



Handy ‘clip & save’ box with contact data and other useful information



Bethany Lutheran Church - ELCA
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FIND US ON FACEBOOK:

Bethany Lutheran Church,
Spencer IA-ELCA

YOU TUBE:

Bethany Lutheran Church
Spencer, IA

CHURCH COUNCIL:

Russ Wright, President
Sue Metcalf, Vice-President
Sue Boblit, Secretary
Sandi Schmidt, Treasurer
Council members-at-large:
Candy Huber
Randy Phillips
Judy Hiemstra
Jaci Scheier

STAFF:

Director of Worship and Music:

Elina Leander Ozolins
sveiks@mediacombb.net

Visitation Ministry:

Onalee Wright
onalee53@gmail.com

Secretary:

Elizabeth Essick
bethany@bethluthspencer.com

Custodian:

Erick Phillips

BEAUTIFYING BETHANY RETAINING WALL REPLACEMENT

For so many years, driving by on Grand Avenue, or attending Church Service here at Bethany Lutheran Church, you could not help but notice the beautiful assortment of flowers and shrubbery that surround our building. Especially those located on the elevated retaining walls located on the north, east, and south perimeter of the Education wing. Starting with spring blooms and carrying throughout the entire summer. Sadly, our retaining walls have been bowing, and are showing increased signs of stress and deterioration. Enough to warrant replacement.

Starting very soon this spring, Ferguson’s Landscaping contractors will be on site to remove the existing failing retaining walls and replace them with new ones. We do not know the exact date, but as soon as spring weather allows, Ferguson’s landscaping will begin.



We invite and encourage all members to help themselves to any flowers or shrubbery here on these retaining walls, as they cannot be saved during the reconstruction phase of this project. Once the project begins, we must stay clear of the work area for safety reasons. Once the retaining walls have been replaced and completed, planning for new flowering plants will begin.

A fresh beginning!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any council member.



April SCRIPTURE READINGS & VOLUNTEERS

Listed below are the lectionary readings for services March.
Worship onsite, via livestream online (times indicated below), or catch a rebroadcast aired on SMU Channel 2 on Tuesdays at 5 pm or Wednesdays at 10 am.

APRIL 2 – 7 PM - MAUNDY THURSDAY

Scriptures: Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14; Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19;
1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Greeter: 1) _____; Reader: Judy Himstra,
Communion Servers: Kristin Bensen, Onalee Wright,
3) _____, 4) _____
Ushers: Kent Baker; 2) _____

APRIL 3 – 7 PM - GOOD FRIDAY

Scriptures: Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 22;
Hebrews 10:16-25; John 18:1-19:42
Greeter: Danny & Candy Huber;
Readers: Deb Mechler, Sue Boblit, Rhonda Salts
Communion Servers: Candy Huber, Twila Henning,
Onalee Wright, 4) _____
Ushers: Kent Baker; 2) _____

APRIL 5 – 9 AM - EASTER/RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

Scriptures: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24;
Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10
Greeter: Jaci Scheier & Arya Studer;
Readers: Deb Mechler
Communion Servers: Twila Henning, Jaci Scheier, Onalee
Wright, 4) _____
Ushers: Kent Baker; 2) _____
Count: Sue Boblit

APRIL 12 – 9 AM - SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Scriptures: Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Psalm 16
1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31
Greeter: Rhonda Salts; Reader: Jaci Scheier
Communion Servers: Jaci Schreier, Onalee Wright,
Twila Henning, Candy Huber
Ushers: Kent Baker; 2) _____
Count: Connie Heien

APRIL 19 – 9 AM - THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Scriptures: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19;
1 Peter 2:19-25; Luke 24:13-35
Greeters: Jaci Scheier & Arya Studer;
Reader: Mary Marske;
Communion Servers: Jaci Schreier, Twila Henning, Onalee
Wright, Mary Marske
Ushers: Kent Baker; 2) _____
Count: Francis Hiemstra

APRIL 26 – 9 AM - FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Scriptures: Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23;
1 Peter 2:19-25, John 10:1-10
Greeter: 1) _____; Reader: Jaci Scheier
Communion Servers: Jaci Schreier, Onalee Wright,
3) _____, 4) _____
Ushers: Kent Baker; 2) _____
Count: Sue Boblit



Thank you to all who served our Bethany family by diligently working to make Wednesday evenings a meaningful experience of fellowship and worship this Lenten Season!



Every Sunday's worship service at Bethany Lutheran Church comes together through the work of many people.

There are numerous opportunities for volunteers to assist, we encourage and welcome your help! We are happy to teach you any aspect you are interested in helping with!

Many thanks to all who share of their time and talent, serving in this way!





SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING

The Western Iowa Synod Council met via zoom® on Saturday, March 21st for an hour and a half. The Synod enjoys a full slate of staff now and received their reports. Including Bishop Scott Dalen, are the following staff: Rev Chip Borgstadt (candidacy), Rev Cara Knutson (SAMs and TEEMs), Rev Melissa Pickering (Director of Evangelical Mission), Dominique Fritz-Rapsch (part-time bookkeeper), and Julie Cook (office manager).

The Bishop’s report highlighted the ongoing work of the staff in Western Iowa. A variety of ministry models or possibilities are being explored as congregations plan for the future. A couple of congregations are considering Holy Closure as they shift thinking to what legacy they leave behind. The Bishop has led installations for pastors and vicars. Companion Synods (Tanzania and Chile) have also claimed some of Bishop’s time as a plan for 2026 was established and shared. The synod’s 2025-26 fiscal year ended January 31, 2026 ‘in the black’.

Bishop Dalen attended the Conference of Bishops March 3-7 where bishops from the ELCA’s 65 synods met with Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, the ELCA Secretary, representatives of ELCA seminaries, and others. Rev. Curry reinforced the priority area for his first three years in office: “A connected church and a sustainable church – Raising the bar together”.

WIS Assembly preparations included a number of documents that were reviewed and approved by the council. Council members volunteered to fill needs throughout the event from greeting to cleaning up. The 2026 WIS Assembly will be held April 17-18 at the Sergeant Bluff Community Center.

Denise Kramer Tolzmann, Synod Council

At the Igumbilo Lutheran Girls’ School, students have finished their midterm exams and are enjoying a couple of weeks’ break to go home before gathering in Njombe for the Youth Easter Conference.



This news came from the school librarian, Naini, pictured here.



Construction on the new dining hall & kitchen began before our August 2025 visit but stopped for lack of financial resources to buy supplies.



Thanks to donations from First/Milford and Bethany/Spencer, bags of cement have been purchased and cement blocks are being made individually by hand. - dkt



Everyone has seen those little pins on a map that indicates the location of something of interest. Sometimes, the pin or marker says, "You are here". (were you lost?!)

What follows is a devotion prepared by Travis Brincks from around Kiron/Odebolt for the March 21st Synod Council Meeting. (Travis and I attended WIS

Lay Ministry School together years ago. - dkt)
The Western Iowa Synod Assembly will be in April in Sergeant Bluff.

"We are Here"

That is our Assembly theme this year, and it is something we should remind ourselves during these complicated times for the church.

We are still here, gathered by God's Spirit in this place, in this moment, for the sake of Christ's mission.

Hear the words of Deuteronomy 31:8 -

"It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

And the words of Revelation 21:3 -

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and be their God; ...'"

Reflection

"We are here" can sound like a weak claim in an anxious time - shrinking budgets, fewer members and volunteers, and changes in church life. But in Scripture, the more important truth is that **God is here.**

- God goes before us and does not leave or forsake us, even when we feel small or uncertain.

In Christ, God has chosen to dwell with us - Immanuel, "God with us" - and the Spirit is already at work where we live and serve.

So, when we say, "We are here," we are not just reporting our attendance. We are confessing a calling:

- We are here, in this synod, in this season, because God has placed us here.

- (We are here, in this Bethany Church, in this season, because God has placed us here.)
- We are here to listen for where God is already at work in all our congregations and communities. We are here to love our neighbors and to seek a just and compassionate society in Christ's name. Council work (whether Synod Council or congregational councils) can feel like agendas, budgets, and reports. But under all of that is a deeper question: "Since we are here, and God is here, what is God inviting us to do - now?"

Maybe today that means:

- Paying attention to the "small" ministries that quietly proclaim Christ's love.
- Being honest about our fears yet choosing courage because the Lord goes before us. Remembering that we are part of something larger than ourselves—a whole synod, a whole church, a whole denomination - seeking to be church "for the sake of the world."

Where you have noticed God's presence? - in our congregation, our community, our synod, and our church?

Prayer

God of Immanuel,
we give you thanks that
before we ever say,
"We are here,"
you promise, "I am with you."



You have placed us in this synod,
in these congregations,
in this council, at this time,
for your purposes.
Open our eyes to see
where you are already at work among us.
Give us courage where we are afraid,
wisdom where we are unsure,
and love for one another
and our neighbors in need.

As we do the work before us
today and every day,
keep Christ at the center of our
conversations and decisions,
so that everything we say
and do bears witness
to your presence
and your mercy in the world.

We pray in the name of Jesus,
our Lord who is
always here with us. Amen.

In the year 2025 the board of directors was active in sustaining our role as overseers of the mission of St. Luke. We met not only for monthly business meetings, but also to ensure that the chaplain position remains filled and to enhance our services for the future.

