
BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN NEWSLETTER

Pastor Sue Sinclair

MAY 2026

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FROM THE PASTOR...

BEING CONNECTED

In Matthew 18:20 Jesus tells us, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Christ is present and faith grows in community.

So, what does it mean to be connected, to be a community?

We are called to interact with each other—fellow members of our congregation, members of other Christian groups, and people who have no church connection. People in our hometown, state, across the country and around the world.

When we do, we are called to connect in the most positive way that we can—even with people who have a different social, political or theological perspective than ours. Every interaction that we have, should be grounded in love, because every interaction that Christ has with us comes from the depth of his love for us.

I am moved by these words from Presiding Bishop Curry, "We must connect with each other regularly and faithfully...and walk together as children of God even when we don't agree on everything. Use your power for good. Pray together, serve and accompany your neighbors and continue to model what a faithful and prophetic witness looks like."

We are doing this already. Serving the Banquet, quilts going around the country and world, supporting the other congregations in our towns, and our food pantries, grief support. But there are more ways that we

can connect. When 2-3 or more are gathered, Christ is present! ~Pastor Sue



Holly Rozeboom, Nathan Huyser, Bev Jackson, Matt, Kendra Michael, Austin, Erin Van Der Brink and Hazel Mae, McKenna Bouwman, Holly Horstman, Arnie Van Voorst, Arlyn Schreurs, Don Eiesland, Wayne Kollis, Michelle Johnson, and all our Nursing Home residents (Joy, Marion, Bev B, Jean M. Connie, June)



SENIOR SUNDAY

May 3 we will be honoring;

- Bryce Kock
- Emersyn Rentschler
- Neveah Van Dyke
- Hailey Folkens

Join us for cake following worship

- Thank you Board of Evangelism

Confirmation News

Our Last Confirmation class for the 2025-2026 was held on April 29th. If your student hasn't finished sermon notes, they can be done throughout the summer.

The Pig Project

N.W. Iowa is the largest area of pork production in the state, selling 13.5 million hogs in 2022.

If you have any experience with hog production, you know that there are always some animals that reach market weight but cannot be processed at a typical slaughterhouse due to injury. Though some go to specialty processors, many are destroyed.

Ken Less (St. John's rural Akron) spent years feeding hogs for several large pig owners, and saw the potential for a ministry to feed hungry people. He spearheaded the Pig Project through our Synod.

The synod currently has one USDA approved butcher (Loutsch Brothers in Akron) process these pigs for us, with the potential for other lockers in the synod to be added this year.

The synod pays for the processing of pigs donated to this ministry (receipts are available for tax purposes.) The meat is ground and packed in 1 pound packages and are available to food banks and pantries at no charge.

In 2025 nearly 5,000 lbs. of pork was given and helped to feed the food insecure in our communities.

Applications have been sent to both Manna Market and the Larchwood Food Pantry already, and I have spoken to the synod office about Bethlehem picking up meat for this area.

If you, or someone you know is a pork producer and have questions about taking part in this ministry, you can contact Ken Less at 712-548-8623 or Julie at the synod office at 712-732-4968.

We have huge potential to turn a financial loss into a blessing.



GREETERS SCHEDULE

for May

May 3	Noah & Teresa Kerkvleit Family
May 10	Dustin & Andrea Hoogendoorn
May 17	Tracy & Kim Gayer
May 24	Sam & Deb Kroger
May 31	Gary & Kay Twedt



May

3	Board of Evangelism – Senior Sunday
10	Scott & Pam Hanson, Carmen Van Dyke, Gary & Kay Twedt
17	Darrel & Pat Bonnema, Brenda Baatz, Larry & Deb Van Roekel

***Summer Coffee (May 24 – August 30) will be by volunteer only. Please let the office know if you are planning to serve or if you have a celebration to observe. Thanks!**



3	Easton Cartmill
10	Memphis Van Dyke
17	Hallie Brueggeman
24	Ryker Rentschler
31	Jakson Blankespoor



WORSHIP HELPERS THIS MONTH

Usher Team: Randy Kock
Reader: David Lantz
Altar Guild: Betty Kock, Pam Hanson



Fellowship CIRCLE

May 14 2:00 pm



The following couples will celebrate the gift of marriage this month by observing their wedding anniversaries:

