriptures, let us devote ourselves to grow in the grace and knowledge of God, that we might mature in Christlikeness.



Serve

Since Christ came to serve and lay down his life for us in love, let us, enabled by his grace, devote ourselves to serving one another in sacrificial love.



Go

Since the Lord Jesus Christ has commissioned us to make disciples, let us, in confident reliance on his enabling presence, devote ourselves as a church to go in compassion to the peoples in our neighborhoods and the nations.

WORSHIP & MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

Chuck Steddom
Pastor for Worship & Ministry Development

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,
do all to the glory of God.

—1 Corinthians 10:31

2025 was a busy year in the two areas of Bethlehem that I directly oversee: Worship Ministry and Local Outreach.

Worship Ministry

In the Worship Ministry, I have the joy of working with over 125 people, including worship teams, choirs, and seasonal orchestral players. In addition to the weekly Sunday morning worship services, we added two large-scale worship concerts. Inspired by the summer sermon series in the Psalms, our first concert in June was entitled "Symphony of Psalms." All the musical selections in the program were different settings of Psalms in a variety of musical genres. We invited singers and players from more than seven other like-minded churches to join us. In part, this was an experiment to see if collaborative efforts such as this would be a benefit both to the musicians who participated as well as their churches. The Lord blessed this venture in such a way that we chose to do a similar worship concert in December.

The December Christmas Festival, entitled "The Wonders of His Love," was presented twice, on December 20 and 21. Again, there were at least seven different churches represented. In addition to a choir and orchestra, we invited a guest violinist from Nashville, Aria Stiles, and we featured our own Isabelle Thom, who studies music composition at Wheaton College and the "Scripture Speaks" ministry duo, Damian & Anna Leverett.

As we look to the future, ongoing collaboration with like-minded churches in nights of worship will be a valuable way in which Bethlehem can support smaller congregations and church plants that do not have the music personnel to lead nights of worship on this scale. In the same vein as our Treasuring Christ Together church planting efforts over the last two decades, a potential fruit might be a Treasuring Christ Together choir and orchestra. Please pray with us about this investment in the kingdom.

The Worship Ministry calendar is also filled with seasonal celebrations such as Passion Week and Advent, as well as other music and worship events throughout this year. In the Spring, Isabelle Thom presented a night of original music as a singer/songwriter. "Scripture Speaks," a ministry of CityJoy, provided worship inspiration at several smaller settings at Bethlehem. In October, we enjoyed the worship leadership and music artistry of singer/songwriter Matt Papa.

I also continue to devote a portion of my time to teaching worship courses in the Bethlehem Seminary Master of Divinity program and mentoring seminary students. It is my joy to plan and lead worship at the Serious Joy Conference for Pastors and assist with their weekly chapel program.

I want to personally thank and commend all those who joyfully serve in the weekly worship services, along with our choir and orchestra members. Special thanks to Bobby Kunkle who served Bethlehem so well during my sabbatical in 2024. He graduated in May of 2025 and is now serving a church in south Florida. All the best to Bobby and his wife, Sarah.

God has given me a wonderful helpmate who has served with me for 43 years. Those close to the Worship Ministry know that all of this is not possible without Carol Steddom's help, musicianship, and vision. Thank you, Carol.

Local Outreach

Local outreach experienced an exciting year in 2025, with focused growth in two areas. The first area is formal neighborhood/street evangelism. Beginning in June, 12–15 people gathered weekly for personal evangelism training. We followed that by making our way to Elliot Park, Guthrie Theatre park, and the US Bank plaza, stopping to pray for people and presenting the gospel as conversations allowed. I believe that all were greatly encouraged by the interactions we had with our near neighbors in the East Metro core. Plans are to resume this as warmer weather returns.

The second area is developing the CityJoy Ministry Center (the former Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church building). It has been an exciting year for Jericho Road Ministries (JRM) as the Elliot Park branch set up shop in the CityJoy Ministry Center, providing many wonderful opportunities to personally interact with our Elliot Court neighbors through meeting physical needs. JRM has been expanding its food services one afternoon a week, distributing food at the Elliot Park Neighborhood building.

We had two hard work days at the Bethesda church building to physically clean up the yard, and the site in general, and we finally got control of the alley in the back. We are currently dreaming and planning how to further utilize this facility as we add legal assistance to our list of services provided to the clients of JRM—and others who might need affordable counsel. Signage and an improved parking lot are on the immediate list for needed upgrades.

We are excited about the growth in our English as a Second Language (ESL) program which meets on Wednesday evenings at the church. Tony Morales and his team are meeting with 6–10 people weekly, representing 4–5 different languages.

The Sanctity of Life Ministry, led by Paul Dreblow, has been active in praying and leading a number of opportunities for Bethlehem to be involved in advocacy for the unborn. These opportunities include prayer walks, film screenings, seminars, and regular meetings for all who want to learn how they can be more proactive in the fight against abortion.

