

Bethany Lutheran Church  
PO Box 459  
380 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave  
Woodhull, IL 61490

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Woodhull, IL 61490  
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**JANUARY 2026**



# JANUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Happy New Year!	2	3
4 9am Worship  Choir @ 10:45	5  AlWood Food Pantry by reservation	6 9-12 Quilting  AlWood Food Pantry Open 9:30-11 AM	7  MOW/United	8	9	10
11 9am Worship *Noisy Offering*  Bells @ 10:45	12	13 9-12 Quilting	14  MOW/ BETHANY	15  Newsletter Deadline  Hope Unit meet at 9:30 @ Clover Library. Peg Nordquist to host	16	17
18 9am Worship Choir @ 10:45 **Council Meeting at 11:30 Annual Meeting Booklets Available T4T @ 5:00 (Bethany)	19	20	21  MOW/United  New Member Class at 6:00pm	22	23	24
25 9am Worship *Noisy Offering*  *Annual Meeting	26	27	28  MOW/ BETHANY	29	30	31



# Educational Opportunities

## Preaching Among Friends

Preaching Among Friends is a class presented by Backstory Preaching. This class is only offered once a year and is a 6-week online course from January 18 – March 5, 2026. Preaching Among Friends equips lay preachers with the confidence, tools, and theological grounding needed to preach effectively in their congregations or to preach in neighboring congregations. For more information, contact Pastor Jen Beamsley at [jbeamsley@nisynod.org](mailto:jbeamsley@nisynod.org) or Pastor Laurie.

## 2026 CRE EVENT

March 7, 2026, at Sauk Valley  
Community College in Dixon, IL

Save the date and join us for the 2026 Congregational Resourcing Event on March 7, 2026, at Sauk Valley Community College. More information will be released in January of 2026.

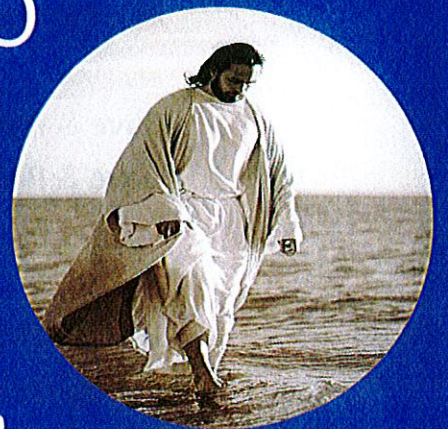
## Diakonia Classes

Diakonia Classes are wonderful 5-week classes that engage in learning theological concepts, Biblical knowledge, and discipleship. Each course is \$65.00, and registration is through the Northern Illinois Synod. Please contact Pastor Laurie or Dave Crippen for more information.

# Via de Cristo (WAY OF CHRIST)

**JOIN US FOR THE NEXT VIA DE CRISTO  
SPIRITUAL RETREAT WEEKEND #68**

**March 19<sup>th</sup> – March 22<sup>nd</sup> - Camp Meno Haven**



**WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST.... CHRIST IS COUNTING ON US TO WALK IN THE WAY OF CHRIST; TO BE A DISCIPLE FOR CHRIST IN TODAY'S WORLD.**

Via de Cristo gives those attending a new awareness of living in God's grace. Participants will enjoy music and singing, food and fellowship, a time for laughter and for prayer and reflection. Join us for an incredible weekend of spiritual renewal and FUN!

