



# Bethlehem News

# January



Happy New Year,

New Year celebrations have been around for thousands of years, with different cultures and civilizations celebrating the start of the year in a variety of ways. Every year in New York City the ball drops on New Years Eve. Thousands in Times Square and all over the United States and the world watch with anticipation for the New Year. The tradition of dropping a giant ball in Times Square to celebrate the new year began in 1908. The tradition can be traced back to "time balls", which were large balls lowered from tall buildings to help ship captains tell the time

The earliest recorded festivities in honor of a new year's arrival date back some 4,000 years to ancient Babylon. For the Babylonians, the first new moon following the vernal equinox (the day in late March with an equal amount of sunlight and darkness) heralded the start of a new year. They marked the occasion with a massive religious festival called Akitu (derived from the Sumerian word for barley, which was cut in the spring) that involved a different ritual on each of its 11 days.

In addition to the new year, Akitu celebrated the mythical victory of the Babylonian sky god Marduk over the evil sea goddess Tiamat and served an important political purpose: It was during this time that a new king was crowned or that the current ruler's divine mandate was symbolically renewed

Today we celebrate the New Year with confetti, horns, parties, food, liquor and of course watching the ball drop, and don't forget the fireworks. 4,000 years ago, ancient civilizations celebrated with a religious festival, they celebrated their god's victory over a evil sea goddess. As we celebrate the New Year, we can also celebrate and give thanks that our almighty God and our Lord Jesus Christ were and are forever victorious over sin, death, and the devil.

Celebrate our God the Father of Abraham the only true God. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Psalm 134:2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord. Celebrate where God is. God found in the incarnate Christ. The Word made flesh. We find Him in His Word. The church is the holy believers who gather around a local pulpit and altar under their Shepherd's care. This happens in a place.

(From LCMS CTCR document)

"In Martin Luther's statement that the church is "the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd," Luther also answered another important question: "When are we the church?" We are the church when we come together for the Divine Service, fellowship, Bible study and service in a local congregation. We are the church when we leave the building and disperse into our individual corners of the world, our mission field."

Come let us be the church. Let us follow our Good Shepherd Jesus.

Blessings for the New Year

Pastor Karl



## News and Updates

Our Voters' meeting will be held on January 26th after the worship service . Each church board will present their plans for 2025. Please plan to attend.



December was a busy month for youth. They had a meeting the first week of December which included a snowball fight. There were 3 practices for the Children's Christmas Service, and they were excited to share the need for a Savior and His birth with the congregation. Also check out the books and puzzles. It supports our youth and a new recent goal of attending the youth convention this new year.

Adult Bible class continues after church on Sundays and the Wednesday morning class will resume in January.

We welcome Mickie Naumann as the new education chairman beginning in January. I have no doubt she will do an excellent job. I thank everyone for the support received over the past several years. What a loving and supportive congregation we have at Bethlehem.

Have a blessed New Year and as always, yearn to learn.

**Sandy Grage**

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Are you aware that you can make a tax-free gift to Bethlehem from your 401k

or IRA?

If you're 72 or older the IRS requires you to withdraw a minimum amount from your IRA/401k. This is known as a required minimum distribution or RMD. The IRS computes this annually at the beginning of the year based on your IRA/401k balance. You are taxed on this withdrawal at your regular tax rate. If you fail to withdraw this amount the tax penalty is 50% each year. However, if you make a contribution to a charity (Bethlehem Lutheran Church) as part of your RMD, you are not taxed on this amount. The contribution is known as a qualified charitable distribution or QCD. It helps ease the burden on your church contribution while it benefits Bethlehem Lutheran. Please consider this in helping the church and reducing your taxes.

Bob Jurs

Stewardship Board



We are getting use to our new name, Lutheran Women in Missions. Also a committee is working at updating our by-laws and constitution. The entire month of February will be our mission month. We encourage you to start saving your coins for our "noisy offering Sunday". Watch the bulletin for details. We invite all ladies to come to our meetings held the first Monday of each month. Come join this Christ centered, fun group.

**Sandy Grage**



This year Bethlehem Lutheran has received \$900 from Thrivent Choice dollars. Thrivent now has 9.6 million volunteers, 93 million volunteer hours, raised \$1 billion dollars and given out 13 million T shirts. There were 1 million Action Teams this year. We had 16 projects at Bethlehem. Thanks to all for the participation.

**Betty Willis**



## 2025 Church Council

### Council Officers

President- Richard Gerlach

Vice President- Doug Grage

Secretary- Holly Bell

Treasurer- Kurt Laser

Member at Large- Greg Murray

### Board Chairs

Board of Education- Mickie Naumann

Board of Elders- Klaus Naumann

Board of Evangelism- Chip Rinehart

Board of Stewardship- Bob Jurs

Board of Trustees- Jeff Kirsch

### Standing Committee Chairs

Altar Guild- Emmy Larson

LWM- Sandy Grage

Thrivent- Betty Willis



## JANUARY 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School & Confirmation	6 <b>LWM IPM</b>  Epiphany	7	8	9 <b>Dinner 4-7 PM</b>	10	11
12 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School & Confirmation	13	14	15 10:30 Bible Study	16	17 Game Night 7 PM	18
19 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School & Confirmation	20	21	22 10:30 Bible Study	23	24	25
26 10:30 Worship 11:30 <b>Voters' Meeting</b>	27	28	29 10:30 Bible Study	30	31	

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES	
5	Karen & Edison Johnson
22	Gale and Melvin Smith

May God Bless Each One of You As  
We Celebrate Your Special Day!



Holly Bell, Mickie and Klaus Naumann attended the Lau at the Buckingham Exceptional School.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS	
3	Steve Hempel, Jayce Lemhouse
5	Rollin Duckwitz
6	Gary Schaeffer; Gary Barkhaus
13	Greg Murray
14	Alan Taylor
15	Edison Johnson
20	Linda Kirsch
23	Kathy Brown
26	Janice Bradtmiller
28	Caydance Albert
29	Chip Rinehart
31	Linda Hedrick





Bethlehem Lutheran Church Website:

Phone: 239-694-3878

[www.bethlehemlutheranfortmyers.org](http://www.bethlehemlutheranfortmyers.org)

Email: bethlehemlc@gmail.com

## Prayer Chain Needs

Do you know that Bethlehem has a prayer chain that prays for the sick, dying and hurting needs of our church family?

Call or email Linda at **(239) 693-5026** or

[jlkirsch3@comcast.net](mailto:jlkirsch3@comcast.net)

Your needs will be taken to the Lord!

## Sunday Worship

**10:30 AM Worship Service**

**Rev. Karl Glander**

[pastorkarlglandler@gmail.com](mailto:pastorkarlglandler@gmail.com)

239-293-1489

**Organist: Holly Bell**

**Church Secretary: Linda Kirsch**



Our Bethlehem Youth performed a special Christmas program during the December 22nd service.

