

JANUARY 2024

VOLUME 43 NUMBER 1

# BETHLEHEM ★ STAR

★ HAPPY NEW YEAR! ★

Throughout the Old Testament God continues to remind the Israelites who they are, and who God is. God says over and over again, “*I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt.*” God meets the prophets and reminds them that it is God who created everything, who set everything in motion, who gave order to the world, who sees, hears, and knows all things. So this month I want to take a lesson from the scriptures and remind us of a bit of our story this past year:

January through July Bethlehem continued to gather in worship using pulpit supply from many different pastors and leaders from inside our congregation and beyond.

In January Bethlehem activated your call process paperwork and started looking for candidates to be you next pastor.

Our well loved Mindy Jacobsen (sadly) resigned from her position as Youth Director as she and her family moved to Alaska for Jens’ job.

July 12th your newly called pastor led his first service with The Average Worship Band. (That’s right, I’ve only been around for 6 months.)

We had our Fall Harvest Dinner, and our annual Bake Sale and Lunch led by the BLCW.

In the fall 14 students started confirmation (2 of whom are from our collaboration with Lutsen Lutheran!), and 6 of our students Confirmed their Faith.

Twelve students, middle and high school, went on our Fall Retreat to Cragun’s.

Our Men’s Bible Study, weekly Text Study, and Women’s Circle continued to offer people a chance to study scripture together in Fellowship.

November 5<sup>th</sup> the congregation unanimously voted to fund and hire a Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries. And November 12<sup>th</sup> we started our Stewardship Drive to responsibly plan for the increase needed to fund the new position.

We celebrated Christmas Eve with 3 services of Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion. (Thank you to ALL of the volunteers that made this Holiday season so special with decorations, an impressive tree, beautiful music and so much more.

As we look back at the past year, let’s be intentionally thankful for ALL of the things that God has done for us and through us. And as we look to the future, let’s join together in hope for all that God is yet to do! (Isaiah 43:19 - see the devotion)

**Peace in Christ.**

*Pastor Calvin Konop*

# Christmas Eve At Bethlehem





# Devotions

By Pastor Calvin Konop

*“I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.”*

Isaiah 43:19

Last month in my devotion I talked about how the Israelites were taken into captivity in Babylon. This month our text is a Promise from God to lead the people back to the Promised Land. God says words that frequently echo through my head, “I am about to do a new thing..”

We just finished the Christmas season, where so much of our worship and celebrations are entrenched in tradition. At our Christmas Eve service we try to sing as many of the traditionally popular hymns that we can, we read the same scriptures, we have the same meals. But God promises that God is doing a new thing.

That doesn't mean that our traditions have to change, but it does mean that God does a new thing within those traditions. It means that God shows up in new and powerful ways. God speaks to us through a line in a hymn that we hadn't noticed before, or opens our eyes to it's meaning in a new way. God's word is living and active, and anytime it's spoken aloud God shows up and uses it in new ways. God is with us in our celebrations, meals, and gatherings in new ways – bringing light and love into our relationships.

As we enter a new year, look for what God is up to in your routines and traditions, and in the mundane parts of your life...because God is always at work. God is always up to something. Let the promise God made to the Israelites all those years ago echo throughout space and time, and be for you today: “I am about to do a new thing.”

## Update: Mission Endowment Fund

By Janet Simonen

Bethlehem Lutheran established a Mission Endowment Fund in 2001. Donations to the fund are sent to and managed by the ELCA Foundation in Chicago. The investment earnings from the fund are then used to support initiatives and programs in four designated categories:

1. Outreach to missions and programs within our local community and synod.
2. Outreach to national and international ELCA initiatives.
3. Funding for Bethlehem capital improvements, debt reduction, and/or building programs.
4. Funding for other causes that enhance the mission of Bethlehem.

The Mission Endowment Committee had \$9,000 to distribute for 2023. \$5,000 was awarded in the Spring (three \$1,000 scholarships to graduating seniors and \$2,000 in summer “camperships” for youth). At its in December, the committee voted to award the final \$4,000 as follows: \$1,800 to Bethlehem for an additional camera to stream services and meetings, \$900 to Lutheran World Relief, \$900 to Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, \$200 to Ruby's Pantry, and \$200 to the Violence Prevention Center.

Donations to the Mission Endowment Fund are always welcome and are truly “gifts that keep on giving”. Brochures outlining the fund in more detail are available in the church narthex.

**Annual  
Congregational  
Meeting**

**January 28  
11:15 am  
following  
Worship**





Our January Mission of the Month is our local **Ruby's Pantry**.