**Applications are available on the Fellowship Hall table  
or ask Pastor Laurie (618)-980-9804.**





## 2025 Poinsettias

Jason, Megan, Kiersten, &  
Zack Hancock

**Jeana Fors**

Bonnie Campbell,  
Sherri Bozsali & Family  
Dave & Cindy Lindsey Family

**Colin & Cecily Anderson**

Teri Bumphrey & Todd Beck

**Teri Bumphrey & Janet  
Anderson**

Gene & Barb Colburn

**Kim Engstrom**

**Kim Engstrom**

Dave & Patsy Crippen

Dave & Patsy Crippen

**WELCA**

**WELCA**

Hilary & Matt Fairbrother

**The Borkgren Family**

Charla & Marion Calmer

Charla & Marion Calmer

Charla & Marion Calmer

Charla & Marion Calmer

In memory of loved ones

**In memory of James Hecht, Sr.**

In memory of Audrey & Jerry Lindsey  
and Bob & Sandy Snyder

**In memory of Grandpa Eric**

In memory of George & Marna Beck

**In memory of Jeff & Julie Bell**

In memory of loved ones

**In loving memory of Jeff Newman**

**In loving memory of John Engstrom,  
Polly Engstrom, and Todd Engstrom**

In memory of loved ones

In memory of loved ones

**To the Glory of God**

**To the Glory of God**

In memory of Rene Bramlett

**In memory of Rick & Martha  
Borkgren**

In memory of Jeff Newman

In memory of Lisa Hollowell

In memory of Martin Calmer

In memory of Betty Usry



## 2025 Poinsettias

Barbara Fors

Barbara Fors

Ruth Laabs-Wilcox

Greg & Rhonda Miller

George & Patrice Wirt

John & Jerri Page

Rich & Janice Maher

Harriet Peterson

Ellen Dalton

Gary Johnson

Doug & Nancy Swanson

David, Christena and Axel  
Anderson

Jim & Kelly Luallen

Bo & Barb Elliott

Carol Eiker

Allen & Peg Nordquist

Allen & Peg Nordquist

Pastor Laurie Hensley

Kathy Shemwell

Bob & Pam Eiker

Dean & Chris Peterson  
& Cameron

In memory of Inez Fors

In memory of Cecil Fors

In memory of parents and  
grandparents

In memory of loved ones

In memory of loved ones

In memory of loved ones

In memory of loved ones

In memory of Leland Peterson

In memory of my parents & sister

In memory of loved ones

In memory of our parents

In memory of loved ones

In memory of Bud Peterson & Dolly  
Anderson

In honor of loved ones

In memory of loved ones

To the Glory of God

To the Glory of God

In memory of Bob, Patsy, Tedd, &  
David

In memory of Sarah Shemwell

In memory of loved ones

In memory of loved ones



## **BETHANY BELLS and CHOIR** **2026**

The adult and bell choirs will begin rehearsing after church and coffee hour from January until Easter. The rehearsal time will be Sundays from 10:45 until 11:30. We will alternate weeks, with adult choir for one week and bells the next. This schedule begins January 4 with adult choir meeting at 10:45 AM. Bells first practice will be January 11<sup>th</sup>, at 10:45. There will not be any rehearsals on January 25<sup>th</sup>, due to the annual meeting. If you have always wanted to be in adult choir or bell choir, but couldn't make it to weeknight rehearsals, here's your chance to join us! We would love to have some new faces in both choirs!

### **Needed:**

We are looking for folks to serve as the voting delegates for Bethany at the Annual Northern Illinois Synod Assembly (June 12 & 13). We are allowed 3 adult voting delegates and 1 youth voting delegate. Please give this prayerful consideration, as we will need to approve the congregational delegates at our annual meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **Bethany Academic Scholarships**

Bethany is committed to helping our youth in their academic endeavors after high school. All confirmed youth are eligible for an academic scholarship of up to \$1,500.00 per year for college or trade schools. The application deadline is April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and the application requires 12 service activities to be completed prior to application. Helping with our worship services, Sunday School, or special events are excellent ways to earn service hours. Please contact Pastor Laurie for additional information.

## **Congregations Lead INITIATIVE**

Bethany Lutheran Church has been granted \$1,000.00 to participate in the ELCA Congregations Lead Initiative Program. This program has already made a substantial impact on participating congregations, fostering cultural shifts, enhancing community engagement, and inspiring innovative practices within congregational life. Bethany is looking for three to six people to form a committee to find new and innovative ways to interact within our communities. If you would like to sign up, please contact Pastor Laurie. More information can be found at <https://www.elca.org/our-work/congregations-and-synods/congregations-lead-initiative>.

### **Bethany Youth Sponsorship**

Sponsorships in the amount up to \$300 per calendar year are available to Bethany baptized children ages birth to 18 years. Sponsorship applications are accepted for any learning activity, camp, or class available to Bethany children and approved by the sponsorship committee. Terms of payment: The sponsorship will pay half of the class, activity, or camp at the time of approval and registration, with parent and/or guardian paying the other half. Upon completion of the requirements, the parent/guardian will be reimbursed for the portion paid by them up to 100% of the cost of the learning activity, not to exceed \$300.00.

### **T4T**

**Time 4 Teens will be going bowling on January 18<sup>th</sup>. We will meet at Bethany at 5:00pm. Please feel free to bring your friends!**



## Thank You!

Thank you to everyone that helped with the Youth Evening Advent Service and Supper! We appreciate everyone who helped make this very special service possible including our youth, choirs, volunteers, and the Witness & Service committee.

