

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

BETHLEHEM
Lutheran Church



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America





WELCOMING All to Jesus Christ
BELIEVING In God's Promises | **SERVING** God and Neighbor
LIVING In God's Grace through Faith

www.slaterblc.org

Bethlehem Lutheran Church | 2025

Staff

Pastor	Rev. Nat Bothwell
Secretary	Tara Rundahl
Custodians	Joe Johnson Tammy Johnson
Treasurer	Erica Weeks-Burger
Financial Secretary	Ann White
Music Director	Jonathan Bell

Council

Doug Houser, President
Cindi Zimmermann, Vice President
Sarah Seigfried, Secretary
Rose Arrasmith
Ed Fulk
Amanda Houser / Brenda Neville
Lindsay Gustafson
Dave White
Pastor Nat

Council Members

with Terms Expiring 12/31/25

Sarah Seigfried
Dave White

Council Members

with Terms Expiring 12/31/26

Ed Fulk
Rose Arrasmith

Council Members

with Terms Expiring 12/31/27

Doug Houser
Cindi Zimmermann
Lindsay Gustafson

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING AGENDA

February 8, 2026

Call to Order..... Doug Houser

Devotions..... Pastor Nat

Approval of Minutes (2024 Annual Meeting)

Reports

 Presentation of the 2026 Budget Erica Weeks-Burger

 Council President Report..... Doug Houser

 Pastor’s Report Pastor Nat

Vote as proposed: Updated Constitution Andy Denner

Vote as proposed: Front Door Replacement Doug Houser

Vote or Update: Kitchen Remodel..... Brenda Neville

Elections..... Doug Houser

 Report of the Nominating Committee

 Nominations from the Floor

 Election

Adjournment & Benediction..... Pastor Nat



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ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING OPENING LITURGY

Recognizing that our faith is a living, busy, active and mighty thing, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with each of you.

And also with you.

Teach us to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Descend on our hearts, that we may love others in the ways Jesus loves us.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Empower us to be enthusiastic in pursuing your vision for our congregation.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Move us to engage issues in our community in Christlike ways, and to pursue deep and authentic relationships with those with whom we serve and partner.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Strengthen us to face the barriers we encounter in doing your work, learning to work with others amid disagreement.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Give us the ability to adapt to the cultural, economic and social changes that occur in the neighborhoods we serve.

Receive our prayer, O God.

Guide us to be a healthy congregation that learns from its failures as well as its successes and offers wisdom to others.

Receive our prayer, O God.

As we strive to become the church that we proclaim to be, raise up leaders who focus on the gospel of freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation as given to us through God's indescribable act of love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Renew us daily in our baptism, that we may discover vitality in our relationships with you, each other and those we serve in the world.

Amen.

Founded on Faith



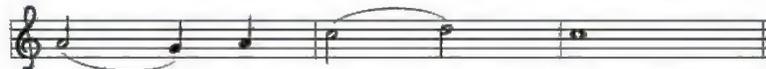
1 Found - ed on faith, the church— a - live by grace—
 2 Your cross, O Christ, re - news our life each day.
 3 E - quipped by prayer, we live the Spir - it's call.
 4 Grow - ing in grace for God's cre - at - ed earth,
 5 Found - ed on faith, called forth, em - pow' red to serve,



pro - claims the gos - pel here and ev - 'ry place.
 Bap - tized in you, we learn and teach and pray.
 Em - pow' red to serve with gifts, both great and small,
 we yearn for jus - tice, peace, and hu - man worth;
 we share God's end - less love with - out re - serve.



The word of God re - sounds through time and space:
 Fed by your love, with thank - ful hearts, we say;
 we bring the liv - ing hope of God to all.
 a world re - stored; a faith - ful, car - ing church.
 Then let us shout a - loud the liv - ing Word!



Al - le - lu - ia!

All Creation Sings, 1048

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A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP YEHIEL CURRY

Dear friends in Christ,

As Lutherans, we are set free to love our neighbors and seek justice. In Colossians 2, we read: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (6-7).

I am abounding in thankfulness for you, church. You are an integral part of this mission as we envision a world experiencing the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation. The ministries of congregations including yours, our synods and the ELCA churchwide organization are all working together today and every day so more people may know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love. From providing food to people experiencing hunger, to helping train the next generation of leaders that will lead this church, your support is at work here at home and around the world.

Your generosity to each of the three expressions of the church — your congregation, your synod and the churchwide organization — has made it possible for us to do this work

together. Your financial resources, your time volunteering and accompanying others, and your voices are so valued.

As we look ahead to the coming year, I encourage you to continue to walk in Christ, remembering you are rooted and established in faith, and free to love and serve your neighbors. Thank you, church, for the ways you connect with and support our siblings across the ELCA and in our communities.

In Christ,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yehiel Curry'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue background.