May 2	Gary & Deb Vogelzang-1987
May 12	Tracy & Kim Gayer-1990
May 27	Stan & Cynthia Haugland-1978
May 31	Gary & Ramona Kruse-1975



1	Benjamin Bahnson, Connie Vander Sanden
2	Greg Hanson
6	Bev Brinkman, Michelle Johnson
7	Cynthia Haugland, Nevaeh Van Dyke
8	Don Gramstad, Mitchell Rentschler, Larry Van Roekel, AJ Whalen
9	Jim Jensen
10	Gary Kruse, Kelsey McKenney
11	Trent Hoogendoorn, Kate Roemen
12	Kyle Knutson
15	Cindy Van Voorst
19	Noah Kerkvliet, Connie Rentschler
20	Michael Standley
21	Randy Kock,
22	Dianne Eiesland, Ashlee Van Hill
23	Wil Van Hill
24	Joy Yunker
25	Tim Kroger, Bruce Underberg
28	Cadence Van Dyke, Tiffany Vandentop
30	Nancy Halma, Tyler Kock
31	Tyler Ballinger

In Holy Baptism our gracious heavenly Father liberated us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate the May baptismal anniversaries of the following members of Bethlehem Lutheran:

Andraya Bahnson-2	Hallie Brueggeman-5
Lori Hamann-4	Tara Twedt-8
Greg Twedt-7	John Rentschler-9
Theo Kerkvliet-9	Tyler Knutson-12
Jake Kruse-10	Adley Cartmill-13
Brenda Baatz-12	Nathan Wiltgen-15
Becky Roemen-14	Susan Bahnson-17
Marion Matzen-16	Janae Douglass-19
Hazel Niemeyer-17	Whitley Hage-24
Conrad Kerkvliet-20	Don Gramstad-28
Jacob Standley-26	Rome Kramer-29
Connie Vander Sanden-27	

SPECIAL DATES FOR MAY

- National Day of Prayer, May 7
- Last Day of Sunday School, May 3
- Mother's Day, May 10
- Ascension of the Lord, May 14
- Armed Forces Day, May 16
- Day of Pentecost, May 24
- Memorial Day, May 25
- Trinity Sunday, May 31



May 3 is the last Sunday School. Kids will have a morning of fun at the park. Parents please pick up your children at 11:15.

*When on vacation, Lord be with us in spirit.
The rest of the summer, be with us in person.*

Thank you to ALL who have volunteered their time and talents this Sunday school year! Teachers, substitutes, bell and choir directors and everyone in between.

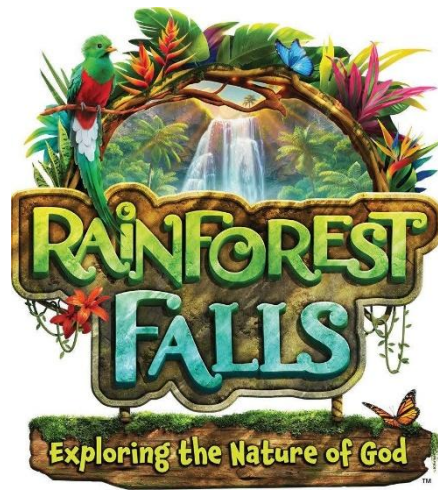


Memorial Day is Monday, May 25. A service is held at Richland Cemetery every year; it begins at

10:00 a.m. **Memorial Day** is a US federal holiday which is celebrated every year on the final Monday of May. It is a day of remembering the men and women who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces



There will be a sign-up sheet in the fellowship hall, as you enter the kitchen, for summer coffee hour if you are interested in furnishing refreshments. If it's in honor of a special event, be sure to let the office know so it can be put in the bulletin/newsletter. If no one signs up for a particular Sunday, but you want to start the coffee pot, let Pastor know so she can announce there will be coffee after the service.



