



Bethel Blaze

SEPTEMBER 2026

Sharing Christ's love with a big heart

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

In Person

Sunday Morning:

8:30 am 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



RALLY SUNDAY - SEPTEMBER 20

We want to start this year off with a party, and we need you to make it a true celebration! **Sunday, September 20** is one BIG Sunday, so put it on your calendar and we will see you at Bethel. All students, from pre-K through college, are invited to bring their backpacks to worship for a special blessing!

Sunday School will begin on Rally Sunday and will now be offered at BOTH worship services. Children in grades K-5 begin in the sanctuary with their family as part of the wider congregation. After the Prayer of the Day, they are invited to go with Megan Shoup (our new Director of Children Youth & Family Ministries), for a Sunday School experience based on the same text the congregation focuses on. They will rejoin their families prior to communion. A pre-K Sunday School with Juley Jenkinson will also be offered just like last year - watch Bethel's "This Week" email for an update when the schedule is finalized.

The day wouldn't be complete without a **CYF Fair** on Bethel's front lawn! Your friends and teachers here at Bethel are excited to celebrate with you with a bounce house, build your own back-to-school snack mix, face painting and so much more. Join us between worship services from 9:35 - 10:20 am. Be sure to bring your backpack and maybe even a friend!



Blessing of the
Backpacks



MISSION & JUSTICE FAIR

Rally Sunday isn't just for kids! How is the Spirit stirring you to serve your neighbor this year? Mission & Justice has a variety of teams working in different areas. Come to our Mission & Justice Fair in the narthex between services to learn about specific opportunities to get involved.

In Matthew 25:40 Jesus said "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." As Christ followers, we commit to feed the hungry, cloth the needy, welcome the stranger, care for the sick, and comfort those in prison.

We will also have the **grand prize drawing** for Summer Bingo participants! The winner gets to choose a ministry aligned with Bethel's values to be the recipient of a \$250 gift.

FIRESIDE REFLECTIONS

from Pastor Ben



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

It is an exciting time to be Bethel Lutheran Church! Megan Shoup, our new Director of Children, Youth, & Family Ministries, has started (as I am writing this, she is in her second week on the job) and already she has brought great questions about what we do and why we do it, a desire to make connections, build relationships, and foster community, AND a fresh perspective that reminds us (or at least me) that we have some pretty special and unique things engrained in our community here at Bethel.

As the program year gets underway amid this time of transition, your staff and leaders are most certainly feeling a little overwhelmed, but in a good way. We are excited to get back into the rhythm (and find new ones). There are new people in new roles, seasoned people entering new roles, and those wonderful “tried-and-true” folks returning to the roles they do so well in this time when Bethel is entering a new chapter. It’s an exciting time to be Bethel!

So, if you were waiting for some kind of sign, invitation, or nudge to fill out that registration form, volunteer for that ministry, join that team or committee, or just get more involved and invested in the Bethel buzz, this is it! The Holy Spirit is moving, busy, and creating so many possibilities in our ministries, new and old, here at Bethel. Exciting times, indeed!

Peace & Blessings,

Pastor Ben

BEFRIENDERS

from Marci Groenwold

Myrna Luehmann, long time BeFriender coordinator, included and appreciated everyone. Here is a story she shared with me as told by Charles Plumb, a US Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, Plumb’s plane was destroyed. He ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and survived 6 years in a communist Vietnamese prison. Today he is an inspirational speaker and tells this story, entitled “Who Packs Your Parachute?”

One day, while Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, “You’re Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!” “How in the world did you know that?” asked Plumb. “I packed your parachute,” the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man said, “I guess it worked!” Plumb assured him, “It sure did. If your chute hadn’t worked, I wouldn’t be here today.”

Plumb couldn’t sleep that night, thinking about that man. He wondered how many times he might have seen him and not even said ‘Good morning, how are you?’ or anything because Plumb was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor. “Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn’t know. When Plumb finished his story, he asked “Who’s packing your parachute?”

Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. Take time to recognize the people who pack your parachutes. As Myrna would have been quick to point out, gratitude changes everything.

A fundamental BeFriender principle: “Nonjudgmental presence.”

For more information regarding the Bethel’s BeFriender Ministry, please contact the Bethel Office at 507-786-6674.

EVERY WEEK

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS, 9 AM - 3 PM

SUNDAY



8:30 am Worship/Livestream

9:40 am Coffee Fellowship & Education (Bethel Presents begins 9/27)

10:30 am Worship with Sunday School

MONDAY



12:00 pm Bible Text Study @ The Vault

TUESDAY

9:45 am Staff Meeting

WEDNESDAY*



3:30 pm SPARK (formerly Limitless) (*begins 9/16)

5:30 pm Bistro Join us for a fresh cooked meal and fellowship! Cost is \$5/meal; family cap of \$20.

