



Bethlehem Family and Friends,

Advent blessings to you all! I hope this latest newsletter finds you filled with the hope that Advent has a way of bringing. I invite you to take some time to read this newsletter early in the month. It is filled with ways that you can prepare your hearts and minds for Jesus to come. It offers you many different ways for you to gather with your family of faith to celebrate Advent, Christmas and even more. My hope and my prayer for you is that it can be a season of light, hope, and joy. But if, in the midst of it all, you find yourself needing a break, or needing someone to talk to in these busy days, I would welcome a chance to grab a cup of coffee or lunch with you.

You can reach me at my cell at 218-290-3982 or email me at [pastoramyblccf@gmail.com](mailto:pastoramyblccf@gmail.com)

One of my favorite authors, Joyce Rupp, has written "A Christmas Blessing" that I thought I might share part of with you. It is my prayer and hope for you this Advent and Christmas season:

*-May there be harmony in your relationships. May sharp words, envious thoughts, and hostile feelings be dissolved.*

*-May you give and receive love generously. May this love echo in your heart like the joy of church bells on a clear December day.*

*-May each person who comes into your life be greeted like Christ. May the honor given the Babe of Bethlehem be that which you extend to every guest who enters your presence.*

*-May the hope of this sacred season settle in your soul. May it be a foundation of courage for you when times of distress occupy your heart and mind.*

*-May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children be awakened within you. May it lead you to renewed awareness and appreciation of whatever you too easily take for granted.*

*-May the bonds of love for one another be strengthened as you gather with your family and friends around the table of festivity and nourishment.*

*-May you daily open the gift of your life and be grateful for the hidden treasures it contains.*

*-May the coming year be one of good health for you. May you have energy and vitality. May you care well for your body, mind, and spirit.*

*-May you go often to the Bethlehem of your heart and visit the One who offers you peace. May you bring peace into this world.*

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas dear ones. Thank you for walking this journey with me.

Your partner on the journey, *Pastor Amy*

## Ways to get involved at Bethlehem in the next few weeks...

**Our next Joyful Times meeting will be Thursday, Dec. 13 at BLC at 9:30am.** Please come and join us for coffee and fellowship and bring your ideas for new places that we could explore together!



On **January 23, All members and friends of Bethlehem are invited to a Potluck at Noon.** Bring a dish to share and come and fellowship with your friends and neighbors. Our speaker for the day will be Kathy Green, sharing her stories of climbing and hiking in various countries.



Bethlehem is once again helping families in need by providing them gifts and food. The gifts that are needed are on Christmas stars that are posted in the Fellowship Hall. **Please choose a star, buy the gift that the star asks for, and return it to the church. Gifts must be returned to the church by December 10.** Monetary donations are also welcome. If you have any questions, please contact Becky or Theresa.

Bethlehem will be having a **Live Nativity this Sunday, on December 3 from 4:30-6:00 pm**, and we are hoping that you will come check it out! The story will be shared and acted out approximately every 25 minutes. You get a chance to see the characters of the story and live animals too! All ages are welcome and encouraged to attend! Come and prepare your hearts for the coming Christ child!



If you are looking for a space that is calm and peaceful... if you are missing loved ones this season and need a place where you can be reminded you will not be apart forever...if you just need a space to breathe and be and listen to God speak...

**Come and join us for Quiet Christmas St. John's Lutheran at 4 pm on December 17. St. John's is located at 715 College St.**

**On December 10**, following worship, we will be celebrating Bethlehem's Danish heritage and all of our different ethnicities with **Christmas Around the World!** Come and enjoy **dancing around the Christmas tree, yummy Christmas treats**, and a **visit from Santa!** If you would like to help with this event, please sign up on the welcome table!





The holidays are here! Advent and Christmas can be a time of joy, love, and warmth, but it can be a season of loss, especially for those whose loved ones have died in the last year. Or, perhaps, the traditions and familiar smells and tastes tend to dig up past grief and make it more potent.