This was the second year that the Elliot Park Neighborhood Association asked Bethlehem to support the annual National Night Out celebration in our community. Over 75 Bethlehem volunteers joined us to make that night one of the most effective gospel witnesses we have had. We served over 450 people, and all of our volunteers felt very encouraged as they met and ministered to our neighbors.

CityJoy

Part of my job in overseeing local outreach at Bethlehem is to serve as President of the Board of Directors for CityJoy, working closely with CityJoy's extraordinary Executive Director, Heather Elting-Ballard. CityJoy exists to serve, support, and guide outreach ministers who focus on reaching different parts of our urban community with the gospel of Jesus Christ by witness and deeds of mercy. I count it a privilege to work with all the CityJoy ministers; they are a gift from the Lord.

CityJoy has seen an incredible amount of growth over the last three years. Here are some highlights from 2025:

- Completed strategic planning work
- Approved new mission and vision for CityJoy
- Set up donor database

- Went through solo first audit—a “clean audit”
- Launched new CityJoy website
- Set up TrustSola, providing ministers with 24/7 access to donor and expense information
- Implemented the use of Ministry Safe (Child Safety Training)
- Began Jericho Road Ministries/ warehouse project design work
- Began long-term planning for Jericho Road Ministries
- Added a fourth staff member to Revive
- Started Life-on-Life summer internship program
- Added Dave Omdal’s ministry, Valor, which teaches Jiu-jitsu to youth in the community

Blessings,



Chuck Steddom
Pastor for Worship & Ministry Development

GLOBAL OUTREACH

Brad Nelson
Pastor for Global Outreach

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory.

—Isaiah 43:6–7

Introduction

The majesty and glory of God are the bedrock of missions. Indeed, they are the bedrock of all creation, as we see in Isaiah 43. Every major redemptive event in the Bible was accomplished for God's glory. Everything in the universe is about God and about showing him to us (Psalm 19:1–6).

Therefore, we engage in missions because there are places in the world where God is not yet receiving the worship he deserves for creating the world and for accomplishing salvation. For this reason, we pray, train, and send people to proclaim the good news of Jesus to those who have not yet heard.

Global Partners

Our global partners fall into two categories: commissioned and commended.

Commissioned global partners are men and women who have completed Bethlehem's Nurture Program, have been commissioned by Bethlehem, and are currently sent and financially supported by Bethlehem. We are their primary sending church.

Commended global partners have also completed Bethlehem's Nurture Program and were commissioned by Bethlehem, but they are now sent and financially supported by one of our sister churches. Because of their strong connection to Bethlehem, they desire to remain meaningfully tethered to our church. As a result, the Global Outreach Team continues to provide them with prayer support and invites them to all global partner events.

If you would like to know which global partners fall into each category, this year's *Outreach Partner Prayer Calendar* identifies each global partner as "commissioned" or "commended."

As we enter 2026, Bethlehem has 48 commissioned global partners and 16 commended global partners.

Our commissioned global partners include 85 adults and 80 children—37 couples and 11 singles—serving in 26 countries around the world, for a total of 165 individuals.

Our commended global partners include 31 adults and 27 children—15 couples and 1 single—for a total of 58 individuals. They are serving in 11 different countries.

Global Outreach (GO) Team

The Global Outreach (GO) Team is made up of the following dedicated volunteers:

Scott & Shara Aatsap, David & Faith Jaeger, Morris & Wendy Johnson, Daewon & Youngin Kim, Amanda Knoke, Burt & Trish Koppendrayer, John & Pamela Kovacs, Amy Miller, Ken Morse, Jeff & Gayle Sprinkel, and Bob & Evie Wykstra.

Global Outreach (GO) Staff

Pearl Lundquist serves as the *Administrative Assistant for Global Outreach* and does an outstanding job helping keep all the elements

of our missions program organized. Ken Morse continues to serve faithfully as the *Volunteer Coordinator for Short-Term Ministry*.

Barnabas Teams

Each global partner is supported by a Barnabas Team that prays for them regularly and provides relational, emotional, spiritual, and practical care. At the end of 2025, more than 250 faithful servants were supporting our global partners through service on Barnabas Teams.

Global Partner Reunion

Each year, during the final week of July, we host our Global Partner Reunion. Anyone who was previously, is currently, or is in the Nurture Program is invited to this four-day gathering of fellowship, food, worship, fun, and focused prayer. It is a deeply encouraging time for our global partners to strengthen one another as they persevere in the demanding work of cross-cultural ministry.

Global Focus

The theme for Global Focus 2025 (October 22–November 2) was "Planting Churches Internationally." Ed Stetzer preached on the first Sunday, and one phrase from his sermon has lingered with many of us: "Put your 'yes' on the table, and let God put it on the map." He reminded us that we are all sent with a message to all nations through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Kenny preached on the second Sunday, concluding with our traditional call for those sensing God's leading into missions to come forward. Thirteen people responded.

One of our goals during the twelve days of Global Focus was to help our congregation better know and pray for our global partners. To that end, we hosted a lunch on October 22, where 25 global partners joined congregants at individual tables to share a meal and build relationships. We also held a dedicated "night of prayer" for our global partners on a Wednesday evening.