Advent blessings to you! Thank you for your support of Lutheran World Relief. Because of you, hope reaches near and far.

Rev. Cathy Daharsh

We would like to 'Thank You' for your generous donation to Alpha Mobile Meals. It is greatly appreciated. We strive to provide nutritious meals for those in need – this will help greatly! Again, thank you.

Alpha Mobile Meal Committee

Dear Bethany:

On behalf of the Woodhull Meals on Wheels Board, I would like to thank you so much for the generous donation of \$1,000.00 for our ministry of the Woodhull Meals on Wheels Program.

With the cost of groceries/supplies constantly increasing, all donations to our program are deeply appreciated. We currently have 24 recipients here in town. We try to keep our meal charge to a minimum – it has been \$2.50/meal for a long time.

We have so many wonderful volunteers, mainly from the United Church of Woodhull and Bethany Lutheran Church for which we are eternally grateful. They voluntarily prepare the meals, salads, and desserts, as well as delivering to our thankful adults. We receive so many positive comments on our program from the community. It is such a great service we are all proud of for our small, but blessed community!

Again, thank you so much, Bethany, for this donation. It will definitely be put to good use for our community here in Woodhull.

Sincerely,

Woodhull Meals on Wheels Board Members  
Pam Picard, Pam Eiker, Rhonda Taylor, Barb Elliott, and Nancy Swanson

My Dear Bethany Family,

My heartfelt thanks for all the cards, texts, phone calls, and meals I've received these past six months. Your love and support make such a journey much easier. And above all, thank you for the many prayers. We have such a gracious, loving God who is always listening. His blessings are abundant.

May 2026 be a healthy, happy New Year for all!!

Love and Blessings,  
Carol

I want to thank the choirs of Bethany for entertaining me with Christmas carols and for the cup of goodies! It was wonderful.

Thank you,  
Marcia Colton

## Advent Blessing Tree

Through Advent, you donated items under our Advent Blessing Tree. These items were distributed on December 21<sup>st</sup> to Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. There were 72 packages of adult incontinence supplies, 136 children's books for the Prison Ministry Program, 36 gift cards in varying amounts for LSSI emergency use, 97 containers of diapers, pull-ups, and baby wipes for babies in foster care, 263 men's and women's hygiene items for disadvantaged people, 67 quilts made by our Quilting Queens, 3 handmade stocking caps, 8 handmade scarves, and 5 handmade blankets. In addition, we are very happy to share that 20 coats & snow pants were donated to the Galesburg Rescue Mission. 57 baking items, along with 68 cans of soup were donated to the AlWood Food Pantry. In total you donated 832 items to local charities. Thank you!!

Thank you to Nancy Swanson for coordinating all the Advent donations!



## IN OUR PRAYERS



For all those who serve our nation in this time of peril, for our President and our national leaders, and those who serve in the Armed Forces.

### Those with continuing health concerns:

Lucy Newman	Gary Nelson	Rosalie Roman
Betty Swanson	Barb McNeil	Bob Eiker
Elizabeth Ostrander	Dave Crippen	Seth Malcolm
Joanne Carlson	Donna Carlson	Wendy Johnson
Patsy Crippen	Lois Peterson	Marty Stachniw
Dick Larson	Reva Stachniw	Carol Eiker
Ruth Laabs-Wilcox	Jami Maher	

### WELCA Meeting

WELCA will meet in January to plan the new year. The meeting will be held during a coffee hour. All ladies are welcome to join us. We will be also deciding officers.

### New Member Class

The New Member Class will be held on Wednesday, January 21st, at 6:00pm

## Annual Congregational Meeting

The 158<sup>th</sup> Annual Congregational Meeting is scheduled for **January 25<sup>th</sup>** after worship, with a snow date of February 1<sup>st</sup>. All confirmed members are encouraged to attend to support our ministry in 2026. Please be sure to attend!