The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

—Colossians 2:6-7



2025 Minutes

Submission by
Andy Denner

Annual Meeting Minutes

Sunday January 26, 2025

Doug called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m. Pastor Nat opened the meeting with a devotion. Previous minutes: correction of the date. Rose moved to approve. Kelvin seconded. Motion passes. Nominating Committee report: Ben moved to approve the report with a second from Brenda. Motion passes. Ben Johnson moved to elect the three nominees to the council by unanimous consent. Brenda seconded. Motion passes. Erica Weeks-Burger presented the 2025 proposed budget: very conservative with the numbers on the inflow of money. There are a few things that we know are coming in like Christmas at BLC which will help. Not stated even though we could guess. There is a section for "transfers in." This is money that has been given for a restricted purpose i.e. Sunday school. These funds are transferred in as the

expense occurs and restricted funds are used for this purpose. Regarding anticipated expenses in 2025: we have also been conservative with expenses (estimating increased numbers). As a result, we are budgeting a deficit again in the year ahead. Same approach as last year. With thank offerings and other efforts we were able to end 2024 basically even. Moved to approve budget by Bill. Seconded by Howard. Motion passes. President's report: see written report. Wanted to say last time he spoke we were looking at \$14k in the red, instead we ended (2023) \$9k in the black. Thank you for all that have given. It is important that we try to stay in the black. Again, really conservative in budget and aren't frivolous. Appreciative of the fact that we can keep the lights on and ministry going. This ends Doug's term and

GWOH Planning Team

- Sharon & Doug Mackey
- Bonnie Dingman
- Jeremy & Lindsay Gustafson
- Kathy Harkin
- Cindi Zimmermann
- Sarah Seigfried
- Bill & Julie Britton
- Rose Arrasmith
- Marcia & Howard Taylor



Above: September 7, 2025 was "God's Work Our Hands Sunday" at BLC. Thousands of Lutherans rolled up their sleeves on this day nationwide in an effort to "make God's love real" in the communities we serve. Volunteers packed personal care kits, tended Grimm park, and planted another tree in 2025!



he's appreciative that he has a chance to give back and do what he can.

Pastor Report: the annual report is a yearbook by way of your generosity and good work. It is a testament to the vitality of the community. Kids stayed after confirmation 4 weeks to paint the walls of their classroom. The way we approached the root beer stand as both a fundraiser, but also a way to get into the park and get out there. The golf outing: Joe and Melody did a great job. The extracurricular activities not only fill gaps, but also get us into the community with our neighbors. "God's work our Hands" Sunday was great for a first time event this

year. Christmas at BLC is becoming an annual event it seems. Another good one.

The food pantry and kitchen projects have not gone away. The pantry team's focus has shifted. We have begun filling out grant applications. Lots of positive support on the idea of a c-store where food can be bought without price. The kitchen project: some additional money has come in. Efforts are going forward with an eye toward evaluating how we use the space today. We are feeding people, just as Jesus commands us to do. It was a good year, and it's right to give our thanks and praise.

New business: Ben thanked everyone coming off of council and all who serve. Kreg Kahler moved to adjourn the meeting. Barb seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:33 a.m. Pastor closed with a prayer.



Above: Blindfolded Christmas wrapping by the BLC youth. New in 2025, Jamie and Clint Albertson together with Jen and Anders Dovre corralled our junior high and high schoolers to participate in a variety of service activities and "just for fun" gatherings. This group participated in "Fields of Faith" as well as a number of creative service projects.

Root Beer Planning Team

Rose Arrasmith, Kathy Harkin, John & Mary Kahler, Elaine Raines, and Susan Ramfjord



Above: BLC returned to Nelson Park for the July 4th festivities in 2025. This team again coordinated with Slater UMC to sell root beer floats. Altogether, almost 3 kegs of root beer were sold on what proved to be a sweltering Saturday celebration.



Pastor's Report

Submission by

Pastor Nat

“Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of powerful deeds, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-12

One body. Those are Paul’s words. One body, one Spirit—one mission (the common good). This year we celebrated Myrna, Tami, and Jana and their combined years of teaching confirmation at BLC. We welcomed Jaime and Clint, Jen and Anders into that work (and they’ve made it their own, beautifully). How about Jonathan? The BLC choir is singing again, and on any given Sunday, we might notice James Taylor or the Byrds subtly pull up a chair. One body, a variety of gifts. The same Spirit— calling, gathering, and enlightening us all. We gathered at council meetings to brainstorm

more deliberately in 2025, and to be clear-eyed about Bethlehem’s finances and building needs. Already, Tara and Tami have navigated their church office transition for the coming year. Different varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit: we see this reality playing out among us continually. Paul’s concern 2000 years ago was a church turned in on itself. It’s a continual temptation, but the Holy Spirit persists in calling us to more. For the common good, we share our gifts. We show up for others as we tend to our own spirits. We serve and let go as we trust God to go before us. I continue to be hopeful for this church and its people. We are differently-gifted, and in the brilliance of that design, we remain one body, the church. Christ’s peace to you all.



Above: This year’s “Christmas at Bethlehem” event adopted a variety show format which featured, among other artists, BLC’s neighbor, Shawn Palek. Shawn painted St. Nick (live) during this year’s show.