On November 1, we hosted a Men's Breakfast, where global partner Jacob B. shared about the death of his precious daughter, Perpetua, and the profound impact her life and death had on their family and the surrounding community in Africa. We concluded the week with "Missions in the Manse," where more than 40 people gathered at Pastor Kenny & Kathy's home to learn about the Nurture Program and prayerfully consider long-term missions.

Nurture Program

We prepare individuals for long-term vocational global missions through our Nurture Program, which provides a strategic combination of training, mentoring, and resources for global ministry. Currently, 17 individuals are enrolled in the program, with 12 more actively considering participation.

Women in Missions

More than 25 years ago, Bethlehem member Char Ransom founded "Women in Missions" to bless and support our women missionaries. Her vision was to give the women of Bethlehem opportunities to meet women serving on the field, hear their stories, build relationships, and form teams of "rope holders" committed to praying for them.

This year, Women in Missions met monthly and, at times, met in a combined format with the men's missions gathering. These joint evenings highlighted a global partner and fostered unified prayer and encouragement. We extend our deepest gratitude to Pamela Kovacs for planning and organizing Women in Missions in 2025.

Global Diaconate

The Global Diaconate Fund exists to provide relief to the poorest of the poor around the world. After being on hold for two years, we resumed use of these funds in 2024. Our desire is to bless our global partners by equipping them to serve those in need—being the hands and feet of Christ—so that those helped might also be introduced to Jesus.

In 2025, we sent one grant to India to assist with flood relief efforts.

Short-Term Ministry Trips

Our short-term teams are primarily sent to bless, encourage, and support our global partners. We also send teams to a small number of trusted partner ministries whose work is significant and aligned with our mission.

In 2025, we sent teams to Senegal, Thailand, Ireland, Costa Rica, Poland, and South Carolina (for disaster relief). Additionally, John Mielke and I traveled to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and India to encourage and serve five global partner families.

Prayer for Global Partners

Every Monday morning at 7am, a group of church members gathers outside the Prayer Room to pray for our "Global Partner of the Week" and the nations. When possible, our global partner joins us live; otherwise, we connect with them through a video call.

Business as Mission (BAM)

We have funds available to support global partners who are seeking to establish businesses overseas—often referred to as "Business as Mission" or "Business for Transformation." No loans were distributed in 2025.

It has been a joy to serve for 38 years at a church with a 154-year legacy of global faithfulness. We praise God for Bethlehem's mission: "spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ." Thank you for partnering with us in the greatest work in the universe.

Reaching the nations with you in the Name above all names, and for his glory!



Brad Nelson
Pastor for Global Outreach



ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

René González
Pastor for Adult Discipleship

... asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

—Colossians 1:9–10

I am thankful for God's grace and blessing upon Bethlehem in 2025. Our Adult Discipleship Ministry focused on planning, implementing, and supporting different initiatives and ministries that have, by God's grace, helped our people *belong* to one another and *grow* in their knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptisms

One of the greatest joys in church life is witnessing people profess their faith in Jesus, proclaim the gospel, and share the gospel's work in their lives through baptism. This year we celebrated 29 baptisms of people from a wide range of ages and backgrounds! We also partnered with Bethlehem College and Seminary to do a baptism practicum for their seminary students, which was a helpful and encouraging experience for all involved. Pastor Mike Lane continues to use his giftings to teach the Baptism (and Membership) classes.

Membership & Member Care

We began 2025 with 743 members and ended it with 742; this number adjustment represents 88 removals and 87 additions. Our "Member Care" groups have helped the elders shepherd the flock among us and know all the sheep, including those who come and go. In August we did a membership analysis and saw that the membership of our church is healthily distributed in terms of years of membership.

Small Groups

We began and ended the year with about 40 small groups; this number represents some new groups that started meeting in 2025 and some that ended. We have 438 people participating in small groups, 87 of whom are small group leaders. In the Spring and Fall, we hosted Small Group Leader Dinners to show appreciation for our leaders, equip and encourage them, hear from them, and connect them with each other. We also launched the "Small Group Leader Toolkit," which provides leaders with online resources to help them lead their groups. Josh Sinnott continues to bless this ministry by providing training to our small group leaders.

Young Adults

We thank God for Reed Miller and Jenny Schroeder's ongoing, steady leadership over the years. During the Young Adults Retreat in January, 56 men and women spent a cold weekend at Trout Lake Camp, learning about "shame and the gospel" from guest speaker Cody Irwin. Highlights of the retreat included a balloon/dodgeball battle, broomball, testimonies of faith, and rich conversations about combatting sinful shame. At our multi-church event in June, over 130 people from 15 different churches enjoyed food, games, and fellowship at Tony Schmidt Regional Park.

