

PASTORS PAGE

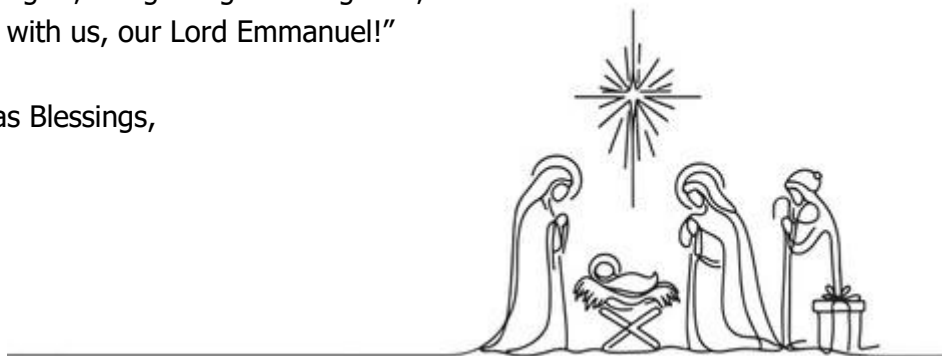
To the Saints at Bethany:

Where do you stand on Christmas music? Some people don't mind listening to Christmas in July. Others don't mind Christmas music, just at the proper time (which can lead to long arguments about when the proper time begins for Christmas music). Others would just as soon skip the whole thing. And some parse out their feelings not based on the genre in general, but on the basis of individual tunes. You might have particular songs that you can do without (I love you Paul McCartney, but I don't need to hear "Wonderful Christmastime" more than once a year, and I don't need to hear "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer" ever again, even after I once had a conversation with the guy who wrote it). But I would guess that even the most jaded Scrooge has a particularly favorite Christmas song. For me, I've always loved "O Little Town of Bethlehem." (I especially like the Bob Dylan version, which you can find on YouTube, but I must warn is not for everyone). Whenever I hear that song, I can't help but reflect on the lyrics (which isn't always the case with other Christmas songs).

The author of the lyrics, Phillips Brooks wrote the words after literally visiting Bethlehem in 1866. He came back home to Pennsylvania to a fragile nation just after the Civil War and the assassination of Lincoln. And he wrote lines like "O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth, and praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth." The line that has always gotten me is the end of verse 1: "Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." The long story of human sin and divine redemption, the story of our suffering and struggling and our anticipation and our desire and our hope—all of those parts of our stories find their culmination in the baby born in the dark streets of a small village two thousand years ago!

And yet another line from the song speaks to us today: "No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in." This line is as true as it was 150 years ago when Brooks wrote it, and just as true as it was two thousand years ago when the dear Christ entered into this world of sin. So this year for Advent and Christmas worship services at Bethany, we will use the theme "The Dear Christ Enters In" to frame our worship. We will see how the dear Christ seeks to enter every aspect of our lives and stories. We look at what happens when Christ enters in and makes our hearts his home. And we will see how our approach to the entire season changes when our focus is not on what we do (or what we think we *have* to do), but on what Christ does for us when He enters. We might even hear Christmas music differently! "We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!"

Advent and Christmas Blessings,
Pastor Azor



Thank you !

To the Members and Friends of Bethany Lutheran Church:

Thank you so much for the heartfelt welcome our family received upon coming to Bethany! Even before we moved in, many volunteers were spending much time painting, replacing carpeting, putting in blinds, putting in a new kitchen faucet, replacing bedroom doors, and doing other helpful repairs to make the parsonage beautiful. We also appreciate the time Andy and Gina Fibiger spent communicating with us and helping us as we transitioned to a new home and church.

When we arrived, we found new towels, coconut vanilla soap, and air freshener in our bathrooms. We also found gift baskets on our kitchen counter that included 2 nice baskets, board and card games, a Bible stories book, a Noah's ark puzzle, an "In All Things Give Thanks" soap tray, vanilla bean soap, scented house spray, washcloths, oven mitts, kitchen towels, a "Crazy Blessed" sign, a "The Secret Ingredient is Always Love" sign, a "Thankful" placemat a flowery notepad, a nice bowl, a very thick and heavy cutting board, candy, popcorn mixes, cashews, almonds, sausage, cheese, crackers, caramel apple chips, peanut butter crackers, and Havarti cheese. The refrigerator was also stocked with cold bottled water. We also appreciated the nice welcome card with a monetary gift.

