



CHIMES Newsletter

DECEMBER 2023 VOLUME 85, ISSUE 12

MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Advent greetings to you,

I really love the season of Advent for a variety of reasons, but one of the big reasons I enjoy this season so much is the way the past and present come together. During Advent we hear passages from scripture that remind us of the foretelling of the coming of the Messiah and the promises God has made to God's people over many generations. For a long time, these promises were all that God's people had to hold onto for hope. But these promises are fulfilled, not forgotten.

Remembering these promises, we then await Christ's coming into the world while also celebrating the ways Christ has already come to be with us on earth. God's promises continue to hold true and carry hope, even for us today because God's story of sacrificial love and abundant grace continues to unfold. We are a part of this great story. We are called and equipped to share that story, embody that love, and practice grace upon grace.

During this season, I invite you to reflect on God's great story and how you are invited into that same story. May the following words from Jan Richardson accompany you this Advent season.

With the promise of Advent hope,
Pastor Jaime Benson

"Blessing the Way" from *Circle of Grace* by Jan Richardson

With every step
you take,
this blessing rises up
to meet you.

It has been waiting
long ages for you.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 2

9 am Christmas Decorating and Sunday School rehearsal

DECEMBER 3

9 am Gifts of Bethlehem Concert and Silent Auction ends

DECEMBER 9

9 am to noon Cookie Walk

DECEMBER 11

6 pm SREA Meeting

DECEMBER 13

Food Pantry Helpers

DECEMBER 17

9 am Worship
10:15 am Sunday School
12 pm Christmas Caroling after a light lunch

DECEMBER 20

5:30 pm Blue Christmas

DECEMBER 21

6:30 pm Church Council Meeting

DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve Worship Services
2 pm (live streaming)
4 pm

DECEMBER 25

Office Closed

DECEMBER 31

9 am Lessons and Carols

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, ELCA
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Pastor: pastorbenson@blcportage.org
www.bethlehemLCportage.org

Look close
and you can see
the layers of it,

how it has been fashioned
by those who walked
this road before you,

how it has been created
of nothing but
their determination
and their dreaming,

how it has taken
its form
from an ancient hope
that drew them forward
and make a way for them
when no way could be
seen.

Look closer
and you will see
this blessing
is not finished,

that you are part
of the path
it is preparing,

that you are how
this blessing means
to be a voice
within the wilderness

and a welcome
for the way.



CHRISTMAS DECORATING – DEC 2

Save the Date: The large live Christmas tree will be decorated on Saturday December 2nd starting at 9 am. Come and join us in bringing in the holiday spirit and decorating the tree and the rest of our beautiful church. Many hands make lighter the work and more enjoyable the time



GIFTS OF BETHLEHEM CONCERT – DEC 3



Gifts of Bethlehem

Gifts of Bethlehem Concert is Sunday, Dec. 3rd at 9 am. People will be sharing their talents including readings, music, and skits. Sunday School children will be performing “The Good News Flash.” To join in the performance, sign up on the sheet in the Narthex or by contacting Tania Anderson or the church office. We look forward to seeing everyone!!

COOKIE WALK – DEC 9



Join us on December 9th from 9 am to noon for our annual cookie walk. You don't have to worry about doing holiday baking this year! Purchase your box of cookies right here at Bethlehem. Do you love to bake and want to help contribute towards the cookies? We'd love that too! For questions please contact JoAnne Genrich.

GIFTS OF BETHLEHEM SILENT AUCTION



Our Silent auction is live! You can bid online or in person at the church. All proceeds from the auction will be donated to other not-for-profit organizations in the Portage area.

<https://new.biddingowl.com/BethlehemGOB>

Thank you to the following companies for their generous donations of certificates:

General Engineering Company
Moose Jaw
Jimmy Johns
Nachos
Famous Dave's
Sal's Pizza
Popcorn Corner
Canape Sandwich
Starbucks

CHRISTMAS SERVICES



BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE



While Advent is a season of hope and Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel the stress of preparations and expectations around Christmas time. This year we will again have our **Blue Christmas service on Wednesday, December 20 at 5:30 pm** to hopefully provide a time and place of solace during this often-frenetic season surrounding the celebration of Christmas. We will come together to seek healing and give room to share grief, sadness, loneliness, or confusion when these emotions often feel out of place during the holidays. Please join us as you feel comfortable. **Pr. Jaime is looking for volunteers to read during this service. Please contact the office or Pr. Jaime.**

POINSETTIAS FOR DECORATING

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

Once again, we will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with poinsettias in the Chancel. You may order a poinsettia at a cost of \$12.00 per plant. All orders must be received in the Church Office by Wednesday, December 6th. The plants may not be taken until after the 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship Service.

Poinsettia Plant

Number of plants _____

Plant Color: Please circle your color choice.
Red White Red/White Bi-Color
Christmas Mouse (Pictured below)

In Honor of _____
In Memory of _____
Given by _____
Total amount enclosed: _____



HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP



GIVING TREE SECRET SANTA
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10TH
10:00am - 12:00pm

BLC Youth 9th-12th grade are encouraged to join us as we shop for and wrap gifts requested from the local community giving tree(s). We will also be making holiday cards for local assisted living/nursing home residents.