6:15 pm Ring Forth Youth Bell Choir

7:00 pm 6th Grade Connections & 10th Grade Confirmation

Choir

Hangtime

8:05 pm Brio

THURSDAY

9:00 am MoB (Men of Bethel) will begin a four-week discussion of the book, 'The Rest of the Story' written and lead by Dr. Stan Quanbeck. The focus is on mission in Madagascar, where Stan served as a medical missionary for many years. New participants are always welcome.

FaB (Faith and Books), our women's book group, is reading *The Faith Club* with discussions in the Youth Room. Contact Lana Reich at lanareich@yahoo.com to be added to the FaB email list.

FRIDAY



9:15 am WoW (Women of the Word) Bible study via Zoom (begins 9/11)

THIS MONTH

SEP 1 6:30 pm ISAAH Discipleship Training

SEP 3 7:00 pm Bethel Vision Seekers
@ Tilion Brewing Co., 432 Mill St W, Cannon Falls, MN 55009

SEP 6 10:30 am Final Outdoor Worship

SEP 7 LABOR DAY - CHURCH BUILDING CLOSED

SEP 8 9:00 am Quilting Group

3:00 pm Lydia Circle Fellowship

6:30 pm ISAAH Discipleship Training

SEP 9 5:00 pm Congregational Life

7:00 pm Finance

SEP 10 10:00 am Projects with Purpose

5:45 pm Active BeFriender Support

SEP 14 6:00 pm CYF Meeting

7:30 pm ISAAH Monthly Meeting

SEP 15 12:00 pm Lydia Circle

SEP 15 (continued)

3:30 pm ARLA Monthly Event

5:00 pm Personnel

6:30 pm Church Council

SEP 17 10:00 am Parkview Fellowship

4:30 pm Homes for God's Children

5:00 pm Congregational Life

SEP 20 RALLY SUNDAY

9:40 am CYF Fair on Lawn

Mission & Justice Fair

1:00 pm Bethel @ Benedictine Chapel

SEP 22 9:00 am Quilting Group

SEP 24 10:00 am Projects with Purpose

SEP 26 BETHEL HABITAT BUILD DAY

SEP 28 6:30 pm Resonance Bell Choir Begins

SEP 30 4:30 pm Homes for God's Children

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



Megan Shoup
(she/her)

cyf@bethelnorthfield.org

office

507-786-8878

Meet the Director! In preparing for this "learn more about the new Director" section, I polled a few families and asked, "What do you actually want to know about the new person?" I hope my answers give you a glimpse into who I am, and more importantly, my deep passion for building a strong community of support and faith formation alongside you.

Why Did You Say Yes to This Role? For me, my "yes" starts in the waters of baptism. There, we remember and celebrate that we love because God first loved us. We experience the truth that it is not our own doing, but rather the radical love of God's "yes" that invites us to say "yes" to the world around us. I have spent my life responding to God's invitation to partner in creating life in God's world. This journey has included degrees in Spanish, Psychology, and Ministry from Hope College, leading directly to a Master of Divinity from Western Theological Seminary. It has taken me from Michigan to Spain, Australia, western Minnesota, and now Northfield. I have coached, studied, preached, and taught, always living out God's call to participate in the holy work of tending souls and cultivating spaces for growth. When asked to apply at Bethel, I said yes, and together we discerned that God was inviting us into a partnership. And here we are!

What Will the Bethel Kids and I Be Doing? At the end of the day, what do humans really need? We need to be safe, fed, and loved. But to truly thrive, we also need places for growth.

While no single place can meet all these needs, I am thrilled to be part of the team helping to meet them for our children, youth, and families. Together, we will cultivate spaces to play silly games, have serious conversations, eat snacks galore, and discover how God is at work in ourselves, in creation, and in the people around us.

(continued on next page)

CONFIRMATION

Pastor Ben here! I'm excited to be leading the Bethel Confirmation program going forward! I wanted to give an update to the whole congregation on what's been planned and shared with confirmation families over the past few months.

This month and next, I get to hang out with the 10th graders on Wednesday nights; walking with our confirmands on the final stretch of their journey before their Affirmation of Baptism service (otherwise known as Confirmation) on Reformation Sunday, October 25.

Then in November, 7th, 8th, & 9th grade confirmation will kick-off with some updates that I'm really excited about:

- Each confirmation class will now be formed into small groups that will go through the confirmation experience together, led by an adult volunteer who will get to know and walk with the youth through this multi-year journey.
- Pastor Inger will continue to teach the 7th grade Bible Year, and I will be shifting to teach 9th & 10th grade, because beloved Bethel members and rockstar St. Olaf Religion professors Kiara Jorgenson and Anthony Bateza have graciously volunteered to teach the 8th grade Lutheran Year going forward! YAY!!
- I am also adding a new attendance expectation with a few allotted Wednesday absences each year, as well as Service & Growth Experience expectations to encourage confirmands to be present on Wednesdays and to worship and serve at Bethel.