VBS May 31 – June 3

- Preschool – 5th grade -

About 80 volunteers are needed to have these nights run smoothly. Do you enjoy watching kids grow and learn about Jesus? Sign up to be a crew leader, even a Jr. leader! 6th – 8th grade can be a crew leader.

** Make sure to register by May 9 to receive a t-shirt.

Thanks to the Methodist Church of Rock Rapids VBS is FREE this year!!



April 2026

Board of Education

Members:

Megan, DJ, Michelle, Deb, Becky

Old Business

- Sing at Fellowship Village April 19th

New Business

- Last day of Sunday school May 3.
- Walk to park and play/kick ball
- Parents will pick up at the park at 11:15
- Everyone bring 12 treats (prepackaged)
- Becky will bring drinks
- No meeting in May/June

Board of Properties

Those present were Clint, Brett, Nate, Gary and Larry.

We talked about the support beams for the church brought in an individual that will give us a bid and he is predicted to start on it this fall if we can agree on a price we also looked at the courtyard, and there needs to be some repairs there as well from the roof line, including the interior wall by our sound booth. we will continue to prioritize the different projects and what the rest of the church know as we progress.



BLC MISSION STATEMENT:

“To welcome all people to seek and serve God as members of the Body of Christ.”

BLC VISION STATEMENT:

We will be:

A welcoming Church:

Opening our doors and hearts to all who enter.

A Church that seeks after the heart of God:

Maturing in faith.

Trusting His word.

Living God’s love.

A Church that is committed to one another:

Through fellowship.

Through love and service.

Through grace and forgiveness.

A Church that ministers to the world around us.

A Church that brings its gifts back to God:

Through good stewardship of time, talent, and treasures.

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Praying Together – 31 Days of Prayer

At Synod Assembly each participant received a booklet called 31 Days of Prayer. It is a thoughtful resource to help us to dwell in the moment. Even though I can't put it in a booklet format here, I'd like everyone to have this resource.

How to Use This Resource

Each day gives you a simple way to pray. You do not need extra time or special words. God meets you right where you are. For example, you might pray, "God thank you for being with me today." We start with ourselves and move outward: to family, friends, congregation, community and beyond. In the last days, we remember that the whole world belongs to God's care. You can use this guide by yourself or with others. Carry it with you, leave it on your table. Share it with someone you love. At the end of each week, take a moment to reflect on what you noticed in yourself and others as you prayed. Consider recording your thoughts in a journal or discussing them with a trusted companion. God is already here. We are learning to notice.

Week 1

Day 1 – Start right where you are. Sit quietly and ask, 'Where is God meeting me today?' Remember, faith is a gift. You do not have to earn it. God gives it freely.

Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God."

Day 2 – Think of someone in your family. Say their name in prayer. Ask God to help you see them as God does: beloved, sometimes struggling, always full of hope.

1st Corinthians 13:7: Love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Day 3 – Think of a neighbor or friend you have seen lately. Pray for something they might be carrying that you cannot see. Ask God to help you notice others today.

Luke 10:27: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Day 4 – Pray for your congregation. Thank God for the people who show up, week after week. Ask God for patience and grace when it is hard to get along.

Romans 12:5 "So we, who are many, are one body in Christ."

Day 5 - Think of your town or village. What does it need most—connection, hope, healing? Pray for those who serve: teachers, emergency workers, caregivers, and local leaders.

Jeremiah 29:7 "Seek the welfare of the city... for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

Day 6 – Thank God for the wider church. We are part of something bigger than ourselves. Pray for

leaders and pastors nearby, and for all who serve in rural places.

Ephesians 4:3 "Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Day 7 – Pray for leaders in your state and nation – not for particular outcomes, but for wisdom, humility and courage to serve all people. Hold those most vulnerable in your heart.

Micah 6:8 "Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."

Week 2

Day 8 – Notice what is making you tired this week. Bring your weariness to God. You do not have to fix it. God loves the real you.

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Day 9 – Is there hurt in your family? Pray for the grace to take one small step toward healing. You do not have to fix everything. Ask God to soften what feels hard.

Colossians 3:13 "Bear with one another and forgive each other."

Day 10 – Think of someone who might feel lonely or left out. Picture their face. Ask God to help you reach out in a simple way today.

