



Bethel Blaze

March 2026

Sharing Christ's love with a big heart

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

In Person
Sunday Mornings:
8:30 and 10:30 am

Online
The 8:30 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



LIVING WITH LENT

As we journey to the great Three Days of our faith, Wednesday soup suppers & prayer services are additional supports. This year, extended time of prayer and reflection with harp music will be offered before and after the Joyous Light Evening Prayer. Come early, or linger in the sanctuary when the service concludes. Thank you to Sarah Swan-McDonald for her harp ministry!

On Sundays, we are exploring different sources for our communion bread. In the meantime, Lent has its own taste! Marci Groenewold even adapted a gluten-friendly "nothing but Jesus" recipe from the synod. Gluten-free wafers will still be offered to be extra safe. Another way worship is the work of the people is in the words we use! Our Eucharistic prayer this season was written by Kaethe Schwehn.

On Sundays in Lent, we continue to follow Jesus' ministry in the gospel of John.

Lent 2 (Mar 1): John 9:1-41 (with Psalm 27:1-4) guest preacher Rev. Mark Aune

Lent 3 (Mar 8): John 10:1-18 (with Psalm 23) guest preacher Karla Leitzman

Lent 4 (Mar 15): John 11:1-44 (with Psalm 104:27-30) Pastor Ben preaching

Lent 5 (Mar 22): John 12:1-8 Pastor Inger preaching

On Wednesdays in Lent, our focus is Listening to Jesus: the Farewell Discourses.

The midday service begins at 11:30 am and is followed by a light soup lunch and fellowship. In the evening, a soup supper is offered from 5:30 pm—6:15 pm. Ray Makeever's *Joyous Light Evening Prayer* is at 6:30 pm, with the harp music beginning at 6:15 pm and following the service. Please enter and depart quietly for those taking part in the extended worship option.

Mar 4: John 14:15-21 [22-27] *Mar 18:* John 16:25-33

Mar 11: John 15:1-11 [12-17] *Mar 25:* John 17:1-26



We begin **Holy Week** with **Palm Sunday on March 29**. Pastor Phil will preach on Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem in John 12:12-27.

Congregational Life's special **Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast** will be from 9:30-10:30 am in the CLC. Menu: pancakes with special toppings, yogurt parfaits, sausage, and fruit. Kids are invited to join in the feast before their Sunday programming. Note there is no adult education on this Sunday so we all can gather for this fantastic fellowship event!



Maundy Thursday April 2 — 11 am & 7 pm Pastor Ben preaching

Good Friday April 3 — 11 am & 7 pm

Easter Sunday April 5 — 8 am, 9:30 am & 11 am Pastor Inger preaching

FIRESIDE REFLECTIONS



Pastor Ben Schori
(he/him)

pastor.ben@bethel.com

bethelnorthfield.org

(preferred for non-urgent
communication)

office

507-786-8953

office hours

by appointment Monday,
Tuesday, Wednesday,
and Thursday

days off

Friday & Saturday

A blessed Lent to you, Bethel.

A couple weeks ago, we entered this season, together, on Ash Wednesday, remembering our mortality (“we are dust and to dust we shall return”) and our need to repent (acknowledging our personal and collective sin, and our turning back towards the God we find in Christ on the cross). And through this month of March, we will continue on this journey together where, at its end, we will enter Holy Week together on Palm Sunday as we remember Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, knowing all that will follow in the coming week and first days of April. With all this behind and before us, and all the current events and context we have and continue to find ourselves in these days, I am very aware this season of feeling like we are on a journey, a journey of transformation (not unlike the month of March itself).

Where we were is no longer where we are, and where we are is not yet where we are going. And I am so grateful to you, Bethel, because as overwhelming as this journey has been and will continue to be, I do not walk this Lenten road alone. You walk it with me. We walk it together. We’re not always in lockstep, we’re not all moving at the same pace, but we are moving forward together as we aspire to be the Body of Christ in this time and place to which we have been called.

Thank you for journeying together, Bethel.

