



Bethlehem Family and Friends,

As we begin another calendar year together, we also begin another year of our ministry together. In some ways it is hard to believe that it has already been 4 years (or will be on January 19) that we have been together as church and pastor. In other ways, it feels like we have experienced a lot together, both good things and hard things that can't possibly just fit into 4 years.

As I began to pray and discern what might be our focus for 2024, I felt pulled towards the idea of belonging and have landed on the idea that we spend this year together working on what it means to **"Belong"**. I believe that to belong to something that is authentic to who we are is one of our deepest desires. **So this year we will be exploring what it means to belong to God, what it means to belong to Bethlehem, what it means to belong to each other.** My hope and prayer for us this year is that we might continue to move towards being a place where all people can find ways to belong that are authentic to who they are and who God is calling them to be.

This coming year you will see different ways to get involved, from small projects to big ideas, from things that encourage you to use your gifts to other things that might put you outside of your comfort zone. I hope you will be open to exploring them together.

This year we will be asking you to continue to step up and take leadership in the future of our congregation within and outside this community. I hope you will prayerfully discern which spaces are the right spaces for you to lead in.

This year we will be inviting you to deepen your faith, maybe through Bible Study, maybe through relationships with one another, and maybe through fellowship with people you don't know yet. I hope you will have the courage to go deeper and begin to know that this is truly a place where you belong.

Finally, dear ones, I would be remiss if I didn't end this note with a thank you. Thank you for your love and support the last four years. Thank you for your continued support as we move forward in ministry together. May God continue to keep us and bless us and the ministry we are doing together.

Your partner on the journey,  
*Pastor Amy*

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

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.

Also, **save the date for our February event, happening Feb 20: "Paint Out Loud with Kathy Cessna"**. Kathy Cessna has invited us into her home for a discussion of her art and abstract expressionism. Stay tuned for more info on this event coming soon!



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, you are invited to join Pastor Amy at the 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!

Grace Groups is a new opportunity starting this month! 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](#)



Join us for our upcoming Grief Group in the Gathering Spot on Tuesday, January 23 at 10:00-11:00 am.

This is an open topic group, which means you can come if you are grieving any type of loss (death of loved ones, loss of job, loss of relationship, etc). You do not need to register ahead of time, however, if you would like to be on our Grief Group email list for ongoing updates, email Pastor Kristi at [pastorkristi.grieder@gmail.com](mailto:pastorkristi.grieder@gmail.com) or call the church office.



January 21: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. WINTER WARM UP!

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 join in the fun! All ages are welcome and encouraged to join us!

Our next gathering of Wine, Women and the Word (women's Bible Study and fellowship) will take place on Thursday, January 25th at 6:00pm at the Gilmore Pub! All women and friends of Bethlehem are invited to join us! For more information, call the church office at 319-266-3541.



NewAldaya has asked for Bethlehem's help to host a few of the monthly birthday parties for residents this year. Hosting means that we provide 3-4 folks to set up (decorate tables, etc), serve treats and clean up. Treats are served from 2-3 pm and need to be handheld. This month the birthday party is Weds Jan 17 from 1:30-3 pm. If you would like to be a part of this new ministry, please call the church office and talk to Pastor Amy! Thanks for helping love and care for the residents of NewAldaya!

Bethlehem Family and Friends,

Thank you so much for the beautiful cards and gifts that you gave to us for Christmas this year! We appreciate your thoughtfulness and are so thankful that we get to be a part of Bethlehem's ministry! Blessings to you and your families in the New Year!

Sincerely, *Pastor Amy, Pastor Kristi, Kelly, Gabby, Hudson, Patty, Noah & Brennan*







Happy New Year!

January is a time to reset for year and reclaim our true, primary baptismal identity in Christ. This is our true source of belonging and connection. Gospel writer, Mark, tells the story of Jesus' own baptism like this:

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my Son, the Beloved;<sup>[d]</sup> with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:9-11)

I encourage you to find a way to remember your own baptism this January. It might be when you wake up each morning and let the water from your shower run down your face just a few extra minutes. It might be when you drink a glass of refreshing water as you go about your day. Perhaps you will travel to a place with an ocean or sea in the winter months and you can reflect on the power behind each wave and see it as a reminder of God's redeeming and unfailing love. Maybe you will go ice fishing or see lakes and ponds frozen with ice. You can sense that the movement and dynamic water invisible underneath as a reminder that God is still with you when it is hard to sense or see. There are so many ways to remember your baptism through this gift of water.