Christmas at Bethlehem Planning Team

Al & LuAnn Erickson, Larry & Sandy Larson, Lori McCasland, Nancy Nelson, Brenda Neville, Jonathan Bell, and Jon & Martha Sheldahl



Parish Report

Submission by

Tara Rundahl

Members Received in 2025

Children Baptized	5
Received by Affirmation of Faith	2

Members Removed in 2024

by Death	6
by Transfer	2

Total Membership 433*

**this number will change as a) new members are received, b) existing members are removed, and/or c) lapsed records are identified and updated.*

Official Acts in the Congregational Record (2025)

Baptisms (6)

Jade Rosing
 Sadie Johnson (Williams)
 Elaina Nelson
 Autumn Bachman
 Cliff Houser
 Parker Ihle

Confirmations (6)

Ellie Albertson
 Andrew Curran
 Lily Gustafson
 Katelyn Krause
 Parker Ihle
 Zane Smith

Weddings (1)

Ben & Sadie Johnson

New Members (2)

Cindy Fogue
 Christina Schell

Deaths and Committals (9)

James Bartscher
 Phil Cline
 Wayne Cline
 Denny Denton
 Gerri Kaldenberg
 Roger Greenough
 Marilyn McCauley
 David Skei
 Susan Skei



Above: 2025's Confirmation Day. Front row (from left) Pastor Nat, Katelyn Krause, Lily Gustafson, Pattie Williamson, Myrna Harmon.
 Second row: Zane Smith, Parker Ihle, Ellie Albertson, and Andrew Curran. Top: Tami Staples and Jana Mitchell.



Above: "Night of the Notables" 2025.
 Below: The Williams & Johnson's celebrate Sadie's baptism.





President's Report

Submission by

Doug Houser

Dear Bethlehem Lutheran Church Family,
As I think back on this past year, I am grateful for all the ways God has been moving in our church. Serving as your Council President has truly been a joy, and I am thankful for the encouragement, patience, and partnership you have shown.

This was our first year with a smaller Council of eight members (from 10 to 11 members), and the change has helped us focus more on the big-picture direction of the church while trusting our amazing ministry teams and volunteers to lead the day-to-day work. It has been a healthy and encouraging shift. Also, a special thank you to the Church Executive Council for their leadership and guidance.

One of our hopes continues to be seeing more of our church family worshiping and growing together. Attendance has slowly risen, and it is wonderful to welcome new and familiar faces every week. Thank you to our pastors, musicians, worship assistants, livestream crew, and everyone who helps make worship meaningful.

Our faith formation ministries—Sunday School, confirmation, adult groups, and small-group gatherings—have continued to help us grow closer to God and one another. These spaces remind us that church is not just something we attend; it is a community we belong to.

We also saw God's love at work through service. Whether it was the food pantry, our banqueting table, Scouts, or global mission efforts, Bethlehem continued to be a place where people find support, welcome, and hope.

Your generosity has kept our ministries strong even in a year when costs kept rising. We have also made it a priority to communicate clearly by sharing updates after each Council meeting.

Looking forward, we are exploring ways to improve digital communication, keep livestream worship strong for those who need it, and make it easier for everyone to stay connected. We trust that God will continue leading us where we need to go.

Thank you for being such a caring, joyful, and faithful church family. I am grateful for each of you and excited for what God has in store for us in the year ahead.



Above: December's Sunday School program ("Let it be Christmas Everywhere") debuted on Sunday, December 14th. This annual production is a labor of love for BLC's writers, musicians, Sunday School teachers, youth helpers, and families. Well done again, everyone!



Financial Reports

Submission by
Erica Weeks-Burger

Actual and Budgeted Re-

The generosity of BLC members and friends helps fund BLC's operating expenses throughout the year. Occasionally, restricted funds are employed as "transfers in" (as needs arise that specifically relate to designated funds).

Pictured right: Year End actual receipts for 2025 as well as budgeted projections for 2026.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church General Operating