Other events throughout the year included: a scavenger hunt at the Mall of America, game

night at Riley Johnson's house, Friendsgiving at the Steddoms' home, sports and ice cream at Reed's house, St. Patrick's Day and Christmas at the Pearsons' home, Fall festival, bonfire at the Eccles' home, Smashburgers at the Seabury house, and a worship and Scripture night at church. These events were successful and well-attended, but the biggest ministry highlights were the moments of deep conversation, spontaneous worship and prayer, and service to the body of believers at Bethlehem. We are so thankful for the godly men and women who make this group what it is.

Seniors

Our ministry to seniors includes a weekly gathering on Sundays called "King's Friends." This class of 40 people regularly gathers to hear from Bethlehem's global partners, receive biblical teaching from elder Rod Takata, and enjoy fellowship. Tom Youngquist serves the group by providing a Zoom link to those who can't attend in person. Once a month, our seniors gather for "Senior Sojourners," which includes lunch and a program. Some of the highlights from 2025 were: hearing Pastor Tom Steller, Bonnie Williams, and Pastor Brad Nelson talk about the history of missions at Bethlehem Baptist Church; walking down 8th Street to visit Jericho Road–Elliot Park and hear about God's work in our neighborhood; and a presentation from Pastor Sam Crabtree about how to communicate the gospel to the children whom God puts in our lives.

Hispanic Ministry

In the Hispanic Ministry, Joey Bures, Tony Morales, and Jairo Miranda practice servant leadership by leading the weekly class and finding ways to help our Hispanic community *belong* and *grow* at Bethlehem. Each Sunday at 11am, Spanish speakers gather in the Chapel to worship God and be discipled in their heart language, while also being encouraged to participate in Bethlehem's 9am worship service, where live translation into Spanish is provided. In addition, we seek to bridge language barriers by offering free ESL classes.

The Lord has richly blessed the Hispanic Ministry's discipleship and evangelistic efforts. We currently have three Spanish-speaking small groups. Beyond these groups, we cultivate fellowship and outreach through quarterly "Sunday Lunch Together" gatherings, our first "Hispanic Ministry Family Day," our first evangelistic "Good Friday Service," evangelism in local parks, and our annual "Christmas Celebration." Through these events, we aim not only to strengthen the body of Christ but also to extend a warm and loving invitation to those who may be hesitant toward the gospel. Lastly, we give thanks to see the members of the Hispanic Ministry integrating into the broader life of Bethlehem in meaningful and lasting ways.

Men's Ministry

The Men's Ministry has grown and strengthened this year. On a weekly basis, Corey Hink continues to lead a "Friday Men's Group." Throughout the year, there were opportunities for men to gather at breakfasts, a cookout, a workday at the CityJoy Center, and a day away at Ham Lake Baptist Camp focused on the theme of "Training for Godliness." In March, we hosted a seminar called "Men Pursuing Holiness Together." About 50 men attended, followed by ongoing participation in book groups reading through *Finally Free* by Heath Lambert.

'Wednesdays Together' and 'Wednesdays at Wabun'

Thomas Florestano has continued to bless our department through leading and organizing Bethlehem's Wednesday evening programming. This weekly gathering is an opportunity for the church family to worship,

be encouraged in the word, and spend time with brothers and sisters in Christ in a more personal way through eating and fellowship. Attendance is usually between 130–150 people. During the school year, we offer various lessons and studies for adults and children. In the Spring, the men and women finished working through the book of Ephesians. In the Fall, they began working through the minor prophets, spending most of their time in Amos. Some weeks, the adults pray together or hear an update from a global partner. During the summer, all ages gathered together at the Wabun Picnic Area to hear a series on "pursuing God" by various speakers from the church.

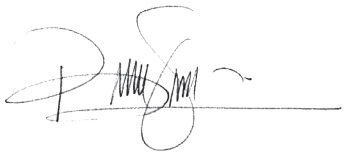
Adult Classes, Conferences, and Seminars

Our adult Sunday Class program is one of the important pieces of Adult Discipleship! We saw a growing amount of participation in the Fall, with 162 adults involved. We are so thankful for our teachers: Glen & Ruth Bloomstrom (*GriefShare* in the Spring and *Gospel-Centered Marriage* in the Fall), Timothée Davi (*Strive to Be More Satisfied in God* in the Spring and *Church History 1: The Age of the Early Church Fathers* in the Fall), Cody Irwin (*Gospel-Centered Marriage* in the Spring and *Biblical Theology* in the Fall), John Mielke and Todd Swanson (*Theological Foundations 2* in the Spring), Christian Hunt (*New Testament Survey* in the Spring), Louise Anderson and Dorothy Wintz (*GriefShare* in the Fall), and Pastor Mike Lane (*Doctrines That Define Us* in the Fall).

In February, we hosted a marriage conference here at church, and 51 couples attended. The conference began with a special Valentine's Day Moroccan-themed dinner prepared by Charles MacDonald and his volunteer team, and the food was served restaurant-style by youth servers led by Charles's wife, Stacy. Pastor Bud & Lisa Burk and their team provided childcare for over 40 children. It was a wonderful time of teaching and fellowship. Our speakers were Ken & Theresa Currie, Pastor Mike & Leeanne Lane, and myself.

