



Bethel Blaze

December 2025

Sharing Christ's love with a big heart

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

In Person

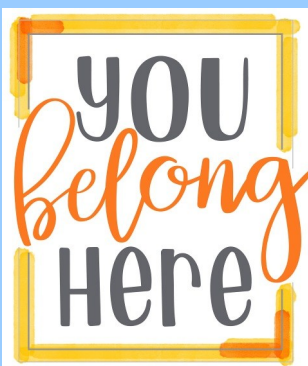
Sunday Mornings:
8:15 am and 10:30 am
in the sanctuary

Online

The 8:15 service is
livestreamed
on our YouTube channel.
Check our website
for the link!
You can also view the service
at your convenience.

Past services are also available
on Northfield's public
television station channels
180 & 187
No cable is required.
There are four opportunities
to watch:

Monday 2:00 pm
Tuesday 1:30 pm
Wednesday 7:00 pm
Saturday 7:00 am



PREPARING THE WAY

HOLDEN EVENING PRAYER

6:30 pm Wednesdays in Advent
(December 3, 10 and 17)

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Sunday, December 14
8:15 and 10:30 am



DECEMBER 24 CHRISTMAS EVE

3:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship
4:30 pm Christmas Eve Worship/Livestream
6:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship *with Holy Communion*

DECEMBER 25 CHRISTMAS MORNING

10:00 am Christmas Day Worship

DECEMBER 29

9:00 am Cookie Share & Coffee Fellowship
10:00 am Worship/Livestream

FIRESIDE REFLECTIONS



Pastor Ben Schori
(he/him)

pastor.ben@bethelnorthfield.org
(preferred for non-urgent communication)

office
507-786-8953

office hours
by appointment Monday,
Tuesday, Wednesday,
and Thursday

days off
Friday & Saturday

Happy Advent, Bethel! Every liturgical season in the church year has its own unique themes. In Advent those themes, at least for me, are waiting and preparing; admittedly, not immediately very exciting. Who likes waiting? And “preparing” sounds like a lot of work.

Perhaps you, like my family and I, have begun living into those themes of “waiting” and “preparing” for Christmas. My girls are now asking for daily updates on how many more days there are until Christmas, and we have begun the annual unpacking of the red and green totes and decorating for the festive season. But beyond the hanging of ornaments and the laying of garland, how might we prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Emmanuel (God with us) in the birth of Christ into our hearts and minds anew, and into this world and context we find ourselves in at the end of 2025?

The waiting of Advent isn’t passive, nor is the preparing for Christmas superficial. They are themes to be experienced intentionally and actively. How will you embody them with a creative spirit and a resilient faith this season? How will you intentionally and actively wait and prepare for the coming of the Christ child? Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Advent Blessings, Pastor Ben

Greetings from the Council President

As we enter the Advent season and a new church year, on behalf of the Church Council I want to wish everyone a meaningful Advent and a joyous Christmas season. I write to you with a full heart after the Bethel Advent Festival – so many wonderful activities, so much delicious food, and so much love.

Yet as Pastor Phil addressed that day in his homily, life is hard. May we all continue to pray for each other, and amid the busyness of the season, let’s continue to watch out for each other and for those outside our Bethel community to make this time a hopeful one for as many as possible.

I will write more in my annual report in January, but for now a huge thank you, Bethel, for your generous hearts in sharing your time, talent, and treasure. You truly do live the ELCA motto “God’s Work, Our Hands.”

God’s peace to you, Paula Mathison

BeFRIENDERS

by Marci Groenewold

The holidays are upon us, and with them come the mix of joy, grief, and tension that can make this season hard. Recently I subscribed to ColossianForum.org, an organization that works with people “to cultivate connection across difference.” As Christians, we know we should love our enemies, but at times we wonder just how to do it. There are ways to find peace and love for others without abandoning our convictions. Difficult conversations do not need to divide and polarize us. For example, following a painful argument with his adult son, a father went to bed anxious and discouraged, unsure how they would move forward. The next morning, he remembered a simple phrase from The Colossian Forum: “Go toward him. Get curious.” With this thought in mind, the father reached out, apologized, and said, “Help me understand why you see things this way.” They didn’t agree on everything, but the conversation softened both of them. What began in tension ended in humility, listening, and deeper love.