Thank you also to Winston and Austin for carrying things when we arrived. Thank you also to Karl and Barb Kaeppler for the lunch they made for us in the church basement the Saturday of our move. We appreciate you being there to help us and also get to know us right away!

From Sara: Thank you to Julie Steele for coming over on moving day to welcome me. Thank you for the two times we met so you could show me the organ and all I need to know for the music at Bethany. Thank you for continuing to be in contact via text or phone call.

From all of us: Thank you for the special experience you shared with us on Installation Sunday. We were glad to worship with you and get our ministry started with you. We enjoyed talking with you after the service and having koinonia during the delicious meal catered by Altona.

We are starting to get to know some of you, and we hope to get to know more of you as time goes on! We are happy to be at Bethany, and we look forward to serving the Lord with you and learning about God's love and care for us. Thank you for living out Romans 15:7: *"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."*

In Christ,

The Cigelske Family

MEET THE CIGELSKE CHILDREN

Hello to the Members and Friends of Bethany Lutheran Church! Thank you again for welcoming our family into your midst. Some of you have expressed happiness about our large family and an interest in getting to know us better. As many of you know, God has blessed us with five sons. "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." Psalm 127:5

Kal is 15 years old. His birthday is February 11, 2010, his baptism birthday is March 20, 2010, and he was confirmed May 5, 2024. He is a sophomore at Sheboygan Lutheran High School. He enjoys weightlifting, reading, learning about theology, playing trombone, and computer science.

Zak (short for Zakariah) is 13 years old. His birthday is June 24, 2012, and his baptism birthday is July 15, 2012. He will take Confirmation Class this year. Zak is in 7th grade at St. John Lutheran School in Plymouth. Zak loves sports and participates in basketball, baseball, soccer, and cross country.

Ezra is 11 years old. His birthday is July 20, 2014, and his baptism birthday is August 10, 2014. Ezra is in 5th grade at St. John Lutheran School in Plymouth. Ezra is well-rounded in his interests, including playing piano, playing saxophone, singing, reading, journaling, basketball, soccer, and cross country.

Ephraim is six years old. His birthday is October 8, 2019. He was baptized on All Saint's Day, November 1, 2019. Ephraim is in kindergarten at Kohler Elementary School. He likes playing with his brothers, building, drawing maps, reading, art, and playing outside.

Bo (short for Boaz) is two years old. His birthday is June 12, 2023, and his baptism birthday is June 25, 2023. He stays at home with mom while his brothers go to school. Bo likes playing with his brothers, toy cars and trucks, reading, and playing outside.

All of our children are happy to be at Bethany and living in Kohler! Everyone has been so kind to our family. Thank you again for your welcome!

In Christ,

Pastor Azor and Sara Cigelske



2026 CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES

Offering Envelopes



2026 Contribution Envelopes will be available soon in the back of church. It is very important that you do not use them until January 1, 2026. Any contributions for 2025 need to be in by Sunday, December 28, 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.

To God Be the Glory – A message from Julie Steele

How blessed we are at Bethany to have a new pastor to shepherd us into the future. And another blessing is his family, of which his wife is an experienced musician.

When Pastor Steele retired and said good-bye, I would have also, except for the need here at Bethany for an organist. I was happy to continue to lead worship services. Now, however, the Lord has provided as He always does...and in HIS TIME!

Sara Cigelski has agreed to “take the bench” and lead worship. You will notice differences, yet I’m confident the Holy Spirit will guide her in the use of the talents God has given her.

Have no fear, the Lord isn’t letting me “retire”. There is an overwhelming need at Trinity in Sheboygan. This is GOD’S TIMING! Their director of music (much more than just the organist) has been on extended leave. I have been asked to assist by playing the organ for church services (just a small part of that job).