	2025 YTD	2025 Budget	2026 Budget
RECEIPTS			
OFFERINGS:			
Envelopes	\$121,725.54	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00
Electronic	\$51,410.51	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00
Loose Offerings	\$10,377.00	\$5,000.00	\$9,500.00
Total Offerings:	\$183,513.05	\$180,000.00	\$184,500.00
OTHER INCOME:			
Worship & Service			
Flowers	\$1,193.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
Services	\$0.00	\$2,500.00	\$0.00
Total Worship & Service:	\$1,193.00	\$4,000.00	\$1,500.00
Our Church Home			
Utilities	\$175.68	\$200.00	\$0.00
Total Our Church Home:	\$175.68	\$200.00	\$0.00
Outreach & Ministry			
Christmas at Bethlehem	\$1,207.33	\$0.00	\$0.00
Community Outreach	\$718.95	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Benevolence	\$1,254.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Outreach & Ministry	\$3,180.28	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Other Income:	\$4,548.96	\$4,200.00	\$1,500.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS:	\$188,062.01	\$184,200.00	\$186,000.00
	2025 YTD	2025 Budget	2026 Budget
TRANSFERS IN			
TRANSFER IN FROM RESTRICTED			
Worship & Service			
Music	\$499.94	\$1,500.00	\$1,000.00
Total Worship & Service:	\$499.94	\$1,500.00	\$1,000.00
Our Church Home			
Property Improvements	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$31,500.00
Refresh & Renew (Kitchen)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Our Church Home:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$31,500.00
Faith Formation			
Adult Education	\$496.50	\$496.50	\$0.00
Campership	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$250.00
Confirmation	\$451.90	\$451.90	\$0.00
EPIC Scholarship	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
Sunday School	\$437.65	\$1,000.00	\$500.00
Vacation Bible School	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$162.53
Youth Education	\$0.00	\$250.00	\$250.00
Total Faith Formation:	\$1,636.05	\$2,748.40	\$1,462.53
Outreach & Ministry			
Banqueting Table	\$81.86	\$0.00	\$250.00
Cemetery Maintenance	\$1,780.00	\$0.00	\$5,500.00
Christmas at Bethlehem	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Community Outreach	\$1,262.11	\$527.93	\$0.00
Congregational Outreach	\$757.75	\$527.93	\$0.00
Golf Outing	\$3,450.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Outreach & Ministry:	\$7,831.72	\$1,055.86	\$5,750.00
Other/Mixed Use			
General Use	\$1,960.10	\$950.00	\$950.00
Thank Offering	\$6,856.68	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Other Mixed Use:	\$8,816.78	\$950.00	\$950.00
Total Transfer in from Restricted Funds	\$18,784.49	\$6,254.26	\$40,662.53
Transfer in from Money Market	\$8,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL TRANSFERS IN:	\$26,784.49	\$6,254.26	\$40,662.53

BLC Budget Team

Erica Weeks-Burger
Doug Houser
Lindsay Gustafson
Pastor Nat



Financial Reports

Submission by

Erica Weeks-Burger

Actual and Budgeted Ex-

Our 2025 budget anticipated a significant deficit. With God's help and through the generosity of many, BLC outperformed this projection in real terms (though the church posted a deficit nonetheless). Giving has increased in each of BLC's last five years. Expenses increased by a greater amount in 2025. Events such as root beer sales, the golf outing, silent auction, and Christmas at Bethlehem helped supplement BLC's regular giving. Another strong Thank Offering Sunday helped reduce the 2025 deficit further.

Pictured right: Year End actual expenses for 2025 as well as budgeted projections for 2026.

	2025 YTD	2025 Budget	2026 Budget
EXPENSES			
Worship & Service			
Events	\$0.00	\$200.00	\$0.00
Flowers	\$581.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
IT	-\$288.89	\$250.00	\$250.00
Music	\$499.97	\$1,500.00	\$1,000.00
Service Supplies	\$596.49	\$800.00	\$800.00
Worship Planning	\$549.00	\$600.00	\$600.00
Worship Printing	<u>\$1,873.99</u>	<u>\$2,500.00</u>	<u>\$2,000.00</u>
Total Worship & Service:	\$3,811.56	\$7,350.00	\$6,150.00
Our Church Home			
Custodial Supplies	\$565.17	\$600.00	\$600.00
Insurance	\$10,904.50	\$13,000.00	\$11,000.00
Property Improvements	\$176.54	\$2,000.00	\$33,500.00
Refresh & Renew (Kitchen)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Repairs & Maintenance	\$6,307.35	\$2,800.00	\$6,000.00
Snow Removal Services	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Utilities	<u>\$14,238.43</u>	<u>\$12,000.00</u>	<u>\$15,000.00</u>
Total Our Church Home:	\$32,191.99	\$30,900.00	\$66,600.00
Faith Formation			
Adult Education	\$568.00	\$500.00	\$600.00
Camperships	\$250.00	\$1,000.00	\$750.00
Confirmation	\$1,413.20	\$500.00	\$500.00
EPIC Scholarship	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
Sunday School	\$437.65	\$1,000.00	\$500.00
Vacation Bible School	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Youth Education Expenses	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$250.00</u>	<u>\$250.00</u>
Total Faith Formation:	\$2,668.85	\$3,550.00	\$3,400.00
Outreach & Ministry			
Banqueting Table	\$197.40	\$250.00	\$250.00
Cemetery Expense	\$5,096.48	\$2,000.00	\$5,500.00
Christmas at Bethlehem	\$1,670.24	\$0.00	\$0.00
Christmas Baskets	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$650.00
Church Anniversary			\$2,333.33
Community Outreach	\$1,888.49	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00
Congregational Outreach	\$838.48	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Food Pantry Building Project	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Golf Outing Expense	\$672.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Benevolence	\$291.68	\$0.00	\$0.00
Southeastern Iowa Synod	<u>\$12,172.71</u>	<u>\$10,800.00</u>	<u>\$11,070.00</u>
Total Outreach & Ministry:	\$22,827.48	\$15,550.00	\$22,803.33
Support			
Church's Portion of FICA	\$2,784.06	\$2,046.98	\$2,876.14
Fees - Offering & Service Charges	\$1,531.93	\$1,400.00	\$1,600.00
Health & Pension	\$34,386.26	\$35,363.04	\$34,496.52
IT Computer Expense	\$4,293.77	\$4,000.00	\$2,000.00
Mailing & Postage	\$499.80	\$500.00	\$500.00
Miscellaneous	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Office Supplies & Other	\$969.86	\$500.00	\$1,000.00
Office Printing	\$859.40	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Office Software & Licenses	\$3,062.76	\$1,500.00	\$3,000.00
Pastor	\$87,237.27	\$88,191.26	\$93,364.68
Staff	\$36,692.86	\$36,048.48	\$37,369.13
Supply Pastors	<u>\$1,605.00</u>	<u>\$2,100.00</u>	<u>\$2,100.00</u>
Total Support:	\$173,922.98	\$172,649.76	\$179,306.48
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$235,422.86	\$229,999.76	\$278,259.81
RECEIPTS LESS EXPENSES	-\$47,360.85	-\$45,799.76	-\$92,259.81
RECEIPTS LESS EXPENSES PLUS TRANSFERS IN	-\$20,576.36	-\$39,545.50	-\$51,597.28