My hope is that these changes will enhance and deepen the Bethel Confirmation program, so that youth grow in their faith and engage even more in the life of Bethel and the greater church.

Sometimes, we will simply play and revel in the joy God created us to embrace. Other times, we will wrestle with life's transitions or the stress in and around us. And still other times, we will serve one another and the wider community. All of this will happen within the loving, supportive Bethel family—a community that deeply values the children and youth God entrusts us to steward well.

What Are You Most Excited About? Recently, my kids labeled me “the interesting parent” because I am always up for an adventure. Whether it’s turning a routine grocery trip into an exciting weekday meal, trekking downtown to the Riverwalk Market Fair, or heading off on a 700-mile road trip, I love treating everyday life as an adventure to be shared with the people around me. I believe that faith itself is a beautiful adventure, especially when it is lived out alongside others in a community like this one. I can’t wait for the adventures I get to lead and participate in at Bethel. From a 1,000-mile youth road trip, to a Christmas cookie party at SPARK, to learning how to be a good friend and neighbor in 6th Grade Connections, we are poised to embrace so many incredible moments together.

CYF 2026-2027 AT A GLANCE

We have so many fun, engaging, growing opportunities. Some of them have all the details in place and some are still in the dreaming phase. Below is an overview of what is envisioned - expect further communication as dreams take shape!

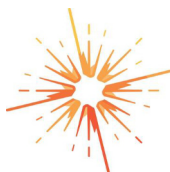
Class of 2027! Bethel has a number of traditions that help support and celebrate your last year of high school. From senior quilts to special retreats, your faith family wants to walk with you through the year. Megan will be emailing families with dates for gatherings and to share the details about how to get your senior quilt started.

WEDNESDAYS, BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 16:

K-5th Grade SPARK

SPARK stands for Spirit, Play, Arts, Relationships & Kids. This after-school program builds off the legacy of BAM (Bible, Arts & Music) and Limitless.

We are so excited to gather and sing, ring chimes, play games, eat snacks and simply get to know each of you. Get your registration turned in and remember, friends and neighbors are welcome, so please start inviting anyone you want to come be part of this community. Please register [here](#).



6th grade Connections Parents, please plan to join Megan and Scott for a brief introduction at 6:40 pm September 16. We want to share more about what *is* 6th grade Connections and how it will work this year.

7th - 10th grade Check out the Confirmation section for exciting changes to our program. 7th – 9th grade classes don't begin until November, so stay tuned for fall activities.

HangTime Pizza! Games! Snacks! New ideas you will bring! HangTime meets from 7:00 – 8:00 pm in the Youth Room. All 11th – 12th grade students are welcome (10th Graders join in late October after confirmation). Friends are welcome too! Sign up [here](#).

SUNDAYS, BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 20:

Sunday School will now be offered at BOTH services. Children in grades K– 5 begin worship with the congregation. After the Prayer of the Day, they are invited to go with Megan to the Center Pod for a lesson and activity based on that Sunday's focus text. Children rejoin their families prior to communion.

Pre-K Sunday School will be offered just like last year. Look for an update from Juley in the "This Week" email when the schedule is finalized.

Kids' Fellowship 9:40 – 10:20 am for Grades K– 5 will be in the Center Pod. Our group will gather and continue to grow community and connection in different ways.

Youth Fellowship 9:40 – 10:20 am for older youth ... This is still in the dreaming phase; stay tuned for more!

Whether volunteering to create a supportive community with Kids' Fellowship and/or a “just youth” time in the Youth Room, please share your ideas with Megan and/or a member of the CYF Advisory Board.

BETHEL BRIGHT LIGHTS



Early in August, Bethel hosted all-day Vacation Bible School! Good Earth Village counselors stayed with parishioners and ran the program.



The Creation Care team educated us about ways to care for oceans, the climate, forests, animals.

Open, Sesame!
Gordy & Betty Olson show us the new accessible west doors.



Bethel youth also reported on other summer camp and trip experiences.



God's Work Our Hands Sunday projects included highway clean-up and card-making. We also enjoyed a special afternoon fellowship at Chapel Brewing cohosted by Congregational Life and Creation Care.

INSPIRATION FROM THE ARCHIVES from Carsten Walter

I've been attending Bethel since I was little, and am now a junior at Macalester College. From May through July, I worked as an archival intern with the Worship and Arts Committee, assembling materials about Bethel's architectural history and the history of the painting "Christ Knocking at the Door" (located outside the AV room in the sanctuary). I also made an online catalogue to make the archives easily searchable, and displayed archival objects between services at an Among the Ministries table in late July. I'd like to share some pieces of history I found interesting while archiving!