Without water, we would not survive. This water of grace also signifies our hope, for without hope we would also perish. January in Iowa can be one of the most intense and demanding months of our year. It's dark outside. The wind is bitterly cold. During this season of discipline and hibernation, be encouraged and know that God is with you, especially when we need it the most. God is our source of life, the only One who can revive and replenish our energy and hope. Let's begin our year with our baptism. Let's begin with our belovedness, which can never be taken away from you, regardless of what you encounter this coming year. Let us allow this precious gift of water and life bring us closer together to weather life's toughest seasons.

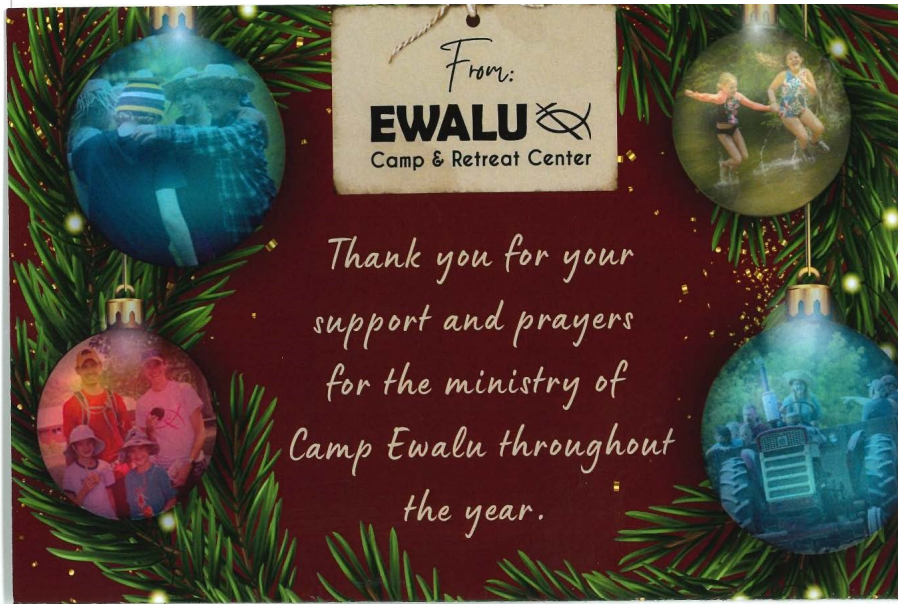
Happy New Year!

Pastor Kristi Grieder

*Receive this blessing:*

May God guide and walk with you through the beginning of this year, fill you with hope, and shower you with grace. In the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

# WE'VE GOT MAIL



Dear community of Bethlehem Lutheran,



In a time of conflict and uncertainty for so many of God's people, we remember that Jesus arrived in this world in the humblest form possible: a baby, born of displaced parents, lying in a manger.

Thanks to your support for Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, there is room at the inn for thousands who are seeking shelter.

WISHING YOU A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Your generosity is making a difference.  
Thank you for supporting the work  
of welcome!

-Your friends at  
LIRS

THANK YOU \* Thanks SO MUCH \* THANK YOU \* thank YOU



THE KRAMER FAMILY | Keith, Anita, Clayton & Kyle  
Pulling For Kyle

Image to left: A picture of Kyle, Deb  
Fulks' nephew whom we have been  
and continue to be praying for.



Do you like to write cards? If so, talk to Pastor  
Amy about a project this winter she could use  
your help with!

Brothers + Sisters of  
Bethlehem Lutheran,  
We thank you for  
your support and  
partnership.

Merry Christmas,  
Love M&S staff,  
Board + Volunteers



MAY THE LIGHT  
OF THE Lord SHINE  
ON YOU THIS  
Blessed Christmas.



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



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

Email Kelly ([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**

Pastor Amy's cell phone: 218-290-3982  
[pastoramyblccf@gmail.com](mailto:pastoramyblccf@gmail.com)

**Pastor Kristi Grieder-Visitation Pastor**

Pastor Kristi's cell phone: 507-995-1538  
[pastorkristi.grieder@gmail.com](mailto:pastorkristi.grieder@gmail.com)

**Kelly Rodriguez—Administrative Assistant**

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**Gabby Greco-**

**Community Engagement Coordinator**

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

**Noah Anderson-Worship Tech**

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

**Brennan Regan-Choir Director**

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

**Hudson Lourenço - Organist**

**Patty Nelson-Custodian**



**2023-2024**

**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**





**Join us for winter warm up,  
Sunday, January 21!**

Wear your fun summer and/  
or Hawaiian gear to worship,  
and then join the fun in the  
Fellowship Hall which will be  
turned into a tropical  
paradise as we take a break  
from winter with fun treats,  
games, fellowship and more!  
All are welcome!

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)