Annual booklets will be available on January 18<sup>th</sup>, so that you can review the materials before the meeting



## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Britta Watters,	1-Jan
Janet Dahlstrom	4-Jan
Kim Engstrom	4-Jan
Jodie McNally	4-Jan
Lisa Nelson	4-Jan
Kelli Swanson	5-Jan
Ann Larson	5-Jan
Greg Bloomberg	6-Jan
Carol Eiker	7-Jan
Trevor Carlson	8-Jan
Lucy Newman	11-Jan
Don Henriksen	12-Jan
Carson Taylor	15-Jan
Collin Watters	16-Jan
Scott Swanson	17-Jan
Joshua Bainbridge	18-Jan
Doug Swanson	18-Jan
Stephanie Johnson	20-Jan
Beau Peterson	20-Jan
Seth Molburg	21-Jan
Natalie Gasper	21-Jan
Lily Fairbrother	21-Jan
Patty Colburn	24-Jan
Kim Bowers	26-Jan
Dain Luallen	27-Jan
Lori Nimrick	27-Jan
Scott McNeil	29-Jan
Alex Borkgren	30-Jan
Ann Olson	31-Jan



## JANUARY

### ANNIVERSARIES

1-01	Jim & Carol Brown
1-05	Gary and Lisa Nelson
1-24	George & Patrice Wirt





Meals on Wheels is a not-for-profit organization. Listed below are the **Bethany Meals on Wheels menus** for upcoming weeks. If you can help with any of the slots, please sign up in the church fellowship hall or contact Barb Elliott, Pam Eiker, or Nancy Swanson!

#### **January 14- Bethany**

Meal: Pork Chops, Dressing/Gravy, Vegetable, Roll  
Salad: Ambrosia Salad or 5 Cup Salad or Choice  
Dessert: Pie  
Cooks: Nancy Swanson  
Salad: St John's  
Dessert: Becky Campbell  
Delivery #1: Dale Sundberg & Gary Johnson  
Delivery #2: George & Patrice Wirt

#### **January 28, 2026- Bethany**

Meal: Ham & Bean Soup, Pickles, Cornbread  
Salad: Apple Salad  
Dessert: Pudding  
Cooks: Chris Peterson  
Salad: St John's  
Dessert: Chris Peterson  
Delivery #1: Dale Sundberg & Gary Johnson  
Delivery #2: George & Patrice Wirt

### **NOISY OFFERING!!!!**

The Noisy Offering will take place on January 11th & 25th during the 9am service.

### **TIME & TALENT FORMS**

**We ARE the church!** And it takes a lot of people power to do God's ministry as the church. If you have not yet completed a Time & Talent form for yourself or your family.... **PLEASE** complete one.



### **ALWOOD FOOD PANTRY**

The AlWood Food Pantry will be open January 6th, from 9:30-11:00am.

On the evening of January 5th, there will be a distribution available by appointment only. Please contact Claudia Sage at 309-236-3650.

The Food Pantry is in the Oxford Township Hall in Alpha next to the Oxford Township

Fire Department. Bethany contacts are:

Jim Luallen 309-629-8103

Rosalie Roman 309-629-4808

### **Hope Unit**

Hope Unit will meet at the Clover Library on January 15<sup>th</sup>, at 9am.

### **ALTAR FLOWERS**

The **price** of Altar Flowers is

**\$60 for 2 vases.** Checks will now need to be made out to Bethany Lutheran Church. We do receive free delivery.

Thank you so much for adding beautiful flowers to our Sunday morning worship and supporting a small, local business.

### **Altar Guild Schedule**

<u>Jan.</u>	Connie Sundberg & Janice Maher
<u>Feb.</u>	Connie Sundberg & Janice Maher
<u>Mar.</u>	Marty Johnson & Donita Creek
<u>Apr.</u>	Lisa Nelson, Patrice Wirt, & Rhonda Miller
<u>May</u>	Patty Colburn & Chris Peterson

### **Funeral Committee**

Kelly Luallen	629-8103
Rhonda Miller	629-9535
Peggy Nordquist	334-2264

## BETHANY BLESSINGS January 26

Church Phone: 309-334-2144

Email: [bethanylc@divcominc.net](mailto:bethanylc@divcominc.net)

Pastor Laurie Cell: 618-980-9804

Pastor Laurie Email:

[pastorbethanywoodhull@gmail.com](mailto:pastorbethanywoodhull@gmail.com) OR

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

### Christena's Office Hours

Friday: 9:00-12:00PM

Other Office hours as needed.