DONATIONS NEEDED:

Wrapping paper, clear tape, and bows. We have received a \$250 Thrivent grant to shop with but additional donations appreciated!

RSVP to Megan by Friday, Dec. 8th
youthfamblc@gmail.com



CONFIRMATION

UPCOMING CONFIRMATION
CLASS SERVICE PROJECTS:

Holiday Cards & Gifts for local Assisted Living Residents
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6TH
6:30PM-8:00PM AT CHURCH

Salvation Army Bell Ringing
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13TH
6:00PM-8:00PM
GROUPS AT WALMART & FESTIVAL FOODS

SIGN UP FOR A ONE OR TWO-HOUR SHIFT.
CONTACT TANIA ANDERSON
PARISHASSOCIATE@BLCPORTAGE.ORG

SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE

We hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving.

On December 2nd, all Sunday School students will meet at 9am for play practice, crafts and lunch. As part of Gifts of Bethlehem on Sunday, December 3rd, all our talented students will perform in the play “The Good News Flash”! The children have been hard at work learning their songs and parts and can’t wait for everyone to see it.

We will be hosting a potluck and ask for all church families whose last name starts with A-G to bring Dessert, H-P sides, bagels, muffins, Q-Z main dish. Please bring it to the Fellowship Hall by 9 on December 3rd. If you would be available to help with set-up, clean up, or serving please let us know.

Don’t forget our last lesson before Christmas break is on December 17th where we will learn about John the Baptist Proclaims Jesus’ Coming-John 1:6-8, 19-28. Our first day of class in the New Year will be January 7th.

We hope you all have a Very Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year.

We are very grateful to have your child/ren in Sunday School this year. If you have any questions, please contact Jeanette Gessner.

SCRIP



Do Your Christmas Shopping with SCRIP!

Scrip is a fundraising program where you can purchase gift cards for many different vendors and a portion of each sale is sent back to the church. As the holidays are approaching, you can get some shopping done and support Bethlehem at the same time! This is an easy way to support the church while purchasing cards that you already use or need!

See our "Giving" page on our website for more information. Order early too so they can be delivered in time for Christmas. Contact Carla Gerhardt with any questions.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Due to pricing increases we are moving away from fresh altar flowers. Ginny Paulson will be making seasonal silk arrangements for the altar. You can still honor people and events by making a \$20 donation to the church, we will continue to list the information in our weekly bulletin. There will be forms available in the narthex.



NEW MEMBERS



We would like to welcome the following individuals who joined our church last month. Be sure to say hello and introduce yourself if you haven't already.

Justin Cave
Mercedes Cave
Joe Jackowski
Charlie Olson
Shirley Stibb-Banks
Cary Dahl

OPEN PERSONNEL SEAT

Do you have gifts and/or experience in personnel related matters such as maintaining an employee handbook, hiring policies, and job descriptions? Do you have a passion for creating a positive employee atmosphere here at Bethlehem? If so, please consider this volunteer opportunity! There is a seat available on the personnel committee and we would love to have you! The committee meets at most a handful of times per year and guides/advises on employee best practices. Below please find a description of the Personnel Committee:



It shall handle all employee related matters, specifically the employee handbook, hiring policies and procedures, and job descriptions. It will follow all duties written in Personnel Committee description. Members of the Personnel Committee will not hold a concurrent seat on the Church Council. The Treasurer will a member ex officio.

If you are interested, please contact Pastor Jaime or one of the current members, Robin Kvalo and Barb Olson-Rothwell.

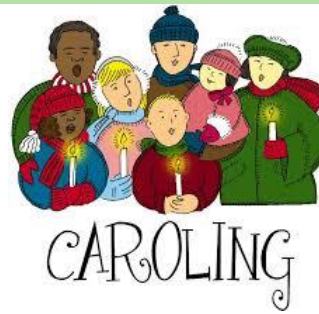


ELCA GOOD GIFTS

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we believe that God is calling us into the world – together. And with generous, loving hands, we can make a difference. Again, this year we are hoping to make that difference with the Good Gifts Giving Tree. ELCA Good Gifts is your opportunity to provide critical support to the ministries and programs that mean the most to you and the people you love. In the entryway to church will be a tree with ornaments. Each ornament will have a gift you can contribute towards. How it works:

1. Select an ornament off the tree – ***it's yours to take home***
2. Two ways to give: a. Put your money in a Good Gifts envelope (they will be near the tree) with your name, envelope number, and dollar amount and turn it in with your normal offerings or into the office. Checks should be made out to Bethlehem. At the end of Advent, we will send the money to the ELCA. OR,
b. You can visit <https://goodgifts.elca.org/> and contribute directly to the ELCA
3. If you are giving this gift in honor of someone, there are cards available next to the tree to let them know of your contribution.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING



As Advent begins and we prepare to remember our Lord's coming into our world, the choir will be sharing their musical gifts. We will also be sharing our hearts and singing voices with those in the church and community as we go