At our December meeting a couple of our committee members shared that Ruby's Pantry has had a **50% increase** in the number of people needing gift certificates, to cover their shares, at the last few distributions. On December 6th, the Cook County Ruby's Pantry Facebook page shared the following:

*The rising costs of food, utilities, and rent have pushed family budgets to breaking! We have nearly exhausted our Ruby's Pantry bank account and it is time to ask for help from our community of caring people!*

If you feel called to join other Bethlehem members in supporting this effort, please note "January Mission of the Month" or "Ruby's Pantry" on your special offering.

If you are not familiar with Ruby's Pantry, we invite you to visit [www.rubyspantry.org](http://www.rubyspantry.org) to learn more. Keep in mind, our offerings will directly support our local chapter, Ruby's Pantry is alleviating food insecurity and cutting down on food waste in communities throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Iowa.

Thank you for supporting our neighbors. Happy New Year!

Jessica Markusen, on behalf of the Church in Society Committee

**Church in Society Team** will meet on the 2nd Wed in January instead of the first. (Jan. 10 at 8:00 am) If you are interested in joining this team please contact Jess at [jess.markusen@gmail.com](mailto:jess.markusen@gmail.com).

## More about Ruby's

Ruby A Flodin was the inspiration behind the Pop-Up Pantries and in honor of her big heart a ministry has been created with the same values: taking the resources God has entrusted us with and turning them into that which supports families and communities.

Ruby's Pantry is for anyone that is looking to extend their monthly grocery budget. For a \$25 bundle donation, you will receive an abundance of groceries. There is no income or residency requirement. Ruby's Pantry is not government funded and is a 501-C3 organization. Each donation is used to cover operational costs like trucking, gas, and warehouse staff. All of the food is donated by corporate food donors making it possible to reach more families each month at 85 locations across Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Iowa.

**Local distribution** is on the second Tuesday of the month, from 4:30-6:30 pm. Currently the distribution site is at the High School, through the Eagle doors. (The site does vary throughout the year, so be aware.)

Volunteers unpack the truck; put the food on tables and "shares" are created by placing one of each item put into each bag. Once all shares are packed, they are put on wagons/carts and taken to the trunks of waiting cars!

## RUBY'S MISSION

To activate people in being alert to the needs of others and to be proactive in encouraging faith, showing friendship and meeting tangible needs of neighbors, friends and strangers regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.



This Member Challenge is easy! **Volunteer your time in the next Ruby's Pop-Up Pantry: January 9<sup>th</sup>, 3:30—6:30 pm** in the high school cafeteria. There is a place for you, especially during the winter when many of the regular volunteers happen to be snow birds.

**Volunteers** are always needed with the local distribution. It's about a 3-hour commitment every month. And is a great opportunity to wear your "God's Work. Our Hands" T-shirts!

Whether or not you use Ruby's, please consider donating funds to the Mission of the Month and sponsor a family by donating \$25 per month or buy gift certificates for those who need ones. Donations can also be made directly to Ruby's Pantry, P. O. Box 5, Grand Marais, Mn 55604

*Thank you for considering volunteering your time and talents! Truly this ministry could not exist without wonderful people like you.*

# Cook County Climate Action Plan

By Naomi Tracy-Hegg



We've heard it a thousand times: global average temperatures are rising due to human activity. In Minnesota, the climate crisis makes its presence known through drought, dangerous wildfire smoke, changing weather patterns, predicted impacts to Lake Superior water levels, habitat loss, algae blooms, pests, rising insurance rates, record heat waves, and brown Christmases. The greatest burden of these impacts will be felt by marginalized communities and the youngest generations.

The constant onslaught of bad climate news (and bad news in general) often pushes us to nihilism, to numbness, and to the most dangerous choice: inaction. However, I come to you today with opportunities to take easy, effective action that has potential to be more impactful than your simple vote.



I (Naomi Tracy-Hegg) and my friends (Olya Wright and Martine Redshaw, among others) have a history of local climate action: we ushered in a Grand Marais Climate Action Plan in 2019, followed by Climate Emergency Resolutions at the city and county levels in 2022. We've undertaken similar projects in Lake County and even dabbled in state-level advocacy. This year, we're asking Cook County to commit to drafting and passing a Climate Action Plan (CAP). This committal would take the form of a CAP resolution.

It would be wrong to say that Cook County hasn't already been taking climate action. The County has investigated electrifying some of our fleet, and the Capital Improvement Plan addresses efficiency and electrification of County buildings. However, if we want to attain the emissions reductions necessary to curb the climate crisis, a more ambitious, cohesive plan is clearly necessary.