Peace & blessings,
Pastor Ben

BEFRIENDERS

by Marci Groenewold

All of us sin. That is, we “miss the mark,” falling short of living up to God’s moral standard. We live unskillfully, blindly suffering ourselves and causing others to suffer as well. We all need forgiveness.

Many of us grew up hearing the phrase “forgive and forget.” We think forgiveness means we should pretend nothing happened and just move on. Then confusion begins and pain multiplies. This idea can pressure people to reconcile even when it’s unwise or unsafe. It can create unrealistic expectations that lead to guilt and even harm. The fear of being labeled bitter or unloving when we set boundaries after forgiving, says forgiveness must lead to reconciliation. Boundaries are not bitterness. They are wisdom. Wisdom demands boundaries.

Commanded by God, forgiveness is an unconditional heart decision that frees you. It depends on your heart, not theirs. Forgiveness is about faithfulness, not feelings. Forgiveness does not automatically mean reconciliation. They are not the same. When you forgive someone, you are not saying what they did was okay. Forgiveness simply refuses to let bitterness own you. Forgiveness leaves justice in God’s hands. Forgiveness is always possible because it begins in the heart, but reconciliation depends on repentance, trust, and safety—things that require both parties. Forgiveness is always possible. Reconciliation requires both sides. It is a mutual journey that rebuilds relationship and depends on honesty, accountability, and a willingness to change, that is, to rebuild what was broken. If there is a refusal to acknowledge what’s been done wrong or continued justification of the harmful behavior, clearly reconciliation is impossible. There are times when loving well means leaving the relationship.

Forgiving without reconciling is not failure. Understanding this difference brings freedom. You can forgive fully without reopening the door to harm. You can walk in peace even when a relationship remains broken.

A fundamental BeFriender principle: “Caring not curing.”

For more information regarding the BeFriender Ministry at Bethel, please contact the Bethel Office (507-786-6674)

EVERY WEEK

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS 9 AM - 3 PM

SUNDAY		8:30 am	Worship (also available via livestream)
		9:45 am	Coffee Fellowship & Education Opportunities
		10:45 am	Worship
MONDAY		6:30 pm	Resonance (Adult Bell Choir)
TUESDAY		9:45 am	Staff Meeting
WEDNESDAY		11:30 am	Lenten Midday Worship & Soup Lunch <i>No soup on March 25—Spring Break</i>
		3:30 pm	Limitless <i>No Limitless on March 25—Spring Break</i>
		5:30 pm	Bistro Soup Supper <i>Please note time shift for Lent; also no soup on March 25—Spring Break</i>
		6:15 pm	Ring Forth Bell Choir
		6:30 pm	Lenten Evening Prayer (Joyous Light)
		7:00 pm	Confirmation & Hangtime
		7:00 pm	Church Choir Rehearsal
	8:05 pm	Brio Bell Choir	
THURSDAY		8:30 am	MoB (Men of Bethel) will continue our study of A.J. Jacobs' <i>The Year of Living Biblically</i> , led by Phil Peterson.
		9:30 am	FaB (Faith and Books) will be reading <i>How We Learn to be Brave</i> by Bishop Mariann Budde. Join us for rich discussions in the Youth Room. Contact lanareich@yahoo.com .

THIS MONTH

MAR 3	6:30 pm	Mission & Justice	MAR 15	noon	Senior Stepping Stones Retreat #2		
MAR 5	10:45 am	OWLs (Older Wiser Lutherans)		1:00 pm	Bethel @ Benedictine Chapel		
	2:00 pm	Monthly Movie: <i>Radio</i>	MAR 17	noon	Lydia Circle		
	7:00 pm	Vision Seekers @ Reunion 501 Division St S, Northfield, MN		3:30 pm	ARLA (Anti-Racism Learning & Advocacy)		
MAR 8	DAYLIGHT SAVINGS BEGINS— SPRING FORWARD!			5:00 pm	Personnel		
	noon	6th Grade Lord's Prayer Retreat		6:30 pm	Church Council		
MAR 10		9:00 am	Quilting Group	MAR 18	4:30 pm	Homes for God's Children	
		3:00 pm	Lydia Circle Fellowship		7:00 pm	Confirmation Finale	
MAR 11	5:00 pm	Congregational Life	MAR 19	10:00 am	Parkview East Fellowship		
MAR 12		10:30 am	Projects with Purpose	MAR 24		9:00 am	Quilting Group
		11:00 am	Pastor Inger @ St. Olaf	MAR 26	10:30 am	Projects with Purpose	
		5:00 pm	Worship & Arts Planning	MAR 29	9:40 am	PALM SUNDAY	
		5:45 pm	Active Befriender Support			PANCAKE BREAKFAST	
		7:00 pm	Finance				