There are many ways we celebrate the birth of Christ as a congregation at Christmas. Whether it is witnessing to the Nativity story for our community, sharing Christmas gifts to those in need, lifting spirits through music in choir or caroling, dancing around the Christmas tree, and sharing in our favorite foods, we each have special traditions that make the holidays special. However, we cannot forget to tend to our need for silence, stillness, and contemplation. We must not forget that December also holds the Longest Night, or the Winter Solstice. We must not skip to the joy of Christmas without first processing our feelings of sadness, anxiety, restlessness, fear, and weariness.

When we allow ourselves to actually feel those heavy emotions in our bodies, share how we really feel with a trusted friend, or move through the tension by going on a cold, brisk walk, then, we actually make space in our bodies, minds, and spirits for the joy. In the first Christmas, Mary and Joseph, too, were burdened by new laws that threatened their safety, they didn't have a stable place to call home. They were estranged from their community because of Mary's unplanned pregnancy. There was no room in the warm, comfortable inn. Let us not forget the discomfort, despair, and disgrace of that first Christmas because the truth is, it actually seems to relate a lot more to our real lives today.

When we acknowledge this shadow side of the good events in life, they seem to have a little bit less tight grip on us. We are truly able to make room in our hearts for joy, like Mary and Joseph made room for Jesus in the stable. No circumstances, conditions, or comfort could compare to the pure joy of the Christ child and the powerful shift of hope he brought to the world. I hope you will open yourself up to true joy this Christmas. It does not come from things or traditions, but from Emmanuel, God with us. We can face any difficulty in life knowing and trusting we are not alone.

**There are a few special ways to get connected and tend to your soul this month:**

Join us for Caroling at Local Nursing Facilities, Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 10:30am-12:00 noon

Quiet Christmas, Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 4:00pm, St. John's Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls

Grief Group, Tuesday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 10:00am in the Gathering Spot

Longest Night At-Home Service, Thursday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, 8:00PM, ZOOM

Call the office or my cell phone (507) 995-1538 if you would like a communion brought to your home.

-Pastor Kristi, Visitation Pastor





Have you been trying to figure out your fit at Bethlehem and wondered how to get plugged in? Whether you are new to BLC or have been a member for life, if you are looking for a place to belong here, Pastor Amy is inviting you to join her at next month's Belonging Brunch, a place for you to come and share what you are interested in, and find ways to use your gifts in this place! **January's Belonging Brunch will take place on January 13th at 9:30 am.** Space is limited at each Belonging Brunch to 12 people, so sign up on the Welcome Table today!

In Bethlehem's recent past, we had a program called Tables of 8 that would gather in each other's homes once a month for fellowship.

We recognize that for various reasons, some folks might not want people in their homes, while others still enjoy it. So this January, we will be kicking off Grace Groups.

Grace Groups are **a group of people that meet together regularly for the purpose of building relationships with one another and encouraging one another along life's journey.**

Grace Groups will take place either in people's homes, at church, or at local restaurants, depending on what type of Grace Group you sign up for.

You can either sign up in person on the Welcome Table or at this link: [Grace Groups](#)



**Save the date to come and enjoy a morning of fellowship at our Winter Warm Up event!**

We will transform the Fellowship Hall into a tropical paradise to warm your mind, body, and soul with fun games, food & drink, and beachy atmosphere. We encourage everyone to wear Hawaiian shirts, sunglasses, etc. to worship and the warm up to join in the fun!

**All are welcome to attend at 10 am on Sunday, January 21!**

# Youth

## NEWS AND EVENTS



Come and see the Christmas story come to life, with live animals and more! **Sunday, December 3rd from 4:30-6:00 pm** a cast and crew of Bethlehem folks will bring the nativity story to life! Come and remember why we celebrate Christmas at all! Jesus is the reason for the season!

**Come and join us December 10 at 10 am** as we dance around the Christmas tree, eat lots of Christmas treats, and have a visit from Santa too! It's going to be a lot of fun...friends are welcome!



What are YOU doing Christmas Eve? Did you know that you could join us at:

**9 am-Cocoa and Carols** in the Fellowship Hall-come join us as we sing, hear a Christmas story, and begin our welcome of baby Jesus. Christmas Jammies or Christmas attire is encouraged!