In March, Zach Simmons taught a seminar on evangelism and discipleship. We sharpened our understanding of how to deliver the gospel message, build trust in evangelistic relationships, and have a faithful presence in the lost world. Conversations that began at this seminar are still bearing fruit amongst the young adults and others in the church. In the summer, some of us put elements of this training to practice by doing evangelism in the Elliot Park neighborhood with Pastor Chuck Steddom.

In Christ,



René González,
Pastor for Adult Discipleship



WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Laurel Eccles
Minister for Women

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace,
that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

—Hebrews 4:16

After a full year at Bethlehem, I feel a deep sense of gratitude and belonging. Minneapolis has truly become home, and I have found joy in building friendships and walking alongside women as they grow in their relationship with Christ. Settling into the rhythms of ministry, forming routines, and sharing life with this community has been a rich and encouraging season, and I am thankful for the privilege of serving alongside so many faithful women.

Looking ahead, my heart remains committed to helping women treasure Christ in every season of life, leaning on his grace and truth as we continue to grow together. I am excited to see how God will guide us in the year to come and look forward to new opportunities for women to deepen their understanding of Scripture, strengthen one another through fellowship, and experience the joy of his presence in community.

Bible Studies

In early 2025, our Bible study of Ephesians by Keri Folmar—a rich study on the grace we have through Jesus Christ—came to a close. In the Fall, we began a study of the Minor Prophets titled "The Righteousness and Mercy of God." Our Spanish-speaking Precept Bible Study, led by Magali González and Miriam Serber, continued exploring the Gospel of Mark.

The Lord is clearly at work through his word, drawing women to himself, and participation in these studies has continued to grow. We are deeply thankful for Lisa Burk and her team of volunteers whose faithful care of children makes it possible for many mothers to participate and engage fully in the studies.

MOMS

Bethlehem's MOMS ministry continued to flourish in early 2025 under the leadership of Ana Bures and Emily Daniels. In the Fall, leadership transitioned to a team of Ana Bures, Natalie Moss, Beth Lundstrom, and AnneMarie Peterson. Each week, an average of 35 women gathered to learn from thoughtful speakers who encouraged them with practical and gospel-centered insights. Topics included parenting, family worship, communication in marriage, anxiety, and persevering faithfully in motherhood.

This ministry is supported in meaningful ways by the childcare provided by Lisa Burk and her team, whose loving care enables mothers to participate fully. We are grateful for the ways they bless both the children and the women of our ministry.

White Cross

Led by MaryAnn Burnes, this dedicated group of women faithfully sews handmade quilts for newborn children in our church. Meeting twice each month, they thoughtfully made and distributed more than 15 quilts in 2025, sharing both their time and talents to bless families in our congregation.

Summer Book Club

More than 40 women participated in five

Summer Book Groups that met across the Twin Cities. Books read and discussed included Cultural Counterfeits: *Confronting 5 Empty Promises of Our Age and How We Were Made for So Much More, Forgive: Why Should I and How Can I?, God of All Things: Rediscovering the Sacred in an Everyday World, The Fellowship of the Ring*, and *Flourish: How the Love of Christ Frees Us from Self-Focus*.

Through these Summer Book Groups, women at Bethlehem stayed connected and continued growing together during a season when regular programming was on pause, building friendships and encouraging one another in Christ.

Leadership Development

In the Spring of 2025, the Women's Ministry offered another session of the leadership development class "Growing in Scripture." Based on the "First Principles (Women)" course published by The Charles Simeon Trust, the class sought to equip women with practical tools to interpret Scripture thoughtfully for personal growth and to encourage, mentor, disciple, and teach others from God's Word. Taught by Kathy Stokes, Cristy Brink, and myself, the class provided a rich and engaging opportunity to study Scripture together and grow in confidence and skill in handling God's Word.

Women to Women Mentoring

Mentoring groups continued in 2025, following the relaunch of the program in 2024. Women to Women Mentoring Groups support the discipleship ministry of the church by encouraging women to form intentional mentoring relationships that help them grow in their relationship with Christ and live for God's glory. Seven groups now meet across the Twin Cities, representing 12 leaders and more than 65 participants. Throughout the year, groups read and discussed a variety of books selected by their leadership teams.

In addition, the Young Adults Ministry hosted a women's book discussion group focused on Christian living; this Fall, participants read *The Gospel Comes With a House Key*.

Special Seminar

In the Spring of 2025, a seminar titled "The Joy of Freedom: Grace and Healing for Sexual Brokenness" drew over 80 women. It was designed for those struggling with sexual sin and for women seeking to support and encourage sisters in Christ on the journey toward freedom. Feedback from the seminar was overwhelmingly positive, and out of a desire to continue learning and growing in this area, a six-week class using the Harvest USA Transforming Love curriculum was offered, with 25 women participating.

