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# BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN NEWSLETTER

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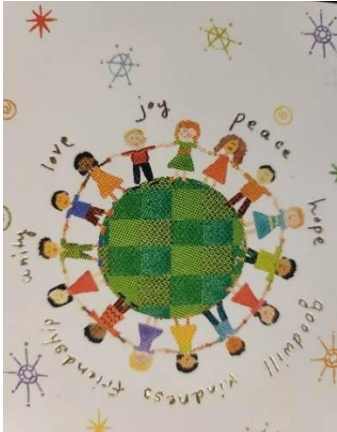
Pastor Sue Sinclair

FEBRUARY 2026

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FROM THE PASTOR...

## Thriving Ministry in Small Congregations



When you imagine a thriving church, what do you see?

Do you picture a mega church or a one from the past, where the church building was the main social venue?

That may have

been an image of a thriving congregation in the past, but what does it look like today?

The truth is that being a thriving congregation is not about what it looks like. It is one where *ministry* is thriving. Where the Love of Christ is active every day--one where love, joy, peace, hope, goodwill, kindness, friendship and unity are part of a congregation's daily expression.

All these words are relational. Christ's ministry was and is all about relationships, and relationships are a core need for people, especially today.

I believe that the members of Bethlehem understand this. Within this community of faith, relationships flourish. It is a gift, and a gift that Christ calls us to share.

There is another gift that we, as Lutherans have to offer. It is our understanding of Grace. There are no right words we have to say, no proof we need to show, nothing that we can do to earn or win salvation. Yet, God seeks, calls, and brings us into relationship with himself through Christ Jesus. Not

because of who we are, but because of who he is.

These kinds of relationships are one of the greatest gifts that small congregations have to offer.

Because we have received this great love and unearned forgiveness from God, we have the capacity to share it with others.

Today, about 50% of people do not have a faith community. That means that Inwood and Larchwood each have about 450 people who do not have and may really need a community of faith.

Today, relationships are people's primary goal, particularly for younger people—not simply in the secular world, but also in faith. Our neighbors need a community that actively practices love, joy, peace, hope, goodwill, kindness, friendship and unity. A community that invites and welcomes them to be in relationship with Christ and with others.

Inviting, though, can seem scary. Lutherans have traditionally welcomed people through marriage and birth. We have been comfortable as a 'waiting church'--one that welcomes others when they make the first move by coming through our doors.

As a congregation, we are good at welcoming. I have yet to see a newcomer who hasn't been greeted and welcomed when they venture through our doors.

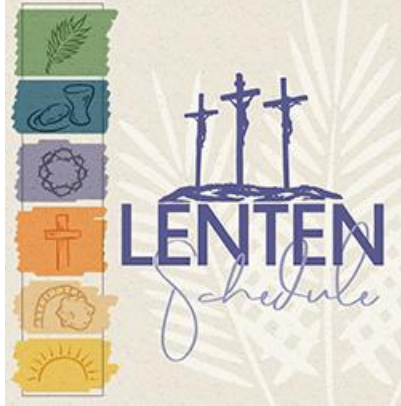
God is calling us to move from joyfully welcoming to joyfully inviting, because we are a community that has faith and love to share.

~ Pastor Sue

"Like" us on Facebook!



Bethlehem will begin Lent with our Ash Wednesday worship with distribution of Ashes Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm.



### **Lenten Services in March**

Our Midweek Lenten meals and worship are just around the corner too! Meals will begin at 6 pm with worship beginning at 7.

**February 25** – Board of Evangelism, serving soup.

**March 4** – Board of Lay ministry, serving casseroles.

**March 11** – Board of Education, serving tacos.

**March 18** – Board of Stewardship, serving BBQ's, hotdogs, and chili dogs.

**March 25** – Board of Properties, serving Nate's special pulled pork.



### **Worship Helpers This Month**

Usher Team: Stan Haugland  
Reader: David Phipps  
Altar Guild: Dianne Eiesland  
Virginia Beynon



### **Acolyte Schedule**

- 1 – Ryker Rentschler**
- 8 – Jakson Blankespoor**
- 15 – Edison Kerkvliet**
- 22 – Brielle Blankespoor**



### **GREETERS SCHEDULE**

for February

- February 1: Rhonda & Jim Jensen
- February 8: Ryker Rentschler Family
- February 15: David & Sheryl Phipps
- February 22: Larry & Deb Van Roekel