**3 pm-Family Christmas Service**-come join us in the sanctuary for an interactive telling of the Christmas story and a small gift for you to take home too! All ages are encouraged to attend this service, and there will be candlelight (regular and battery powered candles) too!

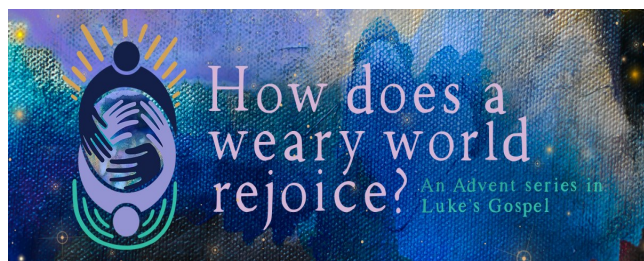
**7 pm-Traditional Christmas Service**-come join us in the sanctuary for a service filled with meaning and hope. The Bethlehem Choir will sing, there will be a traditional sermon, and communion will be served. Candlelight happens at this service as well.

**9 pm-Christmas Under the Stars**-come join us in the parking lot for drive-in worship, where we will sing Christmas songs (and hear the service over our car radios), hear the Christmas gospel, and then, if you choose, get out of your car and sing Silent Night under the stars! Christmas Jammies are welcomed at this late night service!



On **Sundays during Advent**, we will worship at **9 am** and be exploring the theme of **Immanuel: God with Us**. Each week will be centered around a gospel text, and we will walk through the themes of the Advent wreath candles. Our weekly themes will be:

- *Nov 26, Week 1: We have hope because God is with us.* Scripture: Matthew 1:1–17
- *Dec 3, Week 2: We have peace because God is with us.* Scripture: Matthew 1:18–25
- *Dec 10, Week 3: We have joy because God is with us.* Scripture: Luke 1:39–48
- *Dec 17, Week 4: We have love because God is with us.* Scripture: Luke 1:57–80



On **Wednesdays nights** we will gather first for **soup supper from 5:45-6:45 pm** for those who would like it. The proceeds from soup suppers this year will go towards the Youth Gathering next summer. Then we will gather for **Wednesday Midweek Worship at 7 pm**, where we will sing **Holden Evening Prayer** and be exploring the theme of **“How Does a Weary World Rejoice?”**.

Our weekly Wednesday themes will be:

- *Nov 29, Week 1: We acknowledge our weariness.* Scripture: Luke 1:1-23 and Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
- *Dec 6, Week 2: We find joy in connection.* Scripture: Luke 1:24-45 and Isaiah 40:1-11
- *Dec 13, Week 3: We allow ourselves to be amazed.* Scripture: Luke 1:57-66 and Psalm 126
- *Dec 20, Week 4: We sing stories of hope.* Scripture: Luke 1:46-55 and Luke 1:67-80

Our prayer would be that when your family joins us for any or all of these Advent worship opportunities, that they will give you a place to reconnect with the reason for the season, a space to slow down and be filled with the love of God for you, and a chance to be refilled with the hope that can only come from that tiny child in the hay.

May your Advent season be filled with hope, peace, joy and love, friends, and may your weary souls find rest in God’s greatest gift to you!

### **It’s The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year...**

Bethlehem is fortunate to have such a wonderful staff. If you would like to give a Christmas gift to our any of staff members, please do. We encourage you to put the staff member’s name on a card with your gift and deliver it to the church office or put it in their Christmas stockings that are hanging on the wall of the office! **We know words of affirmation and appreciation are a wonderful gift and that our staff treasure hearing what you appreciate about the ministry at Bethlehem.** Our staff members are Pastor Amy-our lead pastor, Pastor Kristi-our visitation pastor, Gabby-our community engagement coordinator, Hudson-our organist, Kelly-our administrative assistant, Brennan-our choir director, Patty-our custodian, and Noah-our worship tech. If you have any questions, please ask the Exec Team - Ellen Hermanson, Reed Hunemuller, Joan Christiansen, or Adam Froyum Roise. Thank you for remembering our staff this Christmas.





