

VACANCY PASTORS PAGE

Isaiah 9:6-7 - "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and His Name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace, there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom to establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness."

December 26th, The Feast of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, the Feast of St. Stephen. The presents are all open, and the meal is nothing but leftovers. The world is starting to go back to its routines, even if we can take a couple more days off. It's December 26th, and many people flock to the stores to get wrapping paper and ornaments for 75% off. We have turned our thoughts to how we can get all this cleaned up.

In the days before Christmas, it is easy to get lost in the worldly happenings of buying gifts, meal preparations, family visits, final decorations, and Christmas parties. Our thoughts are so consumed with the here and now of the season that we often quickly forget the real purpose of Christmas. Then, as fast as it comes, it seems Christmas is in the past again.

The church doesn't move as fast as we do. Christmas Day starts the 12 days of Christmas with a new celebration of God's gifts each day. On the second day of Christmas, the church calendar invades our idyllic visions of peace on earth and goodwill to men with the story of St. Stephen. Stephen was a man filled with the Holy Spirit who boldly confessed it before his accusers when asked to give an account of his faith. His accusers were the very same people who had cried out for Jesus to be crucified. Now, for his confession of faith, they do the same to Stephen by stoning him to death.

The story of Stephen reminds us that Jesus told us, "In this world, you will have trouble." He also preached that blessed are those who are persecuted and reviled for my sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God. "But take heart, I have overcome the world!"

Stephen's martyrdom reveals the true meaning of Christmas. It brings our thoughts back to the reason Jesus was born. At Christmas, God comes to rescue Stephen from his enemy...death. At Christmas, God loved the whole world so much that He gave His only begotten son, to be born of Mary and laid in a manger, to grow up then and embrace the cross of suffering to save Stephen, and you and me, from death.

At the moment of his stoning, Stephen is quoted as having looked up to see heaven open up and the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the throne of God. As he dies, Jesus is there for him, which is where he will be for us. We may not be martyred, or we may be, but we do know that when that time comes because of Christmas and Easter, Jesus will be with those who die in faith.

That is the real reason for the season. That is what we truly celebrate. The gift of God is salvation for us, heaven open to us, Jesus with us. To us, a child is born; to us, a son is given! Of his reign, there will be no end. Amen

Pastor Johnson

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to all who attended the voters' meeting. Input from the congregation is important to us and we appreciate everyone's feedback, especially those who are offering ideas for new things to do at church! Keep those suggestions coming! I'd also like to thank the council and board members for all their hard work and diligence that they put into everything we proposed at the meeting. I pray that the Lord continues to guide us through all our endeavors and provide for us in the coming year, so we may continue carrying out His mission here at Bethany.

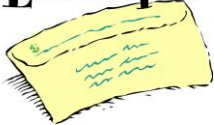
In order to meet our approved budget for next year, we rely on a steady flow of contributions from the congregation. I'd like to encourage anyone who isn't using the E-giving option to consider giving through that. It is safe, easy to set up, convenient, and saves you time from having to write checks, fill out envelopes, etc. It also helps our board of finance be able to better forecast our income and manage cash flow. See Gina in the office if you'd like to have that set up. We also have forms that you can fill out to easily change your contribution amount, frequency, or account.

Just a quick note about the call process...we have narrowed the list of 12 pastors down to the final three that we will present to the congregation. Pastor Kretschmar, who has been assisting us with the call process, is placing a preliminary call to each pastor to see if they would even consider taking a call, to save us time from calling one who would not be interested. As soon as we hear back from all of them, we will release the information about each pastor for you to review in preparation for the voter's meeting, where we will narrow the three finalists down to the one who we will call. **That meeting will be held on December 8th after the service.** Please make it a point to attend this very important meeting!

As we go into the Advent season and look forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, on Christmas, I'd like to wish you all a safe, peaceful, and healthy holiday season filled with the Lord's love and blessings. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ,
Andy Fibiger

Offering Envelopes



2025 CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES

2025 Contribution Envelopes will be available in the lower narthex starting December 1. It is very important that you do not use them until January 1, 2025. Any contributions for 2024 need to be in by Sunday, December 29, either in the offering plate or in the Financial Secretary mailbox in the communication room. If you would like to consider automatic giving through the Joyful Response giving program, you can find registration forms on the counter outside Pastor's office. See Gina in the office with any questions.

CHARITY OF THE MONTH FOR NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

During the months of November and December, any money received in the "Designated Offering" contribution envelope, will go to **Lutheran World Relief**. Their development projects focus on issues at the root causes of poverty. These debilitating causes tend to domino into more and more problems that trap people in poverty. By the same token, attacking just one of these issues can help break the cycle, making people's lives better and freeing them from suffering in many ways. Lutheran World Relief helps by implementing projects all over the world that help with water purification, aiding in emergencies, agriculture, climate, health & livelihood and civic participation. To learn more visit www.lwr.org

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

12-1: Bill Strenger

Luke Matte

12-3: Devon Brooks

12-4: Rayola Madson

12-5: Julie Schuman

12-7: Celestina Duran

12-10: Nancy Johnson



12-14: Dori Matte

12-15: David Hasler

12-16: Rebecca Tershner

Diane Marotz

12-17: Marilyn Kirchenwitz

12-18: John Tershner

12-21: Shua Yang

12-22: Karl Rademacher

12-23: Cory Luecke

Brad Cox

12-25: Kevin Werner

12-31: Ken Buesing

Blessings to all that are celebrating this month!

If we missed a member's birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office, and let us know.