Hebrews 13:2 "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers."

Day 11 – Think of someone in your congregation who shows quiet faith. Thank God for them. Ask God to help you be a steady friend for someone else.

1st Thessalonians 5:11 "Encourage one another and build up each other."

Day 12 – Pray for people in your community who feel left out or alone. Ask God to care for those who struggle or feel invisible.

Luke 4:18 "He has sent me to bring good news to the poor."

Day 13 – Thank God for those learning to serve in ministry. Pray for rural congregations facing change. Ask God to raise up leaders from our own communities.

Matthew 9:37 "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few."

Day 14 – Pray for people whose voices are not often heard: farmers, rural workers, elders, and those who are poor. Ask God to give leaders compassion for all people.

Isaiah 1:17 "Seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."

Week 3

Day 15 – Ask yourself: "What am I holding too tightly?" Open your hands in prayer as a physical act of release. Practice receiving rather than grasping.

Philippians 4:6-7 "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer...let your requests be made known to God."

Day 16 – Think of a family member who is facing something new. Pray for them by name. Ask God to meet them right where they are.

Isaiah 43:2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you."

Day 17 – Is there someone you disagree with? Pray for the grace to stay connected. Ask God to help you love more and argue less.

John 13:35 "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Day 18 – Pray for your congregation's future. Ask God to help you see the gifts already here, waiting to be used. Trust that God is at work.

1st Corinthians 12:7 "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Day 19 – Think about the story of your town: those who built it, those who struggled, those who moved away. Thank God for what has been. Ask God to help you welcome what is new.

Deuteronomy 8:10 "You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you."

Day 20 – pray for pastors and leaders who are tired. Ask God to give them rest and new strength. Pray that they find real community and support.

Galatians 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Day 21 – Pray for healing across all the ways we are divided. Ask God to help you build bridges, even in small ways.

2nd Corinthians 5:18 "God...has given us the ministry of reconciliation."

Week 4

Day 22 – Think of one way God has changed you this year, even if it is small. Thank God for helping you grow. Ask for courage to keep becoming the person God calls you to be.

Philippians 1:6 "The one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion."

Day 23 – What story or value do you want to pass on to the next generation in your family? Pray for wisdom and for the right moments to share it, one conversation at a time.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 "Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart... recite them to your children."

Day 24 – Remember someone who has been kind to you. Pray for them. Ask God to help you thank you to those who are waiting for your gratitude.

1st Peter 4:10 "Serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."

Day 25 – Ask God to show you how your congregation is already being the body of Christ in the world.

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world."

Day 26 – Pray for your local schools, libraries, and places where people gather. Ask God to protect and strengthen the things that hold your community together.

Proverbs 11:14 "Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety."

Day 27 – Thank God for the ways your synod connects with other churches and faith traditions. Pray for a humble heart to learn from others.

Acts 2:44 "All who believed were together and had all things in common."

Day 28 – Pray for those who enforce laws and those who reform them. Ask God to stir a spirit of justice and accountability in civic life – that power might serve people rather than itself.

Amos 5:24 "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Day 29 – God's family has no borders. Pray for people in places of conflict, hunger or loss. Ask God to give you a heart that cares for those far away.

Galatians 3:28 "There is no longer Jew or Greek...for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

Day 30 – Thank God for your Lutheran siblings around the world: in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and everywhere. Ask God to help your congregation to partnership and mutual learning with the global church.

Revelation 7:9 "A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages."

Day 31 – The earth is the Lord's. Pray for those most vulnerable to climate conditions – small island nations, subsistence farmers, and indigenous communities. Ask God to deepen your stewardship of the land that sustains all life.

Genesis 2:15 "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden...to till it and keep it."

A Closing Word

31 days of prayer is not a program to be completed. Rather, it is a practice that invites continual return in all seasons of life. You might revisit this guide at the start of a new month, during significant transitions or whenever you seek renewal in your spiritual journey. Each return offers an opportunity to approach prayer with fresh perspective and deeper engagement.

You began with yourself and ended with the world. That is the shape of the gospel—an ever-widening circle of grace, drawing all things into the love of God.