Memorials & Gifts

Memorial gifts are given throughout the year as a way of remembering those we've lost. These gifts are sometimes designated for a particular purpose; in other cases, they are undesignated. Memorial Gifts were received this year in loving memory of:

2025 Memorial Gifts

- Don Roznos \$35,463
- Dave Cook \$25
- Carol Gibson \$1,025
- Susan & David Skei \$355
- Phil Cline \$1,675
- Mary Severson \$10,000
- Roger Greenough \$100
- Geraldine Kaldenberg \$275
- Sandra Sydnes \$85,860
- Dennis Denton \$810

2025 Designated Gifts

- Food Pantry Building Fund \$12,002
- Golf Outing \$3,220
- Banqueting Table \$50
- Christmas at Bethlehem Sponsorships \$500
- Mission Fund \$1,800
- Love Your Neighbor Fund \$1,850

Thank Offering

Thank Offering Sunday celebrates God's provision each fall. Thank Offering gifts often help close budget gaps and fund new ministry projects. By Council vote, these funds were credited to BLC's general fund, offsetting 2025's budget deficit.

2025 Thank Offering

- Undesignated Gifts Received \$15,815



Above: Barb and Jon visit with Dave Helland re: a future remodel of BLC's kitchen. Not pictured but also involved in this work: Brenda Neville and Cindy Johnson. This project's planning phase is now over, and a formal proposal will go to a vote at February's annual meeting.



Above: Sunday May 11th was Mother's Day; at BLC it was also "Myrna, Tami, and Jana appreciation day." After teaching confirmation on Wednesday nights for more than a century between them, these three "retired" (to serve BLC in other ways). Look for Tami in the church office beginning this February.



Endowment Funds

The Bethlehem Endowment Committee was formed in 2005. The committee met several times with the ELCA and adopted resolutions that were approved by the Council and the fund began its mission. The mission of the Endowment Fund is to accept and manage gifts from church members directed toward the mission of the church. The committee annually distributes 4% of its funds. The funds are distributed across four categories: Congregation, Community, Synod/State, and Global. This year's disbursements were as follows:



Amount to distribute: **\$3,980.00**

Applicant	Congregation (25-45%)	Community (10-35%)	Synod/State (10-35%)	Global (10-35%)
Slater American Legion		\$200.00		
BLC Youth	\$300.00			
Mt. Meru Coffee Project				\$450.00
Lutheran World Relief				\$450.00
Slater Library		\$200.00		
Riverside Bible Camp			\$400.00	
Food Pantry	\$1,200.00	\$580.00		
	\$1,700.00	\$980.00	\$400.00	\$900.00

Endowment Committee

Mike Helland, Andy Denner, Dan Rundahl



Financial Reports

Submission by

Juli Helland

Investment Funds

Bethlehem's Investment Committee manages a portfolio of holdings that include undesignated gifts and other assets not associated with normal Sunday offering activity. It's the committee's responsibility to balance the competing priorities of both 'return on investment' and 'liquidity.' Much of this portfolio is comprised of memorial gifts that

were originally given to fund the ministry of BLC. It's the Committee's responsibility to safekeep these funds at the highest possible return until such time as they are employed elsewhere.

Summary of Holdings

Mission Investment Funds

Certificate	Matures	Interest	3/31/2025	6/30/2025	9/30/2025	11/30/2025
CD1754	02/16/26	3.350%	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00
CD1746	02/18/27	4.900%	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$32,000.00
CD4475	04/28/25	4.180%	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00
CD7047	02/27/27	4.900%	\$41,803.89	\$42,309.90	\$42,833.42	\$43,363.41
7403	N/A	0.600%	\$31,053.36	\$32,074.27	\$33,106.15	\$34,122.66
			\$166,857.25	\$168,384.17	\$169,939.57	\$171,486.07

Edward Jones

	3/31/2025	6/30/2025	9/30/2025	11/30/2025
Muni Bond, Mutual Fund, CD's	\$344,885.60	\$365,899.20	\$381,608.24	\$389,871.63
Kitchen Fund Memorial IRA	\$25,669.80	\$25,941.06	\$26,212.97	\$26,388.73
<hr/>				
	\$370,555.40	\$391,840.26	\$407,821.21	\$416,260.36
Mission Investment				\$171,486.07
Edward Jones				<u>\$416,260.36</u>
Total				\$587,746.43

Investment Committee

Juli Helland, Trent Seigfried, Doug Houser, Jon Johnson

THROUGH YOUR GENEROSITY, GOD IS AT WORK ACROSS THE ELCA.