Though I will miss each and every one of you, please know that I have been blessed to serve here at Bethany for nearly 20 years. I’ve enjoyed the many opportunities God has placed before me — choir director, chime choirs, Sunday School music and bells, you peoples “band” for Christmas, and of course, organist. And I’ll be happy to fill in when Sara needs time off.

I am so glad to pass the reins to Sarah and am thrilled God has provided another talented musician to lead the music at Bethany. God always knows best.

Yours in Christ,
Julie Steele



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



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 1 at 11:00am. 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.

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Bethany officially welcomed our new pastor, Pastor Azor Cigelske, as he was installed on Sunday, November 2. It was a fantastic service, with 20 other pastors in attendance to welcome him into the district. A delicious dinner followed, which was catered by none other than Altona Supper Club from New Holstein, whom Pastor Azor knows very well, having served in that community for so many years. I'd like to thank everyone who attended this momentous occasion to show your love and support for our new pastor and his family! Below is a group picture of all the pastors who attended.



Back L to R: Johnson, Osladil, Kretschmar, Niles, Mech, Schmitt,
Berg, Shive, Schaetzle, Schulz, Barkley, Schultz.
Front L to R: Peitsch, Blas, King, Meador, Cigelske, Johnson, Krause, Huehn, Marks.

We had our annual voter's meeting on Sunday, November 9th. Everything went very smoothly. In case you were not able to attend, we shared a letter from Julie Steele announcing her retirement. On behalf of the entire congregation, I'd like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Julie for all the years of service she so graciously provided, not only as organist, but choir director, chime choir director, Sunday school music director, council secretary, and so much more. Julie's last service was Sunday, November 2, and she is currently helping Trinity with their organist's vacancy through the end of the year, but rest assured, we will have Julie back some time in January so we can recognize and honor her for all her years of service – so stay tuned! That said, we warmly welcome Pastor Azor's wife, Sara, who will be our new organist moving forward! If you've been to church over the past two weeks, you've already heard what a talented organist, pianist, and vocalist she is! We look forward to all the wonderful music she will bring to future worship services!

As we go into the Advent season, and look forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ on Christmas, I'd encourage you all to attend the midweek Advent services on Wednesday nights at 6:00 pm. Gina and I wish all our brothers and sisters in Christ at Bethany 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

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

12-1: Bill Strenger
Luke Matte
12-3: Devon Brooks
12-4: Rayola Madson
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

12-25: Kevin Werner
12-31: Ken Buesing
Tom Usadel

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

12-31: Kya & Andy Diehl



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 3, 10, 17 at 6:00pm
Christmas Eve Service – Wednesday, December 24 at 4:00pm
Christmas Day Service w/Holy Communion – Thursday, December 25 at 9:00am

Note: there will be no Sunday School on December 28



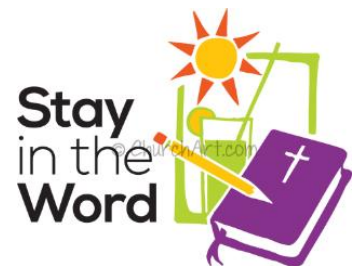
The church office will have limited hours December 22 – January 4.
Please call or email and Gina will respond when she is in.

BIBLE FOUNDATIONS – EXPLORING GOD'S STORY TOGETHER

Bethany's Confirmation program is being rebranded. **Bible Foundations** will be a two-year cycle of learning Bible stories along with the catechism.

This class is open to everyone! 7th and 8th graders will be confirmed in Christ at the end of the two years. But this is not just for our 7th and 8th graders. Parents of confirmation students are encouraged to join and learn along with their child. Members (and even non-members) of all ages are also invited to join.

Bible Foundations meets Wednesdays from 3:30 – 4:30pm. Please feel free to join each week or whenever you are available.





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.



Youth Movie Night

Join us in the Bethany Fellowship Hall
Friday, December 12 from 5:30 - 8:00pm.

We'll start with a pizza dinner followed by two short Christmas movies "The Prince of Peace Christmas Movie" and "On Angel's Wings". We will take a short break in between the movies to put together an angel craft.

Parents are welcome to stay (but not required - we will have plenty of supervision). Bring your blanket, bean bag, pillow etc.