### **February**

February 1: Bob & Lori Tracy, Brett & Megan Blankespoor, Connie VanderSanden

February 8: Jonathan & Brenda Folkens, Neveah & Memphis VanDyke Family

February 15: Larry & Deb VanRoekel, Jerry & Cindy VanVoorst, Nancy Halma

February 22: Doug & Glennie (providing cake), David & Sheryl Phipps, Jon & Gloria Bonjour

### **CIRCLES THIS MONTH**

Fellowship Circle    Thurs., Feb. 12, 2:00 pm  
Hostess: Dianne Eiesland



**Please keep these members and friends in your thoughts and prayers:** Bob Tracy, Bev Jackson, Grant & Trent Hoogendoorn, Tara Hoogendoorn, Matt, Kendra Michael, Rebecca Wolf, Austin, Erin Van Der Brink and Hazel Mae, Olson Family, McKenna Bouwman, Holly Horstman, Arnie Van Voorst, Arlyn Schreurs, Ed Baatz, Don Eiesland, Wayne Kollis, Michelle Johnson, Sarah Krupke, and all our Nursing Home residents (Vern, Joy, Marion, Bev B, Jean M. Connie, June)



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

Feb. 3 Gary & Kay Twedt-1979  
 Feb. 20 Lowell & Paula Bosler-1988  
 Feb. 24 Doug & Glennie Wiltgen-2001  
 Feb. 26 Mike & Jessica Van Dyke-2011

**SPECIAL DATES FOR FEBRUARY**

- African-American History Month
- Groundhog Day, Feb. 2
- Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 8
- Valentine's Day, Feb. 14
- Transfiguration of Our Lord, Feb. 15
- Presidents' Day, Feb. 16
- Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18



**Prayer Partners**  
*Please keep in touch with your partner throughout the month.*



***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 February baptismal anniversaries of the following members of Bethlehem Lutheran:***

Irene Antrim	Pat Bonnema-2
Ruth Johnson-3	Travis Jensen-3
Clint Berentschot-8	Jan Baatz-8
Colby Van Hill-11	Jacob Roemen-13
Kim Hage-15	Caleb Gayer-18
Thea Twedt-19	Daenerys Snyders-23
Dan Brueggeman-28	



3 Anna McCarty  
 7 Susan Kroger  
 8 Dan Moen, Bob Tracy  
 9 Randy Hamann, Chelsea Snyders  
 10 Remmi Olson  
 11 Andrea Hoogendoorn  
 12 Lowell Bosler  
 13 Wyatt Bomgaars, Judy Hage, River Kramer  
 14 John Rentschler  
 15 Nathan Wiltgen  
 16 Lori Hamann  
 18 Marion Matzen  
 19 Zach De Smet, Don Weberg, Bria Berentschot  
 21 Dean Hage  
 22 Kristi Gramstad, Tessa Van Dyke  
 24 Stan Haugland  
 26 Lazetta Van Den Top, Pam Moen

"Like" us on Facebook!



### **A New Ministry at Bethlehem**

Bethlehem’s newest ministry has begun. “Caring Support” provides copies of the booklet series Journeying Through Grief for you to share with friends, family or neighbors to support them in their grief journeys.

As there are so many caring hearts in our congregation and community, we realized that it would be likely that many people would like to share this resource with the same grieving individuals. Marilyn Caswell has agreed to help us avoid overwhelming them with multiple copies by coordinating the senders.

The first person who contacts her about an individual, will receive Journeying Through Grief to share with them. When others contact her for the same individual, she will be able to share that the grieving person is already connected with this caring ministry.

If you know of someone who you would like to share this resource with, please contact the Marilyn Caswell.

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### **What is a Mango?**

Mango is more than just a delicious orange fruit that provides 12 essential vitamins and minerals!

Mango is also a Western IA synod video ‘star’, along with his friend pastor Ed!

Come to our midweek Lenten services, where good food will be shared and worship will feature videos where Mango and Pastor Ed share conversations about faith.

“Like” us on Facebook!



### **Holiday Giving**

Thank you all so much for your generosity this past holiday season. Miracle Sunday provided an offering of \$17,270. The Christmas Eve offering designated for the youth’s donation to local food pantries was \$1,636.





