
BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN NEWSLETTER

Pastor Sue Sinclair

SEPTEMBER 2026

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FROM THE PASTOR...

BLESSINGS

What do we mean by 'blessing'?

Growing up in Nebraska, when someone sneezed, you'd say either 'Gesundheit!' (which is German for 'have good health') or 'Bless you'.

When I lived in the south, I occasionally heard someone say "Bless My Soul!", which meant 'oh my goodness' or even 'Well, Bless Your Heart' which I later learned was more of a way of saying 'you're an idiot' than any kind of well-wishing.

Blessings in the Bible vary. In the Old Testament when Jacob stole the blessing that Isaac had meant for Esau, it was not only Isaac asking God to grant good things to his son, it was also what we would consider his Will. In the New Testament, Jesus blessed the children, and we would name every interaction he had with those in need as 'a blessing.'

So, what do we mean by a blessing? The word may seem to be interchangeable with 'luck', but a true blessing is much more. It is a recognition of God's love and involvement in our lives.

In August, we had a blessing of students, backpacks and adults teaching/assisting in our schools. In September we will be blessing and commissioning our Sunday School teachers.

When we bless, whether it is a special blessing like these, or a familiar blessing within a worship service, it is both recognizing and welcoming God's activity in our lives. We ask God for what we understand as our needs to continue the work he has set before us. We understand that we are blessed to be a blessing.

~ Pastor Sue



Rally Sunday September 13th



Our Sunday School Kids will be kicking off the new school year with fun in the park!

****Parents please plan to pick up your kids at 11:15 at the park just south of church on Rebecca Lane.**



Mike Caswell, Judy Hage, Cynthia Weberg, Amanda Wiltgen, Kathy, Jakson, Anna, Jeromy, Hadlee Vande Stouwe, Virginia Beynon, Nathan Huyser, Kendra Michael, Austin, Erin Van Der Brink and Hazel Mae, McKenna Bouwman, Holly Horstman, Arnie Van Voorst, Arlyn Schreurs, Don Eiesland, Wayne Kollis, and all our Nursing Home residents (Bev Jackson, Joy, Marion, Bev B, Jean M. Connie, June)

WORSHIP HELPERS THIS MONTH

Usher Team:	Dan Pedersen Team
Reader:	Jim Jensen
Altar Guild:	Deb Kroger & Cindy Van Voorst

Confirmation Classes

Confirmation classes begin for the year on **Wednesday September 16th at 7pm with a group gathering of 4th-9th graders.** Parents, please check your email for a schedule calendar and other information. Pastor Sue will be available to answer questions after worship on the 6th and 13th.



Do you have a 3rd grader or above who you feel is ready to receive 1st communion instruction? Pastor Sue will be providing first communion preparation early in the school year and would like to work with families to find the best time to schedule these classes. Please send her a text to 605-933-0131 if you have a student that you feel is ready for this important expression of our faith.

Fellowship Circle:

Thursday Sept. 10, 2:00 pm
Hostess: Dianne Eiesland

Love Days: September 21 @ 1:00 pm



September

6th – Ryker Rentschler
 13th – Jakson Blankespoor
 20th – Edison Kerkvliet
 27th – Brielle Blankespoor

GREETERS SCHEDULE

for September

Sept. 6	Randy & Michelle Kippley Family
Sept. 13	Aric & Hannah Olson Family
Sept. 20	Nate & DJ Cartmill Family
Sept. 27	Kristi Haffner Family



for September

6 th	Darrel & Pat Bonnema Stan & Cynthia Haugland Brenda Baatz
13 th	Jon & Gloria Bonjour Greg & Cheryl Twedt
20 st	Brett & Megan Blankespoor Bob & Lori Tracy
27 th	Marilyn Thiessen Tessa Grotewold Pastor Sue & Paul Claasen

!!! Coffee schedule is gearing back up for the end of the year. Please check the newsletter or email each week for when you are scheduled to help with coffee.

BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

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 September baptismal anniversaries of the following members of Bethlehem Lutheran:

June Junge-1	Gloria Bonjour-3
Kate Roemen-4	Seth Bahnson-5
Michael Standley-6	Damon Snyders-6
DJ Cartmill-9	Norm Rentschler-12
Steve De Smet-13	McKenzie Johnston 18
James Johnston-18	Sandy Lantz-18
Susan Kippley-18	Dan Pedersen-19
Cadence Van Dyke-20	Logan Underberg-21
Jen Underberg-21	Aaron Kock-23
Emersyn Rentschler-23	Lori Tracy-24
Jonathan Kroger-25	Stacy Bomgaars-26
Jamie Pedersen-26	

ANNIVERSARIES THIS MONTH

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

Sept. 2	Jesse & Becky Roemen-2000
Sept. 11	Steve & Sandi De Smet-1993
Sept. 17	Sophia & Jeff Mattoon-2011
Sept. 18	Kaitlynn & Jesse Van Beek-2010
Sept. 25	Dustin & Andrea Hoogendoorn
Sept. 27	Nate & DJ Cartmill-2014
Sept. 30	Kyle & Megan Knutson – 2017