### Pastor Laurie's Office Hours

Tuesday: 11:00-2:00PM

Friday: 9:00-12:00PM

Please feel free to call or text me anytime at  
(618) 980-9804

Please note – If you would like an announcement in the Sunday bulletin Pastor Laurie and/or the Communication & Outreach Coordinator must know **by Tuesday**, and you may contact them by phone or email. Due to new office hours and video work for each worship service we are printing the bulletin earlier than in the past. Thanks for your help as we are making these necessary changes. Newsletter additions must be into the Communication & Outreach Coordinator **by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.**

### Tithe.ly – An Easy way for God's Offering

Bethany has partnered with Tithe.ly as an electronic giving platform. Gifts can be made from your bank account, debit card, or even Apple/Android pay. Please use the following links to set up your electronic giving profile:

**Tithe.ly** – [www.tithe.ly/give](http://www.tithe.ly/give) and look up Bethany Lutheran Church, Woodhull or enter  
<https://tithe.ly/give?c=4352752>

Or Scan the QR code:



## JANUARY PEOPLE POWER

### **1-4-26**

Greeters

Lector/Prayers

Ushers

Acolyte

Coffee Hour

### **9am Service**

Gene & Barb Colburn

Choir

Logan Stiers & Chever Harkey

Emersyn Wirt

**Needed**

### **1-11-26**

Greeters

Lector/Prayers

Ushers

Acolyte

Communion Assistant

Confirmation Assistant

Sunday School

Coffee Hour

### **9am Service (communion)**

Ruth Laabs-Wilcox & Ellen Dalton

Mary Stiers

Ryan & Easton Colburn

Colin Anderson

**Needed**

**Needed**

**Needed**

**Needed**

### **1-18-26**

Greeters

Lector/Prayers

Ushers

Acolyte

Communion Assistant

Confirmation Assistant

Sunday School

Coffee Hour

### **9am Service (communion)**

Dot Creek & Harriet Peterson

Christena & Axel Anderson

Marty Stachniw & Rich Maher

Axel Anderson

David Anderson

**Needed**

**Needed**

**Needed**

### **1-25-26**

Greeters

Lector/Prayers

Ushers

Acolyte

Communion Assistant

Confirmation Assistant

Sunday School

Coffee Hour

### **9am Service (communion)**

Leigh & Logan Brinson

Makenna Walker

Dennis Colburn & Gene Colburn

Remi Page

**Needed**

**Needed**

**Needed**

**Needed**

### **2-1-26**

Greeters

Lector/Prayers

Ushers

Acolyte

Communion Assistant

Confirmation Assistant

Sunday School

Coffee Hour

### **9am Service (communion)**

Ryan, Alissa, Easton & Emmett

Mary Stiers

Gary Johnson & Dale Sundberg

Cameron Renwick

Christena Anderson

**Needed**

**Needed**

**Needed**



# Bethany Church Council Minutes for December 28, 2025

The Bethany Council meeting was called to order at 10:19 AM by Carol Eiker.

Members present: Lisa Nelson, David Anderson, Pastor Laurie Hensley, Patty Colburn, Carol Eiker, Pam Eiker, Christena Anderson, Denise Eiker, Dave Crippen, Mary Stiers

Members absent: Marion Calmer, Rosalie Roman, Jillian Rodseth, Keegan Taylor

Devotion: Mary Stiers gave the devotion

Adoption of Agenda: A motion to adopt the agenda was made by Dave Crippen and seconded by Patty Colburn. Motion carried.

Minutes: A motion to accept the minutes, as presented, was made by Mary Stier and seconded by Lisa Nelson. Motion carried.

Financial Secretary/Treasurer Report: The reports were reviewed. The motion to accept the reports was made by Christena Anderson and seconded by Denise Eiker. Motion carried.

Special Fund Report: Dave Crippen gave the report.

PASTOR'S Report: The report was presented by Pastor Laurie Hensley. The report included 21 visits and 3 community/school activities. She participated in a Via de Cristo meeting, she conducted the Thanksgiving Eve Service, as well as the Congregational Advent Project. She visited Lutheran Social Services in Sterling, IL. She caroled with the choir. She conducted the Youth Advent Service, as well as the Christmas Eve Service at Bethany and United. Her official acts included the funeral for Betty Henrikson. She will be conducting a New Member class, attending First Call Theological Education and attending Via de Cristo training in the upcoming month.

## COMMITTEES:

**WORSHIP & MUSIC:** Gave a recap of the Advent Services. They will be meeting this week to discuss choir and bells. They are planning to meet with the entire Committee quarterly. There was a discussion of the Choir and Bells upcoming new schedule.

**WITNESS AND SERVICE:** There was a recap of the Advent Blessing Tree donations and that LSSI is very thankful for them. The committee is planning an appetizer luncheon for the Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for January 25<sup>th</sup>.

**STEWARDSHIP:** A report was given on the 2026 campaign. We still need Time & Talent/Commitment forms be returned. The committee will be contacting some of last year's volunteers in order to verify their participation.