FAITH FORMATION AT BETHEL

The Nursery is open 8:15 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 (birth to pre-K)

Children's Ministry

March is FINALLY here, which means spring is ALMOST here! Which means summer will be here before we know it, RIGHT? It is not too late to register your kids for some summer fun and faith formation at [Good Earth Village](#) (if you haven't already). Several of our Bethel kids are already signed up! GEV offers a variety of [Summer Programs](#) for children and youth of different ages and with different lengths of stay at camp.



This year's Northfield Week at GEV (shared with St. John's & St. Peter's) is June 21-26. Pastor Ben will be there that week, too! Use the sponsorship code NORTHFIELD26FULL for an additional \$100 campership for full-week programs and NORTHFIELD26HALF for a \$50 campership for half-week and overnight programs.

Youth Ministry

PLANT Youth Fundraiser



Spring is here and so is the Bethel Youth Plant and Flower Fundraiser. Our 8th - 12th grade youth are raising money for summer trips. You can designate which youth to support or select "General Youth Fund." Plants will be delivered to your home Mother's Day Weekend.

To order go to: www.gertensfundraising.com
Store ID: 165
Orders MUST be placed by April 1st



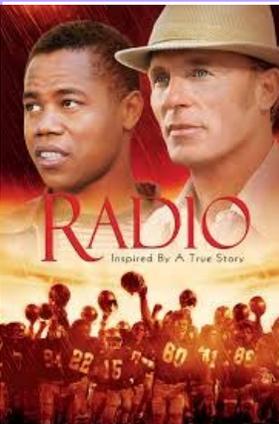
The March Food Drive is on! This year, that means we are all in a GAME SHOW! Are YOU smarter than a Sunday School Student? Is the price right? Are you going to take a spin on the wheel of philanthropy? Let's have some fun as we collect food and money for the Community Action Center all March long!

LECTIONARY CONSIDERATIONS... RESPONSES DUE MARCH 9!

In February, the pastors led a special Bethel Presents focusing on Bethel's experiences of the Revised Common Lectionary and the Narrative Lectionary. Example bulletins were provided to help folks remember and reflect (an [RCL worship from February 5, 2023](#)) and a [Narrative Lectionary worship from October 5, 2025](#)). If you were unable to attend, a link to an asynchronous learning version of the presentation (the slides and the interactive questions) is provided below. There are 5 questions about what you value in the worship experience and what approach might best nourish your faith going forward. Please submit your responses by March 9. The responses will be reviewed by the Worship & Arts Planning Team and will inform what lectionary approach Bethel takes after Pentecost (when the Narrative Lectionary—John year ends). If you prefer a paper version of the survey, please check in at the church office.

<https://app.peardeck.com/student/tdxcvnye>

MONTHLY MOVIE



Join us Thursday, March 5 from 2 — 4 pm in the Youth Room for *Radio*
 We will watch the 2003 film *Radio* starring Cuba Gooding Jr. and Ed Harris, which presents the story of a high school coach and the developmentally challenged young man whom he took under his wing.

PROJECTS WITH PURPOSE

The Pachamama Project is a world-wide network of volunteers making reusable period pads for refugees and vulnerable people who experience period poverty. On **Thursday, March 12, at 10:30 am in Room 41**, Lana Riech will show us the process of making the pads and the finished project. The group will decide whether this is a project we will do, and develop a plan for collecting materials, cutting, and sewing them. As always, you are welcome to bring your own project or just stop by for coffee or tea.