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Advent Services – Wednesday December 4, 11, 18 at 6:00pm

Christmas Eve Service – Sunday, December 24 at 4:00pm

Christmas Day Service w/Holy Communion – Monday, December 25 at 9:00am

Note: there will be no Sunday School on December 22 or 29



The church office will be closed December 23 – January 1

SPECIAL VOTERS' MEETING

**Sunday, December 8, 2024
11:00am**

At this meeting, the Call Committee will present the three Pastoral candidates they have chosen, and the congregation will vote on which one to call. Please make every effort to attend this very important meeting!



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

The Sunday School children had a great time shopping for gifts to fill shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. We were able to fill 12 boxes that were dropped off and shipped to children all over the world.



THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS

All Thrivent members at Bethany please remember to direct your "Thrivent Choice Dollars" to Bethany Lutheran Church if you have not already done so.

Thrivent cards on the shelf near the Pastor's office will help guide you. If you are unsure if you have funds available to direct just call 1-800-847-4836 to check.

Thanks to those who have already directed their dollars. These dollars help fund programs, events and missions for Bethany.

CHRISTMAS DECORATING

The Altar Guild will be decorating the church for Christmas on Saturday, December 7 starting at 9:00am. Any help (even if you are not in the Altar Guild) would be greatly appreciated.



POINSETTIA ORDERS

There's still time if you'd like to get your poinsettia order in. Call or email the church office by Monday, December 2 at noon. Red or white poinsettias are \$11 each. You can order them in memory or in honor of someone. Plants can be picked up and taken home any time after the Christmas Day service.



Living Out Love 2024 Surpassed Goal!!

We are so grateful for the generosity of our partner churches and other supporters as we surpassed our goal during our annual fundraising event, Living Out Love! We raised over **\$67,000** to be used across our ministries to impact lives in Sheboygan County.

During our event, we were blessed with the testimony from one of our refugee cases and from one of our New Way Community participants. Being able to share these moments of joy and success during our annual event was extremely uplifting. We thank everyone who attended and who supported us throughout the year to make these testimonies happen. We are impacting lives one story at a time!

May you and your families be blessed this Thanksgiving holiday!

"We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly." ~ 1 Thessalonians 1:2

DECEMBER 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
01 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship w/HC (Pastor Schaetzle)	02	03 10:30 am Bible Study	04 6:00 pm Advent Worship (Pastor Krause)	05	06	07
08 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship (Pastor King) 11am Voters' Meeting	09	10 10:30 am Bible Study 6pm Elders 6:30pm Bd of Finance 7pm Council	11 6:00 pm Advent Worship (Pastor Krause)	12 7:15pm Dartball (home)	13	14
15 8:45am Sunday School 10am Worship w/HC (Pastor King)	16	17 10:30 am Bible Study	18 6:00 pm Advent Worship (Pastor Krause)	19 7:15pm Dartball (away)	20	21
22 10am Worship (Pastor King)	23	24 4pm Christmas Eve Worship (Pastor Krause)	25 9am Christmas Worship w/HC (Pastor King)	26	27	28
29 10am Worship w/HC (Pastor King)	30	31				

THOSE SERVING IN GOD'S HOUSE THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2024

Sunday, December 1

10:00 a.m.

w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Andy Fibiger
Ushers:	Ken Thompson, Bob Kuehlman
Altar Guild:	Shirley & Ray Ottman
Scripture Reader:	Steve Hazen
Door Locker:	Andy Fibiger
Streaming:	Brianna Meyer

Wednesday, December 4

6:00 p.m.

Elder:	Gerry Luebke
Ushers:	Todd & Dori Matte
Streaming:	Steve Perry

Sunday, December 8

10:00 a.m.

Elder:	Lee Gumm
Ushers:	Sue & Dave Prange
Altar Guild:	Barb & Karl Kaeppler
Scripture Reader:	Mary Ann Fibiger
Door Locker:	Dan Fibiger
Streaming:	Andy Fibiger

Wednesday, December 11

6:00 p.m.

Elder:	Shua Yang
Ushers:	Jerry Sabrowsky, Dan Fibiger
Streaming:	Madison Fibiger

Sunday, December 15

10:00 a.m.

w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Steve Hazen
Ushers:	Fibigers
Altar Guild:	Sue & Dave Prange
Scripture Reader:	Lee Gumm
Door Locker:	Diane Marotz
Streaming:	Brianna Meyer

Wednesday, December 18

6:00 p.m.

Elder:	Todd Matte
Ushers:	Ray & Shirley Ottman
Streaming:	Andy Fibiger

Sunday, December 22
10:00 a.m.

Elder:	Lee Gumm
Ushers:	Steve & Alaric Hazen
Altar Guild:	Barb & Lee Gumm
Scripture Reader:	Todd Matte
Door Locker:	Ryan Brooks
Streaming:	Todd Matte

Tuesday, December 24
4:00 p.m.

Elder:	Gerry Luebke
Ushers:	Ken Thompson, Bob Kuehlman
Altar Guild:	Liz & Ken Buesing
Streaming:	Madison Fibiger

Wednesday, December 25
9:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Shua Yang
Ushers:	Steve & Diane Marotz
Altar Guild:	Julie Steele & Rachel Johnson
Streaming:	Brianna Meyer

Sunday, December 29
10:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Steve Hazen
Ushers:	Todd & Dori Matte
Altar Guild:	Lynn & Gerry Luebke
Scripture Reader:	Sharon Werner
Door Locker:	Steve Marotz
Streaming:	Steve Perry

There are a lot of services in December. If you are unable to work your scheduled shift, please either find someone to switch with or contact the church office and Gina will help find a replacement. Thank you to all of our volunteers for helping out during this busy holiday season!