When the chaplain resigned in late summer, we collaborated with one of our member churches, Christ the King Lutheran in Spencer, to work out a sharing agreement with their pastor to fill the role. While the pastor unexpectedly received a new call elsewhere after only two months, I was proud of our board for working thoughtfully and creatively with the leaders of the church. It was a positive experience that highlighted our shared responsibility and teamwork.

Subsequently we received an application and chose to hire Rev. Loomis to the position of chaplain. We are pleased with the experience and enthusiasm he is bringing to his ministry with our residents.

We also focused on moving toward a fundraising campaign. We toured the campus one building at a time, assessing all the needed updates while also dreaming of improvements, with our building directors weighing in. We compiled a list of everything we observed and assigned dollar amounts to all the projects that ran the gamut from painting walls to redesigning areas.

The board also went on a field trip to Orange City and Sioux Center to tour facilities that have been built more recently. This fueled our imagination for ways to update St. Luke that can not only help us serve our residents more efficiently, but also foster a feeling of home vs. an institution for both residents and their families. We are also drawing on the experiences that Jane Kruse and I had at the Growing Bolder conference in 2024.

We have carefully considered our next steps in raising funds. We have solicited the advice of our friends at Ingham Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, who have successfully completed a recent capital campaign. We will proceed with hiring a fundraising professional whose first job will be to conduct a feasibility study for raising funds locally. Interviews for that project will be conducted within the next few weeks.

While the idea of raising substantial funds for updates and improvements may appear daunting, we are inspired by those who undertook the creation of St. Luke over sixty years ago. Each phase of our campus was added by faith, with careful consideration of local needs. Those needs continue, and expectations for the current aging population are different than those of the previous generations. Consequently we are moving forward with faith that our mission is still critical to the well-being of our local elderly population.

We could not move forward with confidence without the solid foundation of all that has been accomplished thanks to our dedicated staff and supporting churches. I wish everyone reading this could be in the room when Ken Nelson briefs us on the work he and his staff are doing. While financial challenges have tested us, the staff doggedly and skillfully continues to serve the frail elderly with dedication. We remain solvent, thankful and determined to sustain our mission well into the future.

A note about the makeup of the board. After receiving the resignation of Dave Hoyer, who is moving away, we appointed Rollie Mortensen, a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Royal. After a few months Rollie, too, had to resign due to moving elsewhere. We asked Pam Virelli, also a member of Bethlehem, to replace him. She is enthusiastic about serving with us, and we are glad she agreed to run for reelection this year. Her positive attitude and her background in working for a law firm will serve us well.

We hope that you as member churches will keep us in your prayers and on your radar for the work we are doing on your behalf. Thank you for your support.

Deb Mechler, Board President

Listed are current prayer concerns along with those from over the past month. Prayers have been lifted up for these folks at Bethany and beyond.





Prayer Group & Bible Study
WEDNESDAY MORNINGS
@ 9:30

This small group meets weekly for a cup of coffee and to read the upcoming Sunday's lessons. After a brief discussion of the lessons, they pray for those on Bethany's prayer list and others in need of special prayers. They also send postcards indicating prayers have been offered. This meeting usually lasts less than an hour.

Feel free to join them in this prayer ministry!

MEN OF BETHANY
BIBLE STUDY
A.K.A. "THE MOB"

This small group is dedicated to Bible Study, meeting every Saturday morning at 7:30 am. Participants enjoy fellowship, a light breakfast and time spent discussing the Gospel message and readings for the next day. Gain insights and deepen your understanding of the Bible texts as you hear them again on Sunday. All men are welcome to join in the conversation.

Join Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2030878041?pwd=MWJUeIRVTTdtUUZMbnA2RjVhQ2dsZz09>

Meeting ID: 2030878041

Passcode: 618607

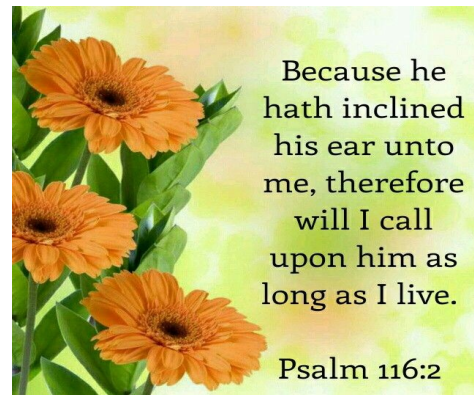
Health Concerns

Kirk Andersen, Cindy Heiter, Lucille Huber, Donna Jones, Jill Meyer, Sylvia Moore, Liz Vulk, Carolyn Kruger, Marla Woelber, Betty Lee, Bruce Iverson, Lee Youde
 Jim Hiemstra (Francis Hiemstra's brother)
 Loren McIntire (Jaci Schreier's uncle),
 Deb Albert (Cheri Klemme's sister),
 DeAnna Bensen (Bill Bensen's mother),
 LuAnn Becker (Bob Becker's sister),
 Lois Sanchez (Deb Mechler's sister),
 Bethany Lutheran Church's Call Process,
 Leadership across the World at local, state and national levels,
 The people of the Middle East, Peace in All Nations
Prayers of Thanksgiving
 Baptism of Brynlee Madison Mitchell