Before a BeFriender makes a visit, they pause to take a moment to set aside anything that might prevent them from really hearing what the other person is trying to say. The “Palms up, Palms down” prayer is one way to do that. With palms down and using a releasing posture, we let go asking God “What do I need to let go of or what are you inviting me to let go of?” With palms together we pray “what am I thankful for or what am I going to be thankful for.” Finally with palms up we ask “What gift do you want to give me?”

Although the temptation is to rush ahead and fix what’s broken, it’s important for us to slow down long enough to know what God’s been forming in us all along.

A key BeFriender principle: “God is present.” For more information about BeFrienders, please contact the Bethel Office (507-786-6674).

EVERY WEEK

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS 9 AM - 3 PM		
SUNDAY		8:15 am Worship/Livestream
		9:30 am Coffee Fellowship & Education Hour
		10:30 am Worship
MONDAY		6:30 pm Resonance (Adult Bell Choir)
		12:00 pm Bible Text Study @ The Vault
WEDNESDAY		
		3:30 pm Limitless
		5:45 pm Bistro! Join us for a fresh cooked meal and fellowship. Suggested donation is \$5 per person. Kid friendly SunButter or cheese sandwiches are available as alternatives.
		6:15 pm Ring Forth Bell Choir
		6:30 pm Advent Service—Holden Evening Prayer on December 3, 10 and 17
		7:00 pm Church Choir Rehearsal
		Confirmation & Hangtime
		8:05 pm Brio Bell Choir
THURSDAY		8:30 am MoB (Men of Bethel)
		9:30 am FaB (Faith and Books) We are reading <i>Out of Sorts</i> by Sarah Bessey. Please join us for rich discussions in the Youth Room. Contact lanareich@yahoo.com to be added to the FaB email list.
Friday		9:30 am WoW (Women of the Word) (via Zoom)

THIS MONTH

DEC 2	5:00 pm	Personnel	DEC 14 - (cont'd)	morning	Children's Christmas Program and Reception
	7:00 pm	Endowment			
DEC 4	10:45 pm	OWLs (Older, Wiser Lutherans)	DEC 16	2:00 pm	Grief Support Group
	2:00 pm	Monthly Movie		6:30 pm	Church Council
	7:00 pm	Vision Seekers @ Tanzenwald	DEC 17	4:30 pm	Caroling & Cocoa @ Benedictine
DEC 7	<i>Alternative Giving Fair in East Narthex</i>		DEC 18	10:00 am	Parkview East Fellowship
DEC 9	9:00 am	Quilting Group	DEC 21	1:00 pm	Benedictine Chapel
	2:00 pm	Library	DEC 23	12:00 pm	Lydia Circle
DEC 10	5:30 pm	Congregational Life	DEC 24	3:00 pm	Christmas Eve Worship
	6:30 pm	Circle of Saints Blessing <i>for 6th graders as part of Advent Service</i>		4:30 pm	Christmas Eve Worship / livestream
DEC 11	10:30 am	Projects with a Purpose		6:00 pm	Christmas Eve Worship with Holy Communion
	5:45 pm	Active Befriender Support	DEC 25	10:00 am	Christmas Day Worship / livestream
	7:00 pm	Finance Committee	DEC 28	9:00 am	Cookie Tasting Fellowship
DEC 13	9:00 am	Worship & Arts Action Team		10:00 am	Worship / livestream
	1:00 pm	Benedictine Chapel			
Dec 14	<i>Alternative Giving Fair in East Narthex</i>				

FAITH FORMATION AT BETHEL...

The Nursery is open 8:00 am—11:45 am on Sunday

and 5:45 pm—7:00 pm on Wednesday

providing a safe and caring environment for our youngest ones (up to preK).

Children's Ministry

Join us on Sunday from 9:30—10:15 am for Kids' Fellowship! After games with older youth in the center pod, kids K-5 are practicing songs for the Christmas program with Brenda Rabbel!

A Wednesday Limitless highlight this month will be teaming up with Congregational Life to offer:



Caroling and Cocoa Wednesday, December 17

All ages are welcome to join us as we spread joy to our neighbors at the Benedictine and Northfield Retirement Center with Christmas caroling, followed by Hot Cocoa Fellowship in Bethel's Christian Life Center at 5:15 pm.