- 1 Steve Ahrendt
- 3 Scott Hanson, Kylee Kelly, Daniel Kroger, Tatum Kippley
- 4 Steve De Smet, Blake Lloyd
- 5 Grant Niemeyer
- 6 Liza Brueggeman
- 7 Jon Bonjour, Aaron Kock, Elena Whalen
- 8 Sandi De Smet
- 9 Edison Kerkvliet
- 10 Tyler Knutson
- 11 Kyle Standley
- 13 Jonathan Kroger
- 15 Blade Baatz
- 18 Cassidy Baatz, Dalton De Smet
- 20 Priscilla Briones, Juanita Dreessen
- 22 Bryden Jensen
- 23 Reid Jensen, Dylan McKenney
- 24 Nolan Bahnson, Ramona Kruse, Gary Vogelzang
- 25 Carrie Triggs
- 26 Gary Twedt



GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS

This year we are teaming up with the ELCA churches in Rock Rapids and George for a GWOH event on Saturday Sept. 26th.

The event will benefit children in our communities through ATLAS.

One ministry that they provide is a "First 24 hour Backpack" for children entering foster care. As they particularly need bags for young children, we will be gathering items to complete bags for children 0-3 and 4-6 months.

Items are packed in a dark or light-colored backpack. Each backpack needs:

For 0-3 Months

- 2-3 onesies (sizes NB-3M) short- and long-sleeved
- 1 sleeper/footed pajamas (sizes NB-3M)
- 1 pair socks or booties
- Soft hat (weather appropriate)
- Cards of Encouragement & Empowerment
- Book: Kids Bible Stories
- Grocery/supply gift card



Hygiene & Care

- 6 diapers (NB) & 6 diapers (size 1)
- Travel-size wipes (sensitive) (2pks of 20)
- Small tube diaper rash cream (Triple Paste)
- Burp cloth
- Baby Lotion

Comfort & Feeding

- Swaddle blanket
- Pacifier (BPA-free)
- 2 small bottles
- Bib

For 4–6 Months

- 2 onesies, 1 sleeper (sizes 3–6M)
- Weather-appropriate hat
- Cards of Encouragement & Empowerment
- Book: Kids Bible Stories
- Grocery/supply gift card

Hygiene

- 6 diapers (size 2)
- Wipes (fragrance free, 72ct)
- Baby lotion
- Baby Shampoo
- Diaper Rash Cream (triple paste)

Comfort & Feeding

- lightweight baby blanket
- Pacifier
- 2 bottles
- Bib
- Burp Cloth
- Sippy Cup

A board of items will be set up in the narthex for people to choose and donate.

- No one currently wanting to be the Sunday school superintendent so the board will complete the tasks/role until someone can be found.
- Change: no Sunday school open house.
- outdoor movie night Saturday, Sept 12th: David, popcorn and drinks will be provided, bring your own chair- flyer to come
- Rally Sunday September 13th. Kids will go to the park for craft, games, snack/drinks

New business

- Sept meeting will be classroom prep
- Reviewed confirmation schedule from Pastor Sue
- Change to Sunday school programming, kids will start Sunday school when they start preschool

Board of Lay Ministry

August 12, 2026

Members present: Kay Twedt, Dustin Hoogendoorn, Dave Phipps, Jim Jensen, Pastor Sue

1. Reviewed the minutes of the June Board meeting – Minutes were approved. There was no July board meeting.

2. Pastor gave her monthly report.

-Pastor spoke to Cynthia and his waiting to hear back from the Endowment Committee regarding funds for purchasing 50 more ASC Hymnal Supplements (blue).

-Pastor reported that the summer bible study went well. She had good attendance at Fellowship Village and they preferred the style of bible study.

-Pastor shared vacation dates for the fall. She is planning to take vacation from Thanksgiving to Dec. 3.



August 2026

Board of Education

Attendance:

Michelle, Deb, DJ, Becky

Old Business

- Review Sunday school numbers, teachers, classroom break down
- Need to order Sunday school materials, new supplies, check on Bibles for September

-Pastor will be blessing the students, teachers and backpacks at worship on August 23.

-Confirmation schedule has been drafted. The number of joint classes has increased to 5 this year.

-Pastor will be reaching out to parents about acolyte training.

3. Discussed having a New Member Sunday sometime in September. There will be no confirmation Sunday as there are no students that age.

4. Discussed God's Work, Our Hands. Pastor has visited with Pastor Riter from Immanuel Lutheran in Rock Rapids and George and have agreed to do a joint service event. They received 2 suggestions from Atlas. One is assisting in packing emergency bags for foster children with some basic supplies. We may be able to donate items as well. The other is to help families in Inwood, Rock Rapids and George who would appreciate handyman and /or yard work. They will look into both of these suggestions more. A suggested date is September 26.