Sign up in the lower narthex or call or email the church to let us know if you can make it. Don't forget to invite a friend!

Sundy School Christmas Program



Sunday School has started up again at Bethany, and every Sunday, we are also preparing for a Christmas Program! We have started learning the song "Go, Tell it on the Mountain," and more is yet to come. If you have a child or grandchild age two-8th grade who would like to be in the Christmas Program, please let Gina Fibiger or Sara Cigelske know! You can email Gina at info@blckohler.com, and you can email Sara at scigelske@gmail.com. Please send your kids or grandkids to Sunday School every Sunday from now until the Sunday before Christmas so they can practice at the beginning of the Sunday School hour. The dress rehearsal will be Sunday, December 21 at 8:45 with the Christmas Program following during the 10:00 church service. We will have fun and bring you a special service celebrating the birth of our Savior!



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.



Living Out Love 2025 Event Update

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 **\$62,000** to be used across our ministries to impact lives in Sheboygan County.

THOSE SERVING IN GOD'S HOUSE THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2025

Wednesday, December 3
6:00 p.m.

Elder:	Lee Gumm
Ushers:	Ray & Shirley Ottman
Streaming:	Todd Matte

Sunday, December 7
10:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Steve Hazen
Ushers:	Ken Thompson, Bob Kuehlmann
Altar Guild:	Lynn & Gerry Luebke
Scripture Reader:	Mary Ann Fibiger
Door Locker:	Ken Thompson
Streaming:	Madison Fibiger

Wednesday, December 10
6:00 p.m.

Elder:	Gerry Luebke
Ushers:	Fibigers
Streaming:	Andy Fibiger

Sunday, December 14
10:00 a.m.

Elder:	Shua Yang
Ushers:	Steve & Diane Marotz
Altar Guild:	Sue & Dave Prange
Scripture Reader:	Kal Cigelske
Door Locker:	Steve Marotz
Streaming:	Steve Perry

Wednesday, December 17
6:00 p.m.

Elder:	Andy Fibiger
Ushers:	Todd & Dori Matte
Streaming:	Noah Fibiger

Sunday, December 21
10:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Steve Hazen
Ushers:	Steve & Alaric Hazen
Altar Guild:	Shirley & Ray Ottman
Scripture Reader:	Lee Gumm
Door Locker:	Andy Fibiger
Streaming:	Brianna Meyer

Wednesday, December 24
4:00 p.m.

Elder:
Ushers:
Altar Guild:
Streaming:

Gerry Luebke
Dan Fibiger, Jerry Sabrowsky
Barb & Lee Gumm
Madison Fibiger

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

Elder:
Ushers:
Altar Guild:
Streaming:

Shua Yang
Dave & Sue Prange
Gina & Andy Fibiger
Todd Matte

Sunday, December 28
10:00 a.m.

Elder:
Ushers:
Altar Guild:
Scripture Reader:
Door Locker:
Streaming:

Todd Matte
Ray & Shirley Ottman
Liz & Ken Buesing
Steve Hazen
Dan Fibiger
Kal Cigelske

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!



December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 11am Poinsettia order deadline	2 10:30am Bible Study 6pm Elder Meeting	3 3:30pm Bible Foundations (Confirmation) 6pm Advent Worship Church office closed	4 7:15pm Dartball (home)	5	6
7 8:45am Bible Study & Sunday School 10am Worship w/HC	8	9 10:30am Bible Study 6:15pm Board of Finance 7pm Church Council Meeting	10 3:30pm Bible Foundations (Confirmation) 6pm Advent Worship	11 7:15pm Dartball (away)	12 5pm Christmas Movie Night	13
14 8:45am Bible Study & Sunday School 10am Worship	15	16 10:30am Bible Study	17 3:30pm Bible Foundations (Confirmation) 6pm Advent Worship	18 7:15pm Dartball (home)	19	20
21 8:45am Bible Study & Sunday School 10am Worship w/HC	22	23	24 4pm Christmas Eve Worship	25 9am Christmas Day Worship w/HC	26	27
28 10am Worship	29	30	31			