The details:

1. Limitless attendees and chaperones will carol at the NRC from 4:45-5:15 pm
2. Youth and Adults (& non-Limitless kids) will carol at the Benedictine from 4:30-5:00 pm
3. All will meet for hot cocoa fellowship after caroling.
4. Bistro (our community meal) is from 5:45—7:00 pm. Children are welcome to stay with their parents, go to the **Art Room**, or go to **Games & Activities in the Center Pod**.

Youth Ministry

Highlights for December...

1. 6th Grade "Circle of Saints" is part of the Advent Evening Prayer service **December 10**.
2. The Hangtime Christmas Party is **December 17**.
3. Kristi is preaching on 1st Sunday of Christmas, **December 28** (reminder one service at 10 am)!

OPPORTUNITIES

Christmas Cards

Help us send **Christmas greetings to our Northfield neighbors in residential care facilities** like the Benedictine, Northfield Retirement Center, Three Links, and Laura Baker. This year, we hope to provide more than 610 cards so that every resident receives a Christmas greeting.

Cards and envelopes are available just outside the CLC. Sample messages to personalize the card are provided. Please sign the cards with **just your first name** or **"a friend."** Return completed cards to the "mailbox" on the counter. Your cards will be delivered about 10 days before Christmas. Thank you for thinking of folks that might be forgotten this time of the year!



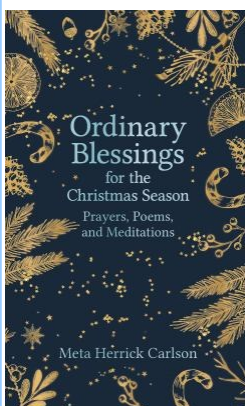
OPPORTUNITIES

MONTHLY MOVIE



Thursday, December 4 @ 2 pm

Be sure to stop by our Library for a large selection of Christmas titles! They are located on the yellow portable library cart.

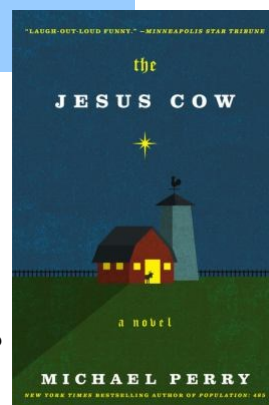


For many, the season leading up to Christmas is a time of expectations, busyness, joy, and often grief.

Ordinary Blessings for the Christmas Season helps us access the deeper meanings of holiday, connect to the ancient story of Christmas, and pause to recognize the sacred ordinary in the season.

IN THE LIBRARY...

Life is suddenly full of drama for low-key Harley Jackson in *The Jesus Cow*: A woman in a big red pickup has stolen his heart, a Hummer-driving predatory developer is threatening to pave the last vestiges of his family farm, and inside his barn is a calf bearing the image of Jesus Christ. His best friend, Billy, who shares his trailer with a herd of cats and tries to pass off country music lyrics as philosophy, urges him to avoid the woman, fight the developer, and make a fortune from the calf. But Harley takes the opposite tack, hoping to avoid what his devout, dearly departed mother would have called “a scene.”



A LIGHT IN THE STORM

Saturday, December 13 1 pm—6 pm

Agenda Launch & Anti-Authoritarianism Strategy Training

@ the Minneapolis Convention Center offered by ISIAAH and Faith in Minnesota

Learnings from the listening surveys conducted all over MN will be shared as folks come together to protect our state, neighbors, and families in the face of rising authoritarianism. “Yes” agendas will be created so that we move forward with strength, and instruction will be offered on how to join your precincts for caucus, how to connect with legislators, and more.

If you signed up for the “Light in the Storm” assembly and need transportation, but you didn’t indicate that you want to ride the bus, please contact Mary Loven by Dec. 7. Her email is mary.e.loven@gmail.com



SCAN TO REGISTER

CHRISTMAS COOKIE TASTING & FELLOWSHIP

Keep the Christmas spirit going on the **First Sunday of Christmas, December 28—bring your leftover cookies to fellowship at 9 am!**

There will be one worship service at 10 am.

BETHEL BRIGHT LIGHTS



After ICE violence in Northfield, Bethel joined with other faith communities for a prayer vigil in Bridge Square. Bishop Hassanally, who serves our ELCA's Southeastern Minnesota Synod, addressed the gathering.



Hangtime Friendsgiving, Sunday School building for the peace of the city, and Advent Festival excitement were all part of a full Bethel November. From playing 9 Square to making lefse and cards, thank you to all the ministry hosts!