Special Events

The Women's Ministry hosted several events in 2025, beginning with the Spring Tea on May 3. The tea was entitled "Growing Together" and was based on Colossians 2:6–7. Over 140 women attended, enjoying testimonies from AnneMarie Peterson, Natalie Moss, Angie Burroughs, and Cheryl Lonski, as well as a short devotional I shared.

In October, we introduced a new "Women's Fall Overnight" hosted at the scenic, lakeside setting of Camp Lebanon. Centered on our Fall focus "Drawing Near," the event explored "How the Gospel Shapes Our Friendships." Fifty-five women participated, enjoying worship, devotions, testimonies, and small group discussions, along with hikes, pontoon rides, bonfires, and board games.

Our Advent Gathering on December 6 drew over 140 women and included worship and a spoken word performance by Scripture Speaks (Damian & Anna Leverett).

Two nature hikes and an informal coffee shop fellowship offered additional ways for women to meet new people or to deepen relationships in our church community.

As I reflect on this past year, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve the women of Bethlehem. I am especially thankful for Emily Daniels, my new Administrative

Assistant for Women's Ministry, whose energy, faithfulness, and creativity have fostered a joyful ministry partnership, and for Pastor René González, with whom I work closely and whose guidance and support make this ministry possible. It is a privilege to walk alongside so many women as they grow in Christ, encourage one another, and deepen their love for God's word. Serving in this ministry continues to bring me great joy, and I look forward with hope to all that the Lord will do among the women of our church in the year ahead.

Warmly,



Laurel Eccles
Minister for Women

CHILDREN & FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Bud Burk
Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
—Galatians 6:14a

Overview

In the conclusion of my 2014 annual report, I said, "The glory of Christ and the grace he brings has risen more fully to the surface this year, and I believe it is just beginning to blossom and will do so even more by God's faithful grace in 2015 and following. *I look forward to giving annual reports in the years to come* of this unfolding story of God's grace in Christ to undeserving sinners at Bethlehem among families which brings both salvation and sanctification for our joy. This glorious theme can be summed up in a word—the name of Jesus."

I am grateful to our faithful Father that, by his grace, I can say the above statement remains current and fresh. What follows is a continuation of his work in 2014, to the praise of his glorious grace in Christ.

In 2025, the Children & Family Discipleship team had the privilege of serving 108 households that include 240 children. Nineteen babies were born and welcomed into our congregation.

Ministry Events

The psalmist David said, "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hand" (Psalm 143:5). I do that here, as I recall Father's kind providence in blessing our three seminars. "Family Worship" was the emphasis at our Spring parent seminar. In the summer, we invited a sister in Christ, author Kathryn Butler, to speak at our parent/child seminar. She told the children that the best stories carry the theme of redemption and point to Jesus Christ. We emphasized "The Seasons of Parenting" at our Fall parent seminar. The gospel of Jesus Christ was the theme at each of these seminars, and there were significant times of meaningful conversation, prayer, and song. I am deeply grateful for the grace God granted to the households that attended.

Classroom Ministry

Our ministry to children in Nursery–Grade 5 is staffed by team members who display the fruit of the Spirit. These dear brothers and sisters serve in various roles, pointing the children to the Son with a countenance of love. Every child is prayed over by name, in Jesus' name. This theme of the gospel presented with love and prayer never gets old.

Our Nursery team is led by Lisa Burk (*Lead Coordinator for Nurseries*), Christina Osburn (*Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*), and Charles MacDonald (*Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries*). They faithfully serve the children and their parents, as well as our volunteer team of 45 adults and 21 youth.

By our Father's provision, the Sunday school classes for children in Kindergarten–Grade 5 have seen little turnover in team members. This cultivates relational growth among teams as they mature together in wisdom and joy. I continue to be so grateful for staff members

Debbie Mairet (*Administrative Assistant for Children & Family Discipleship*) and Julie Olson (*Ministry Assistant for Classroom Support*) who serve our team of 57 volunteers.

I am very glad to report that our Wednesday night children's ministry, "Kids Together," is growing relationally. Our time together includes the word, prayer, and song. Everything points to Jesus and the hope and power of his good news. The atmosphere is one of love, and it feels like a family in a living room. We are together—and together with Jesus. I am so grateful for our Father's favor in this way.

Partnership with Youth & Family Discipleship

To close, I am glad to report that I see a growing partnership between the ministries of Children & Family Discipleship and Youth & Family Discipleship. We've taken a step forward in 2025, with more planned for 2026. This is truly wonderful, and I am grateful for the friendship and leadership of Daniel Bouchoc, our Pastoral Resident for Youth & Family Discipleship. This growing unity and partnership is a good gift to our parents and their sons and daughters.

It has been a blessed year.



Bud Burk
Pastor for Children & Family Discipleship

YOUTH MINISTRY

Daniel Bouchoc
Pastoral Resident for Youth & Family Discipleship

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus ...

—2 Timothy 2:1

Overview

This year, my family moved from Oakridge Community Church in Stillwater to Bethlehem, and I began my role as *Bethlehem's Pastoral Resident for Youth & Family Discipleship*. By God's grace, I see a growing partnership between Bethlehem's families, youth, and volunteers, and I pray that this leads to our youth coming to faith and being discipled.