**February 8, 2026**

**\*\*Wear your favorite team jersey to church**

**\*\*Sign up to win a gift bag for your Super Bowl party**

**\*\*Please bring canned goods or paper products for the food pantry!!**

**Win prizes!**

**January 2026**

**Board of Lay Ministry**

January 14, 2026

David Lantz, Marilyn Caswell, Kay Twedt, Jim Jensen, Pastor Sue, Dave Phipps, Dustin Hoogendoorn

We welcomed Kay Twedt as a new member of the committee, Selected David Lantz at Chair of the committee.

1. Pastor gave her monthly report.
  - We reviewed Christmas Services;
  - Pastor order 26 Red Hymnals and have been place in the sanctuary.
  - Reviewed the Caring Love program - ***Journeying Through Grief***. Marilyn Caswell monitor and distribute materials for congregation.
  - Reviewed plans for Lenten Worship. Pastor plans to use YouTube Video by Pastor Ed Peese.
  - Ash Wednesday is February 18, 2026
  - Easter is April 5, 2026
  - Pastor tasked committee members to participate in the Zoom meeting on Thriving Ministry in Small Congregations on January 20 at 7:00 PM. Sign up at <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/10694803>.

2. Set up Lenten meal Schedule  
February 25 Board of Evangelism  
Soups

March 4 Board of Lay Ministry  
Hot Dishes

March 11 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

March 18 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

March 25 Board of Properties  
Nate's Special Pulled Pork

3. We set up a Reader and Communion Assistant Schedule.

January	Marilyn Caswell
February	Dave Phipps
March	David Lantz
April	Jim Jensen
May	Dustin Hoogendoorn
June	Kay Twedt
July	Marilyn Caswell
August	Dave Phipps
September	Dustin Hoogendoorn
October	Kay Twedt
November	Jim Jensen
December	David Lantz

4. Discussed recognizing groups within the congregation.

- Parsonage Committee
- Women of the BLCW Funeral committee members
- Organist, Andrea Hoogendoorn

5. Alter Guild – Kay shared the need to set up a *Procedure* and *Process* to order consumable supplies used by the Alter Guild. This includes: oil for the candles, communion wafers, communion cups and Wine. Most of these items can be purchased on Amazon except the wine. The Purchasing Agent or the church secretary could assist with ordering the supplies. The committee will follow-up on this topic next month.

6. Discussed the need to upgrade or improve the closet to hang the banners that are not in use. Currently the Baptismal Banners are missing.

**Board of Stewardship**

Members present: Cynthia Haugland, Nancy Halma, Steve Ahrendt, Dan Brueggeman, Tom Rentschler

December meeting minutes were read.

Reviewed 2026 counting schedule and updated member contact info.

February 8, 2026 is Super Bowl Sunday. Cynthia will buy gift bags. 4 gift bags: Youth female/male and adult female/male. Church members are encouraged to bring food pantry items and dress in their favorite team's gear. We will meet at church at 8:45 to prep. Tom will draw the names. Clean up after the service and divide food items. Dan will deliver to Inwood Food Pantry and Tom will deliver to the Larchwood Food Pantry.

Big Thank You to the congregation from Pastor Tim with UCC for the food donations from the annual meeting to the Larchwood Food Pantry as well as Jen with the Inwood Food Pantry.

### **Board of Evangelism**

The Board of Evangelism met Sunday, January 11, 2026.

Minutes:

1. Donations for Manna Market will be delivered.
2. Sandy will purchase treats for Valentine Boxes to be filled at our February meeting for Fellowship Village residents.
3. We will request to serve a Lenten meal for Wednesday, February 25, 2026. Soup will be our entree.
4. Board volunteers will pack backpacks for West Lyon program March 19 & April 2.
5. We are making plans to display photos of members/families during the year.
6. A cookie fundraiser was discussed for Christmas 2026. We'd like to gift a family at Christmas with the donations.
7. Our date to serve The Banquet West, is, Wednesday, April 22, 2:00-5:00 (food preparation) and 5:00-8:00 PM (serving time).  
Sandy Lantz (board chair)

### **Board of Properties**

Members present, Brett B, Gary T, Nate C, and Larry V.R.

Thank you Dianne for her time on the board and being secretary for the board. The Nativity scene was put away during the meeting and we approved a new furnace for the parsonage.



### ***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.