Christmas Caroling on Saturday December 17th. Join us in spreading some Christmas cheer! After worship some refreshments will be served. We are planning to depart the church around 12 pm and we will be caravanning to a variety of homes and care facilities. We will wrap up around 2:30 pm. Everyone is welcome including children



Bethlehem Lutheran Church







Profit and Loss Comparison

November 1-23, 2023

	TOTAL				
	NOV 1-23, 2023	NOV 1-23, 2022 (PY)	OCT 1-23, 2023 (PP)	JAN 1 - NOV 23, 2023 (YTD)	JAN 1 - NOV 23, 2022 (PY YTD)
▼ Income					
▶ Income	16,276.30	15,660.96	18,626.00	245,352.35	253,870.28
▶ Other Income	9,484.16	6,354.73	3,958.00	63,313.82	19,926.01
Total Income	\$25,760.46	\$22,015.69	\$22,584.00	\$308,666.17	\$273,796.29
GROSS PROFIT	\$25,760.46	\$22,015.69	\$22,584.00	\$308,666.17	\$273,796.29
▶ Expenses	\$38,747.76	\$15,985.01	\$13,201.68	\$294,137.93	\$242,266.96
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$ -12,987.30	\$6,030.68	\$9,382.32	\$14,528.24	\$31,529.33
▶ Other Income	\$2,100.00	\$2,100.00	\$3,050.00	\$28,365.00	\$30,031.09
▶ Other Expenses	\$2,282.10	\$3,050.92	\$2,796.85	\$28,322.93	\$28,321.85
NET OTHER INCOME	\$ -182.10	\$ -950.92	\$253.15	\$42.07	\$1,709.24
NET INCOME	\$ -13,169.40	\$5,079.76	\$9,635.47	\$14,570.31	\$33,238.57

Cash basis Thursday, November 23, 2023 10:41 AM GMT-06:00







December 2023 WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Date	Usher	Reader	Video Production	Communion Assistant	Communion Assistant	Altar Guild	Acolyte	Music	Coffee Hour
Sun 12/3 9 am	Gifts of Bethlehem	Gifts of Bethlehem	Ben Rudolph	Gifts of Bethlehem	Gifts of Bethlehem	Gifts of Bethlehem	Gifts of Bethlehem	Gifts of Bethlehem	Sunday School
Flowers:									
Wed 12/6 5:30 pm					Cheryl Hebel	Cheryl Hebel	Beau Grosklaus	Sam	
Sun 12/10 9am	Jim Crawford	Robin Kvalo		Kathryn Crawford	Ginny Paulson	Ginny Paulson	Leah Haroldson	Sam	Quilters
Flowers:									
Wed 12/13 5:30 pm					Judy Donahue	Judy Donahue	Claire Langan	Jody	
Sun 12/17 9am	Kory Anderson	Ginny McNeal			Darlene Anderson	Darlene Anderson	Hartley Bell	Jody	Steve & Ginny McNeal
Flowers: Steve & Ginny McNeal in Honor of 50th Wedding Anniversary									
Wed 12/20 5:30 pm					Kathy Lawrence	Kathy Lawrence	Blue Christmas	Carla	
Sun 12/24 2 pm	Ann Ciske	Mark Teslik	Lori and Brady Cox		Nancy Loether	Nancy Loether		Carla	
Sun 12/24 4 pm	Dianna Bush	Nancy Buckley		Nancy Buckley	Lisa Cook	Lisa Cook	Colin Langan	Sam	
Wed 12/27 5:30 pm									
Sun 12/31 9am	Marie Rohrbacher	Del Molden	Jeff Melby			Kerry Melby	Leah Haroldson	Carla	



Looking for volunteers! Contact the Church office to volunteer.

December 2023

General Church Grounds × → Conference Room × → Music Room × → Fellowship Hall ×						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
 3 Gifts of Bethlehem 5:30am Online Silent Auction Ends 9:00am Gift's of Bethlehem - Chil... +2	4 10:30am Tai Chi 1:00pm Card Club	5 9:00am Quilters	6 10:30am Tai Chi 5:30pm Worship 6:30pm Confirmation 	7	Dec 1 10:30am Tai Chi	2  9:00am Decorating for Christmas 9:00am Gifts of Bethlehem Rehearsal
10 9:00am Worship 10:00am HS Youth Service Project	11 10:30am Tai Chi 1:00pm Card Club 6:00pm SREA Meeting	12 9:00am Quilters	13 Food Pantry Helpers 10:30am Tai Chi +2	14	15 10:30am Tai Chi	9 9:00am Cookie Walk 
17  Christmas Caroling 9:00am Worship 10:15am Sunday School	18 10:30am Tai Chi 1:00pm Card Club 6:30pm SRA Meeting	19 9:00am Quilters	20 10:00am Chimes Articles Due 10:30am Tai Chi 5:30pm Blue Christmas Worship 	21 6:30pm Church Council 	22 10:30am Tai Chi	23
24 2:00pm Christmas Eve Worship 4:00pm Christmas Eve Worship 	25 10:30am Tai Chi 1:00pm Card Club	26 9:00am Quilters	27 10:30am Tai Chi	28	29 10:30am Tai Chi	30
31 9:00am Lessons and Carols	