Teaching and Mentorship

We had a wonderful time at Trout Lake Camp. Our normal Sunday and Wednesday rhythms emphasize biblical teaching and mentorship. This year, we studied a good portion of Scripture. On Wednesdays, both Middle School and High School students finished the book of Hebrews and covered the core elements of the gospel. On Sunday mornings, the Middle School ministry studied James and Genesis, and the High School ministry studied 2 Timothy and Genesis. Each gathering concluded with 30 minutes of small group discussion led by mentors who guide conversations about doctrine and everyday life.

Family and Friendships

The youth ministry alternates events for families and youth. This year, our big events included a Mystery Game Night, an End of the Year Party, Turkey Bowl, a Winter Retreat, Summer Camp, and a Christmas Party. These events emphasize community, friendship, and discipleship aimed at cultivating a solid community of families and discipling youth in practicing the one-anothers of Scripture.

Staff

The fruit of youth ministry is a result of the dedication of our staff and volunteers. Andrea Tjarks, *Administrative Assistant for Adult Discipleship*, serves our department with her administrative gifting, and Matthew Harris serves as the *Ministry Assistant for Youth*, with an emphasis on Middle School ministry. There are 23 excellent volunteers who help lead events and mentor students. To top it off, parents are constantly involved in contributing through setup, cleanup, cooking, praying, and so on. The investment in the youth and families at Bethlehem is deep and a significant gift to our church.

Fruit

God is at work in the youth ministry! Several things stand out to me:

- Thanks to Andrea, the administrative side of the ministry has been sharpened. Policies are being clarified and followed, records are being kept, and planning is sharpened.
- While it's hard to measure, the youth ministry has a growing culture of family partnership, which is key to a successful youth and family ministry.
- 10 Youth were baptized at Bethlehem in 2025.
- The Youth & Family Discipleship department is partnering more with Bud Burk and the Children's & Family Discipleship department. This contributes to cohesive family ministry at Bethlehem.

In Christ,



Daniel Bouchoc
Pastoral Resident for Youth & Family Discipleship

COLLEGE MINISTRY

Ken Currie
Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

—1 Corinthians 15:1–5

I join David in giving thanks with my whole heart and recounting God's wonderful deeds as I submit this annual report for the College Ministry of Bethlehem Baptist Church in 2025.

Personal

By God's grace, Theresa and I celebrated 35 years of marriage in 2025 and welcomed the arrival of our fourth and fifth grandchildren. In addition, we celebrated the news of a sixth grandchild due in June 2026. We are truly overwhelmed by the abundance of blessings that we have received through our children and the establishment of their own families.

General Ministry

It continues to be a privilege to serve the church in various capacities as a member of the Bethlehem Leadership Team. This includes attending staff meetings—where opportunities and strategies to meet the needs of the body are discussed—serving in worship services, and meeting with various members for discipleship and pastoral care.

College Ministry

It is amazing to see what God has done in the past few years during a period of rebuilding Bethlehem's ministry to college students. Primarily, my responsibilities in this area relate to leading our Campus Outreach (CO) staff. Our Campus Outreach ministry is a cooperative effort with The North Church to extend the mission of both The North Church and Bethlehem ("spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ") by "building laborers on the college campus for the lost world" through the church.

In addition to office space, Bethlehem provides a portion of the administrative funds for Campus Outreach; each of the staff raises the balance of their personal support. This year, those of our Campus Outreach staff who are covenant members of Bethlehem transitioned their employment from The North Church to Bethlehem. Our current staff roster is the following:

- Jonathan Buschke, *Resource Staff*
- Ken Currie, *Downtown Area Director*
- Ellie Emley, *University of St. Thomas Campus Staff*
- Elisa Horning, *Downtown Women's Area Director, University of Minnesota*
- Billy Kor, *University of St. Thomas Campus Director*
- Peter Lane, *University of Minnesota*
- Sophie McMahon, *University of Minnesota Campus Staff*
- Lincoln Moehn, *University of St Thomas Campus Staff*
- Ethan Panchyshyn, *University of Minnesota Campus Director*

- Stephanie Pohl, *University of Minnesota Campus Director*

Our entire CO team meets monthly, and our downtown staff teams meet twice each month, including a morning of prayer together. I meet with each staff person to discuss ministry plans as well as personal matters as needs arise.

The primary ministry focus of the CO team is personal evangelism and discipleship with a vision to integrate students into the life of the local church. Each staff person seeks to build relationships with students with the goal of sharing the gospel in personal and group settings and disciple those who express evidence of saving faith in Christ. To fuel and support this focus on personal ministry, we hold various events throughout the year, including the following:

- College Connection: meets each Sunday after the 9am worship service. In the Fall, we studied Ephesians 1–3.
- Missions Night: in conjunction with Global Focus, this is a gathering to hear from missionaries and gain an understanding of how to pursue missions as a calling.
- Women's Retreat for the U of M students.
- Real Talk: a weekly evangelistic meeting at the University of St. Thomas.
- New Year's Conference: hosted in Indianapolis as a partnership of Campus Outreach ministries throughout the upper Midwest.
- Summer Bible Study: this summer, in partnership with The North Church, we held a weekly Bible study for college students from various campuses across the metro area.
- Summer Training Project in South Carolina: an eight-week intensive discipleship experience.
- Cross-Cultural Project in New Zealand: a summer-long missions experience.
- Spring Break Trips to South Carolina: provided fruitful evangelistic opportunities.