COMMUNITY
Lenten Services

APRIL 1 JOIN
YOUR COMMUNITY AS
WE SHARE IN OUR LAST
WEEKLY ECUMENICAL
LENTEN SERVICE WITH
LUNCH BEGINNING
AT 11:30 AM & WORSHIP TO FOLLOW!
Hosted by Trinity Lutheran Church



CHILDREN'S
Sunday School

All children from kindergarten through 6th grade are invited to join

Hunter, Kyle, Scott, Autumn or whoever comes from Lutheran Lakeside Camp.

10:15 on Sunday mornings

All are welcome. Come join in the fun!
March 29, April 12th, 19th & 26th

No Kidz Time Easter Morning
Join the Easter Egg Hunt!



Bethany Lutheran Church Planning Council

"A Christ-centered family who serves by sharing God's love and hope with all."

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 - 6:00 PM



Present in Person – Russ Wright, Sue Boblit, Randy Phillips, Candy Huber, Judy Hiemstra, Sandi Schmidt, and Sue Metcalf

Absent – Jaci Schreier

Devotions – Sandi Schmidt gave the devotions on St. Patrick

Check-in Time – Where have you experienced God in the last week.

Additions/Approval to the agenda – Russ Wright asked to be put on the agenda. Motion by Sandi Schmidt to approve with the addition. Second by Sue Metcalf. Motion carried.

Secretary's Report – Motion by Randy Phillips to approve the February 17, 2026, minutes. Second by Candy Huber. Motion carried.

Correspondence – No correspondence was received.

Treasurer's Report/Monthly Expenses for January – Motion by Randy Phillips to approve, second by Candy Huber. Motion carried.

Ministry Teams and other reports – Candy Huber reported that the Faith in Action team is talking about not having an entry in the Flagfest parade but just having a bigger hospitality area on the lawn. More details to come.

Congregational Activity Report – Attached

Unfinished Business:

Wedding Coordinator update – Candy provided an updated Wedding Coordinator handbook; a few minor corrections need to be made (page numbers etc.). Otherwise not much change.

HR Reviews – Russ Wright indicated that the reviews have all been done, still waiting on a couple people to sign.

Audit Letter – The Audit committee conducted the internal audit of the books for 2025 and found no abnormal transactions. Motion by Sue Metcalf to accept the audit as presented. Second by Candy Huber, motion carried.

Seminary Fund – Sandi Schmidt reported that she has received a list of seminary candidates, will send out 2 sample applications for council review.

New Business:

Sue Metcalf – Looking into adding Kids Music, have several youth involved in band, would be great to get something started at Bethany. Looking into possibilities.

Constitution Update – Bethany needs to work on updating our constitution, many changes have been made, and we have not updated for some time. Will look at putting together a committee to work on this.

Lenten Meal – Council will serve the meal on Wednesday the 18th. Pizza and bars.

VBS – Sue Boblit attended the first meeting with 1st Congregational about VBS. VBS will be July 6th, 7th, and 8th. We will be joined by Grace United Methodist this year. Next planning meeting will be May 11th.

Russ Wright – Looking into a meeting with the Bishop ahead of his visit to Bethany.

Randy Phillips – Landscaping project (replacing retaining wall around the church) and adding new landscaping will begin this spring, no definite date. As part of the project Randy presented information on adding a sprinkler system to the lawn. Randy Phillips made a motion to add the sprinkler system for the lawn. Second by Judy Hiemstra, motion carried. Randy will look into adding a drip line to the infrastructure to the landscaping beds and will report back via email.

Russ Wright adjourned the meeting. We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting: Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at 4:00 PM

Devotions: Candy Huber

Respectfully Submitted by Sue Boblit, Planning Council Secretary

MINUTES SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT April 21, 2026, COUNCIL MEETING.



Altar guild as well as the entire Bethany congregation share our gratitude to all who have purchased lilies to beautify the sanctuary this Easter morning!

Consider sharing an Easter lily in honor or remembrance of a loved one and take it home with you after worship.

Sign-up by April 1 at the Welcome Center.

- ✝ Maundy Thursday Service: April 2nd at 7:00 pm
- ✝ Good Friday Service: April 3rd at 7:00 pm
- ✝ Easter Sunday Service: April 5th at 9:00 am



EASTER EGG HUNT

Join us Easter morning following worship at approximately 10:15 am on the south lawn, weather permitting. If inclement weather, the hunt will be held indoors. This is for children age 10 and under. Bring your own basket (we will have some available).

Candy donations are being accepted and can be put in the basket near the Welcome Center.