What, then, can I do to support this initiative? you may ask. **Here's how you can help:**

- **Show up.**

The single most effective way to support this legislation is to show up when the resolution is brought before the County Board. The exact date is yet to be determined, but it will likely be in February. To get email updates about the exact dates, you can add your email to our petition.

- **Sign our petition.** The petition text reads:

Sign and support our local initiative to create a Cook County Climate Action Plan. Join us and show Cook County that we call for immediate action on the climate crisis by passing a resolution to create a powerful climate action plan. Add your voice to demonstrate support for the Resolution and to demand that OUR county takes meaningful action now.



You can sign the petition by following this link: [www.jotform.com/form/233034916397158#preview](http://www.jotform.com/form/233034916397158#preview) or by scanning this QR code:

- **Do you have Thrivent Financial Insurance?**

You may have access to Thrivent Action Plan “free money” for climate action, which would be useful in our plan to present to the school and host an early voting registration drive. Please contact Pastor Calvin or Denise if you have Thrivent Financial Insurance and are interested in helping us out that way.

Mike DeBevec has generously offered to answer questions about IRA incentives for home efficiency improvements and electrifications. There's a lot of information out there, and it's complicated—but Mike has dug through it all and is available to help you take advantage of federal and state incentives (and lower your electricity bill!). You can contact Mike at [mike.debevec@gmail.com](mailto:mike.debevec@gmail.com). The Cook County Local Energy Project (CCLEP) also recommends using this tool for navigating IRA incentives:

<https://fresh-energy.org/electrification-and-you>



## **Seminary Certificate Program for Climate Justice**

The **Center for Climate Justice and Faith** is a collaboration between the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Lutherans Restoring Creation (LRC) and ELCA World Hunger. The Center offers a concentration in climate justice and faith for seminary students and a program in community organizing for climate justice as *love in action*.

To learn more about the Center for Climate Justice and Faith, visit [centerforclimatejusticeandfaith.org](http://centerforclimatejusticeandfaith.org).

## Attuned to Kids Needs

In some congregations it's obvious that people care about kids that aren't their own. It makes a difference. Children thrive when they make connections with caring non-family adults. Many studies, including one from the University of MN indicate that youth who have frequent high-quality interaction with non-parental adults have fewer behavioral problems than youth without such connections. Positive outcomes of strong adult relationships include positive school motivation, improved mental health, lower rates of substance abuse and less school misconduct.



Youth can find supportive and caring adults in sports, scouting, 4-H, music programs, etc. It is my deep hope that congregations can provide this holy space, also - space where children are encouraged, supported, mentored, and prayed for by caring adults. This is what we as Church members signed up for at every baptism in our Church.

The words are: "People of God, do you promise to support (this child), and pray for them in their new life in Christ?" All those assembled say: "**We will**". When we say this, we don't necessarily know what we're getting ourselves into! The liturgical rite in Evangelical Lutheran Worship doesn't say "the congregation" or "members", it says "the assembly" meaning that whether you're an insider, an outsider or someone who just popped in for that day, you are part of a caring web for the newly baptized. YOU made promises.

(This information is taken from an article from Gather Magazine, Dec 2023.)

The congregation voted to hire a full-time position of Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry. What a great opportunity for each one of us to be that non- family adult to show we will carry out our promises of Baptism.

*Submitted by Gwen Lenz*

*Stewardship comes in many forms: talents and financial support. Thank you!*



## Director of Children, Youth, & Family Ministries!

In November, the members of Bethlehem voted to fund and hire a Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries. After we approve our budget for 2024 at the Annual Meeting, we'll be able to post the job and start the search. This is an exciting time at Bethlehem! If you'd like to be a part of making this happen, you can start giving or up your current giving by any amount that works for you/your family. You can take advantage of our online automatic withdrawal, or you can give through checks or offering envelopes. Thank you for your generosity with your time, talents, and treasures. *May God bless and keep you always!*



**GAME NIGHT**

**Confirmation Game Night**

**Friday Jan 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm**

**Snacks provided**

**All Middle School Youth invited. Bring your friends!**





## A Reminder:

Bethlehem has a core group of members that are committed to pray for your prayer concerns. Our Prayer Chain is available to anyone, and participation is welcome to anyone who has time in their prayer life. Folks should either call the church office (218-387-2227), or call/text Laura Popkes at 218-370-0721 to activate the prayer chain.

Requests for prayer can be specific concerns or simply prayers that God will provide what is needed. All prayer requests directly to the prayer chain are confidential unless you request, and then we share with the congregation via the e-Weekly newsletter and church bulletins.