While I am full of praise to God for the growth that we have seen in staff and student participation, I am most grateful for the grace of God in the ongoing participation of graduates from our ministry in the life of Bethlehem. Every Sunday I see graduates in worship, participating in small groups, and serving in different capacities in the church. This is the ultimate vision of our college ministry.

It is a joy and privilege to minister on staff at Bethlehem. May God spread the name of Jesus and the power of the gospel through his church!



Ken Currie
Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach

OPERATIONS & FINANCE

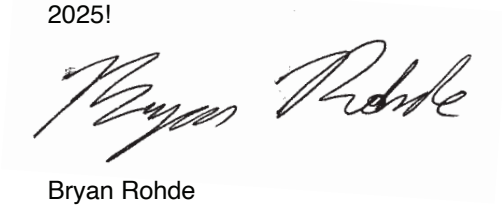
Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.
—Ephesians 3:20-21

In 2025, giving of $2.95M exceeded our expenses for the year and also allowed for $120K to be set aside for debt reduction. We closed the year in a strong financial position with $489K (more than 10% of the annual budget) in general operating reserves and $890K in designated funds across a variety of categories: Helping Hand, capital projects, debt reduction, etc. Outstanding debt was $2.83M, which included the outstanding loan for the Bethesda property.

I am deeply thankful for the generosity of the congregation and for God's continued provision. At the beginning of Q3, giving was behind the prior year. In September and October, however, we experienced an outpouring of generosity that significantly changed the trajectory of the year. Praise God for his grace and goodness.

Looking ahead to 2026, my prayer is that God would provide renewed energy, enthusiasm, and resources for the "Foundation for the Future" campaign launching in January, and that we would finish the year debt-free. I also pray that the Bethesda apartment building renovations would be fully completed and ready to house Bethlehem College and Seminary students, for their good and for God's glory.

Join me in giving thanks for the Lord's rich blessings and faithful provision to Bethlehem in 2025!



Bryan Rohde
Treasurer

Contributions to Bethlehem's Church & Missions General Fund in 2025 totaled $2,945,149. In addition, $734,859 was received for designated funds, including short-term ministry trips and the Helping Hand Fund.

We praise God for the following evidences of grace over the past year:

- 847 donors contributed to one or more of Bethlehem's ministry funds.
- 587 of the Bethlehem donors contributed to Bethlehem's General Fund.
- 70% of the contributions to the General Fund were contributed online.
- 30% of the contributions to the General Fund were made by paper checks or cash.

Remembering God's provision in 2025, please join us in praying for his blessing over our ministries in 2026 and beyond. May the Lord give us grace to be cheerful givers as we serve him and others for the glory of His Great Name.

In Christ,



Paul Johnson
Financial Secretary

STAFF

Erika Booth
Coordinator for Database Management & Help Desk

Daniel Bouchoc
Pastoral Resident for Youth & Family Discipleship

Joey Bures
Ministry Assistant for Hispanic Ministries

Lisa Burk
Lead Coordinator for Nurseries

Mikaela Choi
Assistant for Media Ministries

Kïrsten Christianson
Ministerial Coordinator for Care & Counseling

Lyndsey Cords
Coordinator for Kitchen Ministries

Ken Currie
Ministerial Director for Campus Outreach

Emily Daniels
Administrative Assistant for Women's Ministry

Laurel Eccles
Minister for Women

Thomas Florestano
Ministry Assistant for Wednesday Programming and Local Outreach

Matthew Harris
Ministry Assistant for Youth

Christian Hunt
Administrator for Operations

Paul Johnson
Financial Secretary

Daewon Kim
Bookkeeper

Bobby Kunkle
Ministry Assistant for Worship & Music

Andrew Lang
Director for Systems

Pearl Lundquist
Administrative Assistant for Global Outreach

Charles MacDonald
Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries

Debbie Mairet
Administrative Assistant for Children & Family Discipleship

Cynthia McGill
Administrative Assistant for Women's Ministry

Rob Meysembourg
Coordinator for Facility Infrastructure

Caleece Myhre
Director for Human Resources

Julie Olson
Ministry Assistant for Classroom Support

Christina Osburn
Assistant Coordinator for Nurseries

Dan Rebney
Administrator for Systems

Krista Smith
Office Manager

Carol Steddom
Pianist & Worship Assistant

Dane Styczynski
Director for Media Ministries

Andrea Tjarks
Administrative Assistant for Adult Discipleship

Spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ

Bethlehem
Baptist Church