**Finance and Budget:** The Committee presented the new budget. There was a motion made by Dave Crippen to approve the budget. The motion was seconded by Lisa Nelson and the motion carried. Funeral Livestreaming was discussed and a decision was made to offer the service once the availability of a tech attendant has been verified.

**YOUTH/LEARNING:** The committee will be discussing Sunday School materials. Sunday School begins again on January 11<sup>th</sup>.

**PROPERTY:** The replacement windows for the basement have been ordered. The trim has been replaced in the Southeast corner of the basement. David is continuing with bids for waterproofing the back entryway/area.

**MEMORIALS:** A report was not given.

**Mutual Ministry:** A report was not given.

The motion was made by Denise Eiker and seconded by Lisa Nelson to accept the Committee reports. Motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS:** The Annual Meeting will be held January 25<sup>th</sup>. The deadline for Committee reports has passed. There are still a few reports needed. There was a discussion that the Learning Committee report needs to be separated into three different reports, 3D, T4T, and Sunday School. This year's Council Nominating Committee will be suggesting nominations. Members of the Nominating Committee are Denise Eiker, Doug Swanson, Dennis Colburn, Chris Peterson.

**NEW BUSINESS:** A discussion regarding a grant that is part of the Congregational Lead Initiative was held. Bethany needs 3-6 volunteers for this grant. The protocol for Service Cancellations was discussed. Pastor Laurie and Vice Chair Carol Eiker will discuss the weather when needed. Ryan Colburn will be consulted regarding road conditions. Once a decision has been made, Kristi VerHeecke and Christena Anderson will be contacted to make the necessary communications. There was a discussion regarding a new volunteer being needed to lead the Budgeting Committee. There was a discussion regarding the Synod Assembly. Attendees will need to be decided soon. The Prayer Chain communication is getting a new update. More information to be coming soon. There was a discussion regarding the opportunity for committees to meet on Sundays before council during the time of 10:15 until 10:45.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Several Thank Yous are going to be going out.

The motion to adjourn was from Denise Eiker and was seconded by Lisa Nelson. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 11:20 AM. The meeting was closed with The Lord's Prayer. The next meeting is scheduled for January 18<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am. Dave Crippen will lead the devotion.

Respectfully submitted, Christena Anderson, Council Secretary



A note from Pastor Laurie...

On Sunday, after our final worship service of 2025, when the sanctuary had grown quiet and the last candle flame had been extinguished, I walked around the sanctuary. The pews were empty. The music had faded. And there before me stood the manger, the Christmas tree, and the blooms of the beautiful poinsettias....all reminding me of life.

In that quiet space, I was reminded that Christmas does not end when the decorations come down or when the calendar turns to January. The manger continues to speak. It always does.

The manger tells the story of a God who chose humility over power, presence over distance, and love over comfort. It reminds us that God's greatest gift to the world did not come wrapped in pretty paper...or certainty, but in vulnerability and grace. And because God gives so freely to us, the manger gently calls us to do the same...to offer what we have, who we are, and the gifts God has placed in our hands for the sake of others. As the choir and youth sang so beautifully...*What can I give Him....I give Him my heart.*

That call was answered in powerful and tangible ways this Christmas season by the people of Bethany. From the manger, we were sent out...to give, to share, and to care. Because of your generosity, **703** gifts were gathered and shared with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, **20** coats/snowpants were shared with the Galesburg Rescue Mission, and over **120** food items were shared with the Alwood Food Pantry - **WOW!** Each of these items help support families, children, and individuals who are navigating difficult seasons of life. Each item given, each donation made, and each prayer offered became a quiet proclamation of the gospel: *God is with you. You are not forgotten.*

This is the **Joy of Giving**...not the fleeting joy of checking something off a list, but the deeper joy that comes from loving our neighbors as Christ first loved us. It is the joy that springs from compassion, generosity, and faith put into action.

Bethany, this is who you are! 

Time and again, you respond to the call that comes from the manger. You show up with open hearts and willing hands. You give not because you must, but because love compels you. Whether through quilts and kits, food and funds, time and talent, or simple acts of kindness, you embody what it means to be the church...sent from the manger into the world. Thank you so much!

As we begin this new year, may we carry the light of Christmas with us beyond the season. May the image of the manger continue to guide us, reminding us that even the smallest gifts, when offered in love, can make a lasting difference. And may the joy of giving shape our days ahead, as we continue to live out Christ's love together...for our community, our neighbors, and for the sake of the world God so dearly loves.

Grace and peace to you in this new year.

We are family...we are the Bethany Family!

Pastor Laurie