- *Laura Popkes*



## Library Update!

Slow progress is being made! I've taken a break from discarding books. (UGH!) Now I am doing the more enjoyable task of entering books into a database. The goal is to be able to access books in our library, via Internet, just like you can do at a public library.

As library books are entered, they are given Dewey Decimal numbers which go on the spines. Help will be needed to make spine labels, using the label maker at church. If interested in helping with that, please contact me. It's not like there will be mountains of books -- more like tiny mole hills at a time!!

*Thanks for your help — Shelby Anderson*



## ELCA News

The Church Council of the ELCA appointed Michael Burk as presiding bishop pro tempore after its Executive Committee approved Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's request for a four- to six-month leave of absence, to begin Nov. 17. Burk, former bishop of the Southeastern Iowa Synod, will care for the responsibilities of the presiding bishop during her leave of absence.

## Living Lutheran

Living Lutheran is your source for news, reflections and stories from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and its local and global companions. We cover religious news and social issues, congregational life, global and domestic mission, family matters, spiritual practices and resources, and much more. *Living Lutheran* now will be an all-digital publication. To subscribe go to: <https://www.livinglutheran.org/>

## Gather Magazine

Gather, the magazine of Women of the ELCA, offers a mix of articles, theological reflections, devotions and stories of comfort and challenge that help readers grow in faith and engage in ministry and action. Traditionally the BLCW has used the bible studies in this magazine for their monthly Circle meetings. To subscribe or access this great resource go to: <https://www.gathermagazine.org/>

**Winter/Spring 2024 Bible study:**  
*"Scripture and nature: Teachers of faith"* by the Rev. Sara Olson-Smith.

*Jesus regularly invokes nature in his teaching, drawing us into deeper relationship with the created world. But it's not just Jesus inviting us to see creation as teacher and kin. The scriptures themselves help us see the important role of the created world in God's story and saving work. This four-session Bible study explores how biblical stories of the natural world help us to grow our love for and commitment to God, other people and our beloved earth.*



## Attn: New Member & Interested Persons:

Pastor Calvin and the Membership Committee will be offering an introductory class to membership at Bethlehem Lutheran Church on **Sunday January 14<sup>th</sup>** after the worship service in the Library. Reception of New Members will be during the service on January 21<sup>st</sup>. If you are interested in finding out more about membership, please contact Pastor Calvin or the office at 218-387-2227.



**Become Part of Our Church Family**



## Pollinator Sanctuary

At the most recent Synod Assembly (May 2023) the following resolution: *"Resolved, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod declare itself a Pollinator Synod". Included in this statement was the phrase "promote pollinator friendly habitats on their grounds, at home, and in the neighborhood."*



Bethlehem has participate in the Pollinator Sanctuary and is a certified Monarch Waystation. Now we **need of an ambassador or champion of our "Creation Care Team."** (In previous years, Pastor Mark Ditmanson was involved in this and now we have a hole to fill!)

### ***Do you have an interest in helping Bethlehem continuing this program?***

Please contact Denise in the office to get more information. (218-387-2227 or [blc@boreal.org](mailto:blc@boreal.org)) Complete information may be obtained from the Synod chair Tom Uecker:

[tomuecker1946@gmail.com](mailto:tomuecker1946@gmail.com). The Pollinator Project is sponsored by the NE MN Synod EcoFaith Network: [ecofaith@nemnsynod.org](mailto:ecofaith@nemnsynod.org)



## Annual Meeting January 28

The Annual Meeting of Bethlehem Lutheran Church will be held on Sunday January 28<sup>th</sup> immediately following worship in the Fellowship Hall. Every member is encouraged to grab a cup of coffee and snacks and enjoy a short business meeting.

This will be a normal business meeting with review and discussion of the proposed budget and to vote on new council members. Voting on the new budget will officially trigger hiring a Director of Children, Youth & Family Ministry (CYF) since this position was created at the November 5, 2023 Congregational meeting.

**Attention Council Members and all Committees: Your Annual Report is due to the office by Tuesday January 9<sup>th</sup>.** Preliminary Annual Reports will be available by Sunday January 14. Finalized copies will be available following the January Church Council meeting on Monday January 15<sup>th</sup>.

Members are welcome to join via Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent out in upcoming e-Weekly's and parish e-mails.