# Worship

WITH US ONLINE

Not able to join us for worship in person?  
No problem! All of our worship services can be  
found online on our church website at:

<http://www.bethlehemcf.org/online-worship.html>



## Prayer Chain

**To add yourself to the  
prayer chain team:**

Email Kelly at  
([officeblccf@gmail.com](mailto:officeblccf@gmail.com))

or call Kelly at the

church office (319-266-3541) and let her know  
that you would like to receive prayer chain  
emails.

**To add a loved one to the prayer list:**

Email Pastor Amy [pastoramyblccf@gmail.com](mailto:pastoramyblccf@gmail.com)  
or call Pastor Amy at the church office.



Would you like  
communion brought  
to you? **Call the  
church office, Pastor  
Amy or Pastor Kristi  
will be glad to come**

**and visit!** Call the office at 319-266-3541  
and we will have communion brought to your  
residence. May God bless you and keep you  
today and always!



### GIVING MADE EASY!

Scan the QR code with your smart  
phone to share your offering with  
Bethlehem.

### BETHLEHEM STAFF

Church phone: 319-266-3541

**Pastor Amy Eisenmann-Lead Pastor**

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**Pastor Kristi Grieder-Visitation Pastor**

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**Brennan Regan-Choir Director**

[bregan99@uni.edu](mailto:bregan99@uni.edu)

**Hudson Lourenço - Organist**

**Patty Nelson-Custodian**



## 2022-2023 CHURCH COUNCIL

**Ellen Hermanson-President**

319-573-0719

**Reed Hunemuller -Vice President**

319-277-6381

**Joan Christiansen- Treasurer**

319-269-5634

**Adam Roise - Secretary**

919-208-3171

**Mardy Holst 319-277-0328**

**Derek Kettle 608-314-4356**

**Sara Randall 319-269-2078**

**Rich Fisher 319-939-8055**

**Cindy Stow 319-290-8575**

**YouTube**

Live streaming

When you aren't able to join us in person, we hope  
you will join us on **Sunday mornings at 9 am and  
Wednesday Evenings at 7 pm** on our YouTube page at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/c/BethlehemLutheranCF>

December 2023



## Christmas Eve Worship Options



**9 am-Cocoa and Carols**-Join us for a relaxed gathering in the fellowship hall with the big Christmas tree and “fireplace” as we sing our favorite carols, hear a children’s story and share stories of our favorite traditions. Christmas Jammies are welcome!

**3 pm-Family Worship**-This service will be kid friendly as we hear the story of Christmas woven throughout worship. A service filled with scripture, song, communion, and candlelight. Hudson will be our musician at this service.

**7 pm-Contemplative Christmas**-This service will be a traditional Christmas service with a sermon, candlelight and communion. Our musicians will include Bethlehem Choir, Joelle Smith, Pastor Dan Mixdorf, Megan Hermanson, and Theresa Elverum.

**9 pm-Christmas Under the Stars**-Back by popular demand, we will once again gather “drive-in style” for a simple reading of the Christmas gospel, singing of a couple of Christmas songs and for those who wish to, we will gather outside under the stars in the parking lot to sing Silent Night. Feel free to wear your Christmas jammies! :)

Our Pastor

**Rev. Amy Eisenmann**  
**(218) 290-3982 cell phone**  
**(319) 266-3541 work phone**  
**[pastoramyblccf@gmail.com](mailto:pastoramyblccf@gmail.com)**

Our website:

**[www.bethlehemcf.org](http://www.bethlehemcf.org)**

Our YouTube Channel:

**Bethlehem Lutheran CF**

Our Facebook page:

**[www.facebook.com/  
Bethlehem-Lutheran-Church  
-ELCA-451552121584266](https://www.facebook.com/Bethlehem-Lutheran-Church-ELCA-451552121584266)**

Our Instagram page:

**[@bethlehemcf](https://www.instagram.com/bethlehemcf)**