MISSION SUPPORT

A portion of your offering, called Mission Support, advances the ministry of our church, helping the ELCA nurture Christian community, raise up leaders, serve our neighbors and strive for justice.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

Part of our church's long tradition of meeting human needs, ELCA World Hunger testifies to our hope for and commitment to God's promise of a time when we will hunger and thirst no more. ELCA World Hunger walks alongside communities in more than 60 countries — including the United States — to create unique solutions to hunger and poverty.

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Lutheran Disaster Response shares God's hope, healing and renewal with people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need.

WHERE NEEDED MOST

Where Needed Most supports the powerful ways we work together around the world — supporting leaders, inspiring young people, fueling ministries and championing global mission. Gifts to Where Needed Most support and sustain the people, congregations, synods and ministries working around the world to realize the hope-filled future God promises.



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

Sign up to hear more stories of impact from the ELCA churchwide organization at [ELCA.org/subscribe](https://elca.org/subscribe).

Read about Mission Support and learn more at LivingLutheran.org/SOFIA.



Ministry Reports

Submission by

Jamie Albertson

Sunday School (Preschool-6th)

This ministry team is dedicated to planning meaningful Sunday school lessons and activities throughout the year. This involves coordinating volunteers, gathering supplies, and designing engaging ways to bring each lesson to life every Sunday.

This year, we celebrated an important milestone for our children by distributing new Bibles to kindergarteners and third graders during a special church service. We also concluded another wonderful Christmas program, made possible with the leadership of Tami Staples. Each child participated by sharing a line in the story and learning new songs, beautifully accompanied by Anders Dovre and Erica Weeks.

In addition to our traditional curriculum, we focused on helping each child begin to learn the Lord's Prayer and become more familiar with the Ten Commandments. These foundational elements of faith are essential steps in their spiritual journey, and we are thrilled to see their progress.

One of the key benefits of having an all-ages Sunday school class, with the exception of Pre-K and Kindergarten, is the opportunity for older children to share and spread God's message with their younger classmates. This dynamic not only strengthens their understanding of the Bible but also builds a sense of community and mentorship among the students.

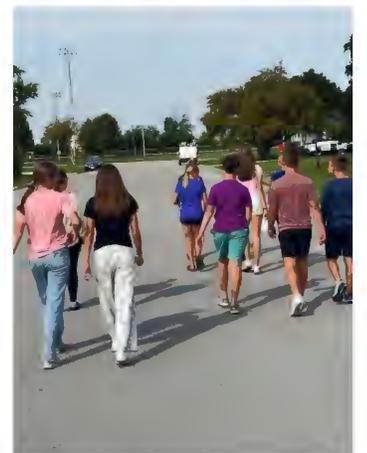
BLC Education Team

Jamie Albertson, Jen & Anders Dovre, Amy Holmes, Ann White, Emily Gibson, & Ann Krause

Throughout 2025, we witnessed each child grow in their faith as they explored stories from the Bible and gained confidence reading aloud. The support and encouragement shared among the children created a meaningful and uplifting learning environment for all.



Above Top: a children's sermon with Pastor Nat on the last Sunday of Sunday School (last spring). Below this: BLC Youth began gathering this fall— for service projects and faith conversations...and volleyball too.





Ministry Reports

Submission by

Jess Denner

VBS Week (Preschool-5th)

Vacation Bible School (VBS) 2025 was held at Slater United Methodist Church and was a great success. The theme was "Road Trip" and we explored God's goodness on the open road with the puppet, "Scout".

During the week, the children learned that God is always near us through crafts, recreation & games, snacks and bible stories. There were approximately 50 children in total that participated throughout the week, which ended with a pool party at the Slater Pool. Thank you to the BLC members who assisted in making last year's VBS a success: Bonnie Dingman, Kurt Jones, Lisa Wason, Rose Arrasmith and Lily Gustafson.



VBS Team

Jess & Andy Denner, Kurt & Canna Jones, Lisa Wason, Alex Hoover, Lily Gustafson, and Rose Arrasmith



Ministry Reports

Submission by

Judy & Craig Whitney

The Community Pantry

Clients are allowed to visit the Food Pantry twice a month to receive groceries and a \$25.00 voucher to be used at Town and Country Market. In 2025, we again gave out turkeys or hams at Thanksgiving, and Christmas baskets to everyone who wanted them. We are doing our best to accommodate the needs of everyone who is hungry in our communities and several clients tell us they couldn't get along without us, which makes all our time and effort worth it.

God is working through us, and all of our wonderful volunteers, to provide food to the those who are hungry for whatever reason. With God's help and the help of our communities, we will be able to continue to provide food to all who need it for a long time to come.