## Thrivent Choice®











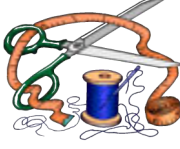



Making generosity easy

Thrivent Choice® is a program of Thrivent Financial where members can recommend where some of Thrivent Financials' charitable outreach funds go. Since 2010, more than \$330 million has been distributed to churches and nonprofits nationwide. *Bethlehem Lutheran Church is one of the nonprofit choices for your Choice Dollars.*

Members can direct their Thrivent Choice Dollars via online or telephone. Visit [Thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://Thrivent.com/thriventchoice) or call 800-847-4836 and when prompted, say "Thrivent Choice."





Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>31</p> <p>8:40am Choir Practice 10:00am Worship Service - Live streamed</p>	<p>1</p> <p>New Year's Day - Office closed</p> 	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p> <p>NO Confirmation NO Meal NO Worship</p> <p>10:00am Ministerium</p> <p>12:30pm Mid-Day Mid-Week Bible Study</p>	<p>4</p> <p>8:00am Bible Study</p> <p>9:00am Quilting</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Clarity Hearing Appts.</p>	<p>6</p> <p><b>Epiphany</b></p> 
<p>7</p> <p>8:40am Choir Practice</p> <p>10:00am Sunday School during Worship</p> <p>10:00am Worship with Live stream &amp; Choir sings</p>	<p>8</p> <p>3:30pm Girl Scouts</p> <p>6:30pm Executive Committee</p> 	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p> <p>8:00am Church In Society meeting</p> <p>12:30pm Mid-Day Mid-Week Bible Study</p> <p>5:30pm Taco dinner before worship</p> <p>6:00pm Contemporary Wor- ship Service</p> <p>6:00pm Confirmation</p>	<p>11</p> <p>8:00am Bible Study</p> <p>9:00am Quilting</p> <p>2:00pm Esther Circle</p> 	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>
<p>14</p> <p>8:40am Choir Practice 10:00am Sunday School during Worship 10:00am Worship Service - Live streamed 11:15 am New Member Class</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr Holiday Office is closed</p> <p>6:30pm Church Council Meeting</p> <p>"I Have a Dream..."</p>	<p>16</p> <p>6:30pm Worship Planning Committee</p> <p><b>All Reports due for Annual Reports</b></p>	<p>17</p> <p>12:30pm Mid-Day Mid-Week Bible Study</p> <p>5:30pm Hotdish meal before worship</p> <p>6:00pm Contemporary Wor- ship Service</p> <p>6:00pm Confirmation</p>	<p>18</p> <p>8:00am Bible Study</p> <p>9:00am Quilting</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Clarity Hearing Appts.</p> <p>6:30pm Confirmation: Game Night</p> 	<p>20</p>
<p>21 New Members Are Joining</p> <p><b>Receive New Members</b></p> <p>8:40am Choir Practice 10:00am Sunday School during Worship 10:00am Worship - Live streamed with Choir</p> <p>2:00pm Care Center Worship Service</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>Irene Peterson's Birthday!</p> <p>Newsletter articles due for next edition</p> 	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p> <p>12:30pm Mid-Day Mid-Week Bible Study</p> <p>5:30pm Sub sandwich meal 6:00pm Contemporary Wor- ship Service</p> <p>6:00pm Confirmation</p> 	<p>25</p> <p>8:00am Bible Study</p> <p>9:00am Quilting</p> 	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p> 
<p>28</p> <p>8:40am Choir Practice 10:00am Christian Con- temporary Worship Ser- vice with the "Average Worship Band" 10:00am Sunday School during Worship</p> <p><b>11:15 am Annual Congregational Meeting</b></p> 	<p>29</p> <p>3:30pm Girl Scouts</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p> <p>12:30pm Mid-Day Mid-Week Bible Study</p> <p>5:30pm Pizza Supper 6:00pm Contemporary Wor- ship Service</p> <p>6:00pm Confirmation</p> 	<p>1</p> <p>8:00am Bible Study</p> <p>9:00am Quilting</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Clarity Hearing Appts.</p>	<p>3</p>

# Bethlehem Lutheran Church

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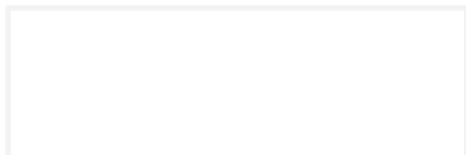


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*Belonging to Christ,*

*Sharing Christ on the*

*North Shore and beyond.*



*Welcome to  
Bethlehem!*

*Every Sunday  
morning Pastor  
Calvin greets church  
goers on their way into  
church. This week his  
wife Ashley joined in  
the greetings.*



**A New Year is upon us  
and presents a time for**

**Fresh Starts**

**and**

**New Beginnings**

**Happy New Year**

**and**

**God's Blessings to you**

**In 2024**

**- Membership Committee**