1. The arson of the original 1908 building – I didn't know that Bethel had a previous building at all, and was surprised to find out that the original building (located near St. John's) burned down in 1962, from what is thought to be an arson attack.
2. Bethel's Dorcas Society– Dorcas Societies were common in 20th century churches and tasked with providing aid (often clothes or food) to poor people. It's interesting to think about how modern mutual aid projects may have been descended from organizations like this.
3. Missionary history– these days Bethel leads youth group trips to Christikon, Flathead, and other places, but at certain points Bethel used to send missionaries to China, India, and Nigeria.

4. Bethel's architecture - Bethel's building and sanctuary were influenced by Midwestern Lutheran design philosophies, including the work of what is now SMSQ Architects. SMSQ's predecessor company designed the original 1963 building, building a space that had various sources of natural light, a communal layout, and flexible, mobile furniture.

5. Joyce Harter's works— Harter was a weaver who designed and made Bethel's various paraments, which the Worship and Arts Committee rotates for each liturgical season. These fabric banners are colorful and effective, adding to the sanctuary's atmosphere while adhering to its architectural simplicity.

ISAIAH DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING CONTINUES...

"For Such a Time as This." Join us on Tuesday, September 1 and September 8, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm, to be equipped for a deeper search into your strengths for God's wider work. We are following training developed by ISAIAH, with units that build on each other. The first session was offered late August, but each meeting covers different topics and you are welcome to jump in! We welcome people of all faiths to join us. Signing up in advance helps us plan for adequate space. See the *This Week @ Bethel* email for more information, or text or call Mary Loven at 507-581-1193.

ACTSS SIGNUP IS OPEN!

Adults Coming Together for Soup and Socializing. Get to know your fellow Bethel members over a soup supper in each others' homes. Small groups meet three times over the coming year and invite a newer Bethel member to join them. More information and registration forms are available in the narthex. Registration deadline is Sunday, September 20. For more info, reach out to Colleen Vitek, cvitek@gmail.com, or 919-848-4844.

BETHEL HABITAT BUILD DAY - SEPTEMBER 26

BETHEL PRESENTS: A MN IMMIGRATION UPDATE - SEPTEMBER 27

As the program year begins, please join us for a special Bethel Presents on Sunday, September 27 between services (9:40 am - 10:25 am). ARLA and the Bethel Immigration Team (with a grant from the Bethel Endowment) are sponsoring "A Minnesota Immigration Update" with Ifrah Esse, an attorney with the Immigration Law Center of Minnesota (ILCM). ILCM is an organization that is on the frontline of immigration advocacy and provides free legal help to low-income immigrants and refugees in Minnesota and North Dakota.

We are still reeling from the ICE surge in Minnesota last winter, and we know our immigrant neighbors are still hurting. What is happening with immigration right now in Minnesota and how can we continue to help? We will hear an update on what is happening in the courts, on the streets and in the lives of our neighbors.

Please spread the word at Bethel and in the Northfield community about this amazing speaker and opportunity to learn about our current situation. Contact Beth Christensen, Connie DeGrote, or Jane Runzheimer with questions.

FINANCIAL NOTES

from Barb Fowler

July 31, 2026 Financials

Revenues	\$73,358
Expenses	\$58,444
Total	\$ 14,914

YTD Financials

Revenue	\$508,186
Expense	\$531,929
Total	(\$ 23,743)

The year-to-date operating fund is in a deficit of \$24K. While no deficit is best, this amount is less than previous months and lower than last year at this time. Thank you to all who have kept their offerings steady through the summer months!

As we move into fall programs, expenses will increase.

Please review your personal giving and do a catch-up if needed. Thank you for all that you give.

Welcome back to autumn at Bethel! I am always thankful when we are together again after often being away for important rest, relaxation, and adventures in the summer. We have much to look forward to this fall – meaningful Sunday worship and learning for all ages, programming opportunities during the week (especially on Wednesdays), outreach opportunities, making new friends, and warm fellowship with each other in all our activities.

If you have been away from Bethel for a while, you have definitely been missed. You are welcome and needed and loved at Bethel.

If you haven't had a chance to play summer Bingo, there is still time to pick up a card at church and get a Bingo! Then tell someone in the office or one of the pastors to receive your prize. It's a fun activity to do alone or with family and friends.

Whether it has been a long time since you have been in church in person at Bethel or whether you have been there all summer, it will be so good to see you in September. As our fall programming begins, invite friends and neighbors to join you for worship at Bethel. Notice who around you does not have a church community. Simply invite them to "Come and see." Once they have come, I think they will return.

Paula Mathison

Congregation President