Note: Pantry open hours are Tuesday mornings from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and Wednesday evenings from 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. When visiting the pantry clients receive approximately enough food to feed them for 3 to 4 days and according to the number of people in their household. Free pet food is also available to food pantry clients, courtesy of the Ames Pet Food Bank.

Pantry Volunteers

Julie Krause, Sarah Ingham, Ann White, Martha Sheldahl, Bill and Julie Britton, Cindi Zimmermann, Ann Krause, Howard Taylor, Scott and Rita Thorson, Kim Reed, Rose Arrasmith, Cindy Johnson, Susie Schaudt, Myrna Harmon, and Judy and Craig Whitney

Pantry 2.0 Fundraising Team

Brenda Neville, Travis Krause, Amanda Houser, Tami Staples, Pastor Nat



Above: BLC published a new vision for the community Pantry in 2024. The Pantry team assessed a variety of construction options, and recruited outside assistance from retail experts. That work led this group to a convenience-store shopping experience complete with storeroom and receiving area. 2026's continued priority: the work of grant writing & outreach to prospective sponsors. In 2025, BLC secured a little over \$30,000 in grants and other pantry gifts.



Below: Jonathan leads the BLC choir during Advent. BLC members sponsored more than 40 poinsettias in 2025 which filled the sanctuary in time for Christmas.



Ministry Reports

Submission by

Barb Mallon and Kelvin Schoon

Cemetery Committee

Our work continues on maintaining the appearance of the cemetery with routine clean-ups and regular attention to the stones and grounds, as well as the frequent replacement of the flag.

The Kiosk at the east drive of the cemetery provides an alphabetical listing of those buried with lot numbers and a map. You can also find this information in a binder located near the cemetery wall map in the Church's second floor meeting room. Also displayed in the Kiosk is information about costs, along with guidelines for the placement and removal of seasonal memorials. There are brochures available in the sanctuary with these guidelines as well. Contact anyone on the Cemetery Committee if you have questions or suggestions.

Cemetery Committee

Denny Mitchell, Joan Schoon, Dave White, Barbara Mallon

Property Team

A clean up kickoff started in spring with many volunteers helping trim bushes clean flower beds and help mulch the landscaping on three sides of the church. Two trailer loads of mulch were applied to the grounds. The church acquired lawn riding mower and the donated push mower got plenty of work early in the mowing season as we needed to mow about 2 times a week for spring and early summer. Special thanks to Rick Zimmerman for stepping up and doing the much-needed mowing. As the mowing season progressed, we were able to cut back to once a week. Thanks to those who stepped up to volunteer and give Rick a well-deserved break. Some tree trimming was done with hopes to take down the end-of-life evergreen tree on southeast corner of the property when the ground is frozen. As summer and warm weather came it was evident that the air conditioning was not keeping up. One of the units was not operating properly. Dave White worked with a contractor to get the system repaired. The contractor said that there is a small leak in the system and that the systems were twenty some years old. He suggested that the church plan on replacing the units in the next few years. The committee has gotten bids for roof repair, front door replacements, and ceiling fan replacements. Those projects are expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2026. The snow removal has been extensive early in the season as we had some heavy snows in November and December. We continue to aid the food pantry and church in day-to-day minor fix it projects. Again, thanks to the many volunteers that have stepped up to keep the church in proper repair.

Property Team

Ben Johnson, Rick Peterson, Kelvin Schoon, and Bill White



Above: BLC's Spring Clean-up event in early May. The weather was brisk, but a great crew tended to the work at hand in time for Myrna, Jana, and Tami's celebration.

Pictured here: Doug Houser, Cindi and Rick Zimmermann, Kelvin Schoon, Al Erickson, Rose Arrasmith, and Pastor Nat.



Ministry Reports

Submission by

Cindi Zimmermann

Stephen Ministry

We just completed our 9th year as a Stephen Ministry congregation! What is Stephen Ministry you may ask? Stephen Ministry is grounded in Jesus' commandment to "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12 RSV). Stephen Ministers receive training to learn how to listen non-judgmentally and how to provide confidential one-to-one, Christ-centered care to people in the congregation and the community experiencing life difficulties. When paired with a person in need of a Stephen Minister, we meet with them once a week for approximately one hour to walk alongside them and provide a listening ear and friendship.

As a group we also provide care and support to the congregation as a whole. We served meals at the banqueting table, hosted fellowships after the service, provided May baskets, greeting cards, and

other surprises to members, participated in the area Blue Christmas service, and did the Advent Wreath readings/lightings. We also celebrated the 9 years of Stephen Ministry in our community by hosting a reunion of past and present Stephen Ministers.

If you or someone you know could use someone to talk to, please contact one of us or the pastor. If you feel a calling to become a Stephen Minister, we would love to have you join us!

Bethlehem Stephen Ministers:

Bonnie Dingman
Kelvin Schoon
John Sheldahl
Cindi Zimmermann

Slater Sheldahl UMC Stephen Ministers:

Connie Peterson
Barb White



Above: Doug Houser is playing through as he promotes the 2025 golf outing in church. This event was back for another year, and the turnout was better than expected. BLC was blessed by the efforts of many working behind the scenes to insure a fun day for all.