ARLA (ANTI-RACISM LEARNING & ADVOCACY)

Join ARLA (Anti-Racism Learning and Advocacy) on **Tuesday, March 17, 3:30 —**

4:30 pm for another letter-writing campaign to address issues for the MN State Legislature. This can be in conjunction with ISALAH's 2026 People's Agenda and can be fluid, depending on which issues are popping up at the time. We will have addresses, writing supplies, and suggestions available. Stay tuned to the weekly newsletter for more information.

BETHEL PRESENTS...



March 1 — Lutheran Social Service of MN with Rev. Mark Aune

Pastor Aune has visited Bethel before (you might remember him from a stewardship sermon and presentation last April). This Sunday he returns wearing a different hat as a board member of Lutheran Social Service MN, one of Bethel's long-standing ministry partners. Pastor Aune will preach at both services and will share an update on LSS's various ministries and initiatives with his daughter, Ingrid Aune.



March 8 — An Update on Immigration Here and Around the World with Karla Leitzman

Global Refuge is another well-respected ministry partner with Lutheran roots and over 80 years of experience welcoming immigrants. In addition to serving Global Refuge as a Philanthropic Advisor, Karla is a candidate for Word & Sacrament in the ELCA and serves as the pastoral intern/vicar at Faith Lilac Way Lutheran in Robbinsdale, MN. She will preach at both services and help educate us on the current state of immigration and the role congregations and individual people of faith play in Global Refuge's vital work.



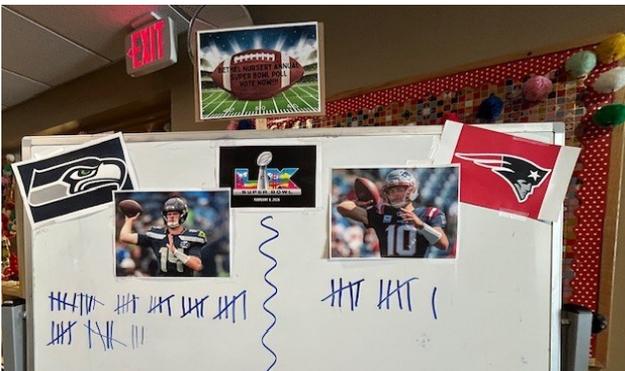
March 15 — Caring for the Incarcerated with Jami Doeden

Bethel's own Jami Doeden will talk about his own vocational journey and describe how his work as a warden is informed by his identity as a Christian. Jami will be joined by a chaplain from a local correctional facility. Come and learn more about local correctional facilities and those who work within them.

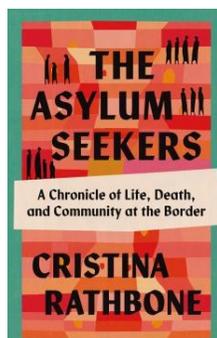
March 22 — Dementia with Pastor Phil and Mary Carlson

Our BeFriender ministry knows that directly or indirectly dementia affects all of us. Join Pastor Phil and Mary Carlson to explore various aspects of dementia: 1) causes, symptoms, and challenges, 2) Suggestions on how to visit people with dementia, 3) how dementia affects close family members: Lu Lindstrom will share her journey with Bill.

FEBRUARY BRIGHT LIGHTS



IN THE LIBRARY...

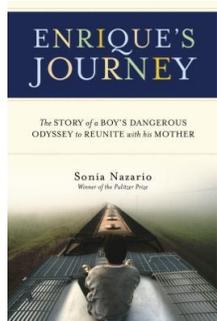


The Asylum Seekers offers a rare narrative account of the horror of the US-Mexico border. Borders run through author Cristina Rathbone too, whose mother was a Cuban refugee. So she travels to Juarez, unsure what to do but determined to learn.

Weaving intimate portraits of individuals with broader stories about the community, reporting from the border as a whole, and reflections on the meaning of faith in a place of suffering, Rathbone tells the story of Mexican asylum seekers living in a makeshift tent camp at the foot of a bridge. Life in the camp is both hectic and harrowing. Families arrive. Families leave. Families get through to the US. Families are returned from the US. Women weep, children squabble, and grown men sob over photographs of their murdered sons' mutilated bodies.