5. A visit from Bishop Scott has been lined up for January 17, 2027. This is in conjunction with Pastor Sue's Ordination Anniversary. We discussed having a special coffee hour or a potluck dinner after worship.

6. Discussed the Annual Report to the congregation. The Annual Report has been turned into the Synod. Pastor will work on the report to the congregation.

7. Old Business – Altar Guild – will talk to Properties for ideas for a new or improved banner closet. We discussed what to do with the old glass communion cups. It was decided to see if we could donate them somewhere. The upgrade of cabinets in the sacristy is getting done and they look wonderful. Thank you to the Board of Properties.

8. We also discussed church groups to recognize in the future.

9. Closed with prayer.

Board of Properties

Board Of Properties minutes for August present were Nate Cartmill, Gary Twedt, Clint Barendschot, Aric Olson, and Larry Van Roekel. The new cupboards and sink have been installed in the sacristy. The rock has been cleaned up in the church parking lot and old cabinets have been hauled away, thanks Gary. Larry met with a flooring rep to come and inspect the fellowship hall floor, as well as the entrance to the church hallways. Will get a bid on replacing the flooring. We are looking into cabinets for the storage of the altar guilds banners. The board agreed to look into windows for some of the Sunday School rooms and agreed to getting the solid windows that don't open. Looking forward to the beam project getting started in the next month. Larry Van Roekel

Board of Evangelism

Board of Stewardship

Western Iowa Synod Prayers for September

For Safety as Harvest Begins

Lord of the harvest, the machines are rolling and the hours are long. Keep hands steady and minds alert when exhaustion tempts a shortcut. Watch over every combine, grain cart, and gravel road this season. Bring each worker home safe at the end of every day. Amen.

For Weather That Ripens the Crops Gracious God, you send sun and rain in their season, and we wait on your timing more than we'd like to admit. Give the fields what they need to finish well—warm days, steady moisture, no untimely storm. Teach us patience alongside the farmers who scan the sky each morning. In Jesus' name. Amen.

For Awareness of Neighbors' Needs As the season turns, Lord, open our eyes to the ones nearby who are quietly struggling—with harvest stress, with loneliness, with worries we haven't asked about. Give us the nerve to knock, to call, to simply notice. Make us neighbors in more than name. Amen.

For the Shortening Days

As daylight shortens and shadows lengthen early, we feel the pull toward homes and porch lights and each other. Stir in us a hunger for real connection—phone calls, suppers, coffee that lasts too long. Let this darker season be a gathering-in, not a drawing-away. Amen.

Harvest Season Theology

By Reverend Chip Borgstadt

Harvest. It's a more modern word that comes from the Old English *hærfest*, which didn't originally mean gathering crops. It meant autumn itself. The season came first. Gathering was simply what you did when the time arrived. You didn't invent the harvest. You just showed up for it.

Remember that every September, when you're watching the combines roll across our fields here in western Iowa. There's a kind of theology built right into the machinery, if you're willing to see it. Jesus often used harvest imagery, not just to be poetic, but because everyone listening already understood the rhythm: you don't rush the grain, and you don't stop it from ripening either. It comes when it comes. "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how" (Mark 4:26-27).

I've got two grandkids, Abbott and Ellie, who planted a row of sunflowers in the yard this spring with more enthusiasm than technique. They checked on those seeds daily — some days twice — convinced that watching harder would make them grow faster. It doesn't work that way, and I didn't have the heart to tell them that most of us never really unlearn that instinct. We just get quieter about it as adults. We still want to watch the ground hard enough to hurry it.

Paul knew this too. "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9). Due season. Not our season, but due season—the one that comes on God's timing, not ours. That's a hard lesson for those of us who like to see results by Friday.

This is where harvest theology cuts against the grain of how most of us were raised to think about faith. We tend to measure ourselves by our doing — what we planted, how hard we worked the field, whether we showed up early enough or stayed late enough. But look again at Mark 4: the farmer sleeps and rises, and the seed grows "he knows not how." The growing isn't his doing. It's not even really a mystery to be solved — it's just not his department. His department was the planting. The growing belongs to God. That's not an excuse for laziness in the field; it's a relief for those of us who've quietly convinced ourselves that grace only shows up for people who've earned enough of it. You didn't invent the harvest, remember. You don't manufacture it either. You're invited into it.

So what does this mean for us? Harvest theology isn't really about grain bins and moisture readings, though God knows those matter plenty around here in September. It's about relying on a process you didn't start and can't finish by willpower alone. The farmer plants. God gives the growth. And somewhere in between—in the waiting, watching the sky, and the patience that has no choice but to be patient—that's at which faith is actually practiced, not just professed.

This month, as the fields turn gold around our sanctuaries, maybe that's worth bringing into worship. Whatever you've been faithfully tending and haven't yet seen come to fruit, it isn't wasted. It's just not due yet.



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 treasure.

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