GIVING TO BETHEL & BEYOND



Christmas Poinsettia Orders

Honor a loved one by helping beautify our sanctuary for Christmas!
Order forms are available in the Narthex. Orders are due **December 9**.

ALTERNATIVE GIVING FAIR

The 17th annual Bethel Alternative Giving Fair (AGF) is underway in Bethel's East Narthex and runs through Sunday, December 14. Starting from a \$3 donation to a much larger gift, you can make a real difference!

What is an alternative gift? An alternative gift is humanitarian support given in honor of a friend or family member. They are gifts of peace and justice, gifts that are sustainable and build security. These alternative gifts multiply and grow, sometimes exponentially, and offer hope and new life to people facing grave crises and needs. They challenge the trivial in our modern culture.

This year we have chosen relevant projects that are tended by authentic and reliable, low-overhead organizations. Stop by and pick up your 2025 Bethel Alternative Giving Fair booklet. Select one or more projects that are meaningful and priced right for you. Stop by the EAST entrance at Bethel by **December 14** to give in person and pick up inserts explaining the gift and the purpose of your giving.



YOU AND THE GREAT BETHEL COOKING SHOW!

If you join the Great Bethel Cooking Show, it doesn't mean you have to produce a gourmet dish in the sanctuary in front of the congregation. Instead, the Kitchen Committee is looking for more volunteers to help with Bistro and Sunday coffee.

Volunteering for Wednesday night Bistro involves one of three roles - prep, serving and dishwashing. Each area usually requires three people and is a 1 to 1.5 hour commitment. Please join our volunteer list! You will receive a periodic email with dates and roles you can sign up for.

On Sunday mornings, experienced kitchen volunteers (folks familiar with preparing the coffee and running the dishwasher) are needed to be "advisors of the month" to the regular volunteers bringing treats or serving coffee. These will be strictly advisory roles to answer questions and help resolve any problems that may come up for the serving volunteers.

To add your name to either list, please contact Marci Groenewold with your information: marci.groenewold@gmail.com

FINANCIAL NOTES

from Barb Fowler, Financial Officer

Financial information:

YTD as of Oct 31, 2025

Revenue: \$729,522

Expenses -800,467

Total \$ (70,945)

Thank you for giving! October financials were strong, not just meeting our expenses but reducing our deficit by \$36k. As we enter the final month of the year, we hope to see that momentum continue so that Bethel can continue to thrive.

Members of the Finance Committee: Barb Fowler, *Financial Officer*; Greg Bussler; Heidi McCormick; Lee Runzheimer; Blair Fowler, *Trustee*; Andrew Jorgenson, *Steward*; Paula Mathison, *President*; and Pastor Inger, *ex-officio*.



Bethel Lutheran Church
1321 North Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057

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Phone: 507-786-6674

Web: www.bethelnorthfield.org

www.facebook.com/bethellutheran

Email: bethel@bethelnorthfield.org

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Return Service Requested



Bethel Lutheran Church
Shares Christ's Love with a Big Heart

We celebrate all people as children of God. We unconditionally welcome diversity of age, race, citizenship, ethnicity, cultural identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, education, relationship status, family structure, and life challenges. Your diversity and uniqueness are valued. Your questions and your doubts have a home here. You, your spouse, partner, children, family, and friends are welcome to be full participants in the life of our church.

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!



SAVE THE DATES!

Coming soon (January 4)...

Sunday @ Bethel

8:30 am Worship

9:40-10:25 am Fellowship / Education

10:30 am Worship

This fall, a shift in the worship schedule allowed the second service to blossom. The pinch on the first service, however, was challenging—especially for our musicians. The council received input from parishioners, the Worship & Arts Planning Committee, and education coordinators. In January, the first service will return to the 8:30 am worship time. Educational offerings will be offered from 9:40 –10:25 and move to Room 61A&B or the East Pod, taking advantage of the technology upgrades and reducing the transition times needed. This will allow the second service to remain at 10:30 am. Thank you for helping us learn new things this fall, and for leaning into this new schedule now that it is settled!

Please be sure to mark your calendars —

Budget Meeting

Sunday, January 18th

9:45 am in the sanctuary

Our treasurer will present the proposed budget for 2025.

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 25th

9:45 am in the sanctuary

As a congregation, we will receive 2025 reports and look together at the year ahead.