Golf Outing Team

Joe & Lora Gibson, Melody Moyer, Tara Rundahl,
Howard Taylor, and Brenda Neville





Ministry Reports

Submission by

Rose Arrasmith and Jess Denner

BLCW (Bethlehem Lutheran Church Women)

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

The Bethlehem Lutheran Church Women (BLCW) gather the third Tuesday of each month for bible study and fellowship at 2:00 pm in the church basement. The BLCW Circle is an opportunity to gather with others to study God's word and share with each other our concerns and joys on our journey with Jesus. The BLCW Circle uses the ELCA magazine entitled, *Gather*, as a guide for the lessons, with a variety of topics and themes. Such themes have included Nature and Quilting. The group varies in number from 5-12. A free will offering is collected, and the proceeds benefit charitable causes. Pastor Nat regularly checks in on the group for a few minutes and answers any questions the group may have. Everyone is welcome!

Evening Women's Bible Study

BLC women met one Monday a month in the fireside room throughout 2025. We read from the book of Matthew, a 12 week study by Drew Hunter. This book broke down the Gospel of Matthew and led to deep and thoughtful discussions of how the Gospel is a reflection of the Old Testament books. Our gatherings will continue in 2026!

Evening Women's Study Group

Jessica Denner, Martha Sheldahl,
Ann White, Christina Schell, Sarah Siegfried, and
Bonnie Dingman

BLC Quilters

We have an industrious group of quilters who meet on the 1st and 3rd Monday mornings of each month to make quilts for the benefit of Lutheran World Relief and Des Moines homeless shelters. On average, Lutheran World Relief distributes more than 300,000 quilts worldwide each year. If you can tie a knot, you're qualified, and we're happy to teach you a few things.



Above: 2025's quilts are ready to be blessed and shipped. Below: BLCW hosts the "World Day of Prayer" as they learn about God's work in the Cook Islands.





Ministry Reports



Submission by

Brenda Neville

Hospitality

Hospitality takes many forms at BLC, but the kitchen is where much of that activity begins. Sunday mornings after worship, volunteers host snacks and treats for all ages. On Easter morning the church Council hosts a breakfast or similar meal. As the church hosts grieving families, a meal is graciously served by the women of BLC.

Banqueting Table

This group continued to host community meals on the first Wednesday of each month while coordinating meals throughout Lent. The main objective of



Banqueting Table’s monthly meal is to offer food and fellowship to anyone and everyone. Food has a way of uniting people, and God is at work in every aspect of this outreach effort. A big thank you to the whole team. From designing the menus, to getting the groceries, to preparing the meal — this team is so committed and dedicated to making the banqueting table a big success.

Banqueting Table Team

Cindy Johnson, Barb Kahler, Julie Krause
Brenda Neville & Elaine Raines

Kitchen Project



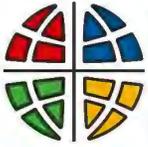
Bethlehem’s kitchen remains a place of fellowship and new life. In 2026, we will be learning more about a proposed kitchen renovation. That project is nearing the end of its planning effort, and we’re very close to making some final decisions a church community. Electrical and ADA accessible updates are proposed. Also discussed: a reimaged east kitchen. This work would be done by Dave Helland Construction pending an affirmative congregational vote, and completed in time for BLC’s 150th anniversary in 2028. There will be more conversation on this project at the February 8th, 2026 annual meeting as we discuss those plans and more.

Kitchen Planning Team

Barb Mallon, Jon and Cindy Johnson,
Brenda Neville



Above: The kitchen team discusses current needs and traffic patterns related to Sunday snacks, Banqueting table and funeral meals. One key element of this project as proposed: this plan would repurpose the east kitchen for cooking and food prep (pictured left). This “prep kitchen” would allow BLC to configure its main kitchen for serving food, freeing up table space in the fellowship hall.



The 2025 Annual Report is now available!

This year's report highlights how mission support to the Southeastern Iowa Synod is faithfully stewarded across Synod Ministries and ELCA Churchwide programs.

Through inspiring stories, you'll see how the Spirit has opened our hearts:

- **Pastor Katie Jensen's journey of calling**
- **Iglesia Camino de Emaús fostering Scripture-based ministry**
- **St. Paul Lutheran's inclusive youth programs**
- **St. Mark's Neighborhood Food Fridge outreach**

Partnerships with Lutheran Campus Ministries, Lutheran Services in Iowa, the CaSTLE Project, and our seminaries show the broad impact of collaboration.

Using the report in your church context:

- **Budget Wisely:** Learn from synod allocations and set priorities for your ministries.
- **Replicate Ministries:** Inspire programs like inclusive youth events, Scripture-based small groups, or neighborhood outreach.
- **Stewardship & Giving:** Share stories to show how donations make an impact locally and globally with your congregation.
- **Fundraising Ideas:** Sponsor ministries, host special offerings, or celebrate annual giving.
- **Collaborate:** Explore partnerships and collective efforts that magnify your mission.

Join in celebrating the faithfulness of our congregations, leaders, and ministry partners by reading the report to see the Spirit at work in call, word, presence, and love.

Access the full report:



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