Here too, however, are beauty, and empathy, and hope. Over time, a leadership team emerges.

The community begins to convene daily meetings, establish systems of distribution for donations, and start classes for the kids. Serving as an unofficial chaplain, Rathbone is there through it all: listening, receiving, assisting, and most of all learning about what authentic faith looks like under conditions such as these.



Enrique's Journey. Based on the Los Angeles Times' series that won two Pulitzer Prizes, this is a timeless story of families torn apart. When Enrique was five, his mother, too poor to feed her children, left Honduras to work in the United States. The move allowed her to send money back home so Enrique could eat better and go to school past the third grade. She promised she would return quickly, but she struggled in America. Without her, he became lonely and troubled. After eleven years, he decided he would go find her. He set off alone, with little more than a slip of paper bearing his mother's North Carolina telephone number. Without money, he made the dangerous trek up the length of Mexico, clinging to the sides and tops of freight trains. He and other migrants, many of them children, are hunted like animals. To evade bandits and authorities, they must jump onto and off the moving boxcars they call the Train of Death. It is an epic journey, one thousands of children make each year to find their mothers in the United States.

ENDOWMENT GRANT CYCLE OPEN—APPLICATIONS DUE APRIL 15

The Endowment Committee is excited to announce a second cycle of endowment grants for 2026. The Endowment Fund provides funds for ministries, programs, projects, and appeals outside of the scope of Bethel's operating budget that further Bethel's mission to "Share Christ's Love with a Big Heart." Bethel members or groups, or people outside of Bethel, are encouraged to submit grant requests. Examples of concepts to consider include outreach ministries of any magnitude; general missions like creation care, worship, music, or church facilities; or any area of Christian education for youth or adults, such as Bible studies, scholarships, local and regional training. The next round of grant requests will be accepted from March 1 through April 15. More than \$23,000 is still available to award yet this spring, so get to thinking of a great idea to start developing here at Bethel! Here is the [link to the on-line application](#).

FINANCIAL NOTES from Barb Fowler, Finance Officer

January financials:

Revenue: \$73,432

Expenses: \$68,003

Balance \$ 5,429

Thank you for your donations in January. This is the way to start out the year! For those of you who are Thrivent customers, Choice Dollars are due to be used by March 31. Last year we received \$1850 in Choice Dollars.

Members of the Finance Committee: Lee Runzheimer, Andrew Jorgenson, Steward, Heidi McCormick, Charlie Dahl, Trustee, Paula Mathison, President, Greg Bussler, and Pastor Inger, ex-officio



Bethel Lutheran Church
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Northfield, MN 55057



Phone: 507-786-6674

Web: www.bethelnorthfield.org

www.facebook.com/bethellutheran

Email: bethel@bethelnorthfield.org



Return Service Requested



YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

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.



SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING TO UPDATE THE CONSTITUTION APRIL 19

Please review the proposed changes to the Bethel constitution. An [electronic version](#) is posted on our website and hard copies are available outside the church office. Some changes are required by the ELCA; some hope to add clarity. A few have more significance (such as expanding the number of council members and adding the position of the President-Elect).

A Special Congregational Meeting
will be held Sunday, April 19 at 9:40 am

BE A HOST FOR ST. OLAF'S YOUNG ADULT FAITH & CLIMATE SUMMIT APRIL 25-26

Help the next generation connect on faith and creation care by hosting a youth or young adult April 25—26. St. Olaf College is hosting its first-ever Young Adult Faith & Climate Summit from April 25 to April 26. The organizers are hoping 150 high school and college students from congregations and schools throughout the Midwest will attend. To keep costs low, organizers are offering homestays as a housing option. **Would you consider hosting 2 to 4 young people in your home for a night, and feeding them breakfast?** You don't need to have a guest room, though that would be great! A couch or air mattress would work just fine. **If you're interested, please fill out this form: [Homestay Host Interest Form](#).**