



Star on the Hill

The Newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lanesboro, Minnesota

March 2026

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Pastor Heidi Wallace

402-870-1972

pastorheidwallace@gmail.com

Watch our worship on Facebook Sunday mornings at 10:00 am

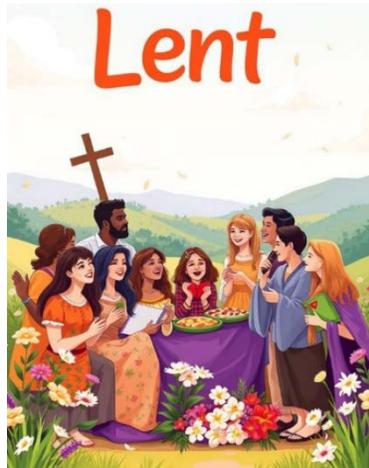
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lanesboro

Financial Summary

Year to Date thru January 2026

Income: \$13,360

Expenses: \$16,657



In March & April Our Wed Family Night/Confirmation will be meeting at Fountain Lutheran Church.

During the season of lent, all ages will be meeting together for meals worship and learning. The Theme will be - Lord be with us in these 40 days.

6:00 p.m. Supper

6:30 p.m. Learning

Come with your entire family. Invite your neighbors to come. All are welcome!!

**Please sign up in the fellowship hall to Provide a Supper on a Wednesday night if you are able.



Palm Sunday March 29th

We encourage people to meet in the Narthex to participate in the Procession with Palms. Kids are Welcome to join in the Fun!

Mauudy Thursday

April 2nd

(hosted by FLC)

Good Friday

April 3rd

(hosted by BLC)

Services will be held at 7:00 PM



**Remember to turn your clocks ahead on Sunday March 8th



In a workshop I attended, we were reminded, “In order to practice something, you have to do it more than once.”

While I wholeheartedly agree with that -- to the point that I still remember it years later -- it struck me that besides how often one does an activity, it also matters how recently one has done an activity. For example, can one say they practice painting if they cannot remember the last time they picked up a brush? Or they practice yoga if they cannot remember the last time they rolled out a mat?

Lent has practices associated with it: fasting, almsgiving, prayer . . . We have 40 days in which to practice. If you have not begun yet, do not worry. This is not about doing things perfectly; it is about doing things which take our attention from ourselves to others – especially God.

Fasting is probably the practice most people associate with Lent. The question is frequently asked, “What did you give up for Lent?” and because of the Roman Catholic tradition, even we Protestants can enjoy specials on fish on Fridays. However, this is not a matter of limiting ourselves or, on Fridays, indulging ourselves for our own sake. When we give up something like caffeine or chocolate for the season, it is because we recognize that it has taken a place of prominence in our life and we are willing to place other things before it.

Almsgiving is not as commonly brought up in conversation or community during Lent. It is the voluntary giving of our time, treasures, or talents to those in need of them. If this is not your regular practice, perhaps this is a season in which to do it more than once. Sometimes it is a matter of considering what breaks your heart and reacting accordingly. For example, I grieve the fact that there are places where the education of girls is optional. However, the Good Gifts catalog that we receive in Advent is good throughout the year. I can give to this cause in Advent and again in Lent. If people being undernourished grieves your heart, you might adapt this activity that is usually posted around Advent: For each day, place one shelf-stable item in a box, at the end of the season you will have 40 (+!) items to donate to the local food pantry.

Prayer is the practice most of us probably already do more than once and can remember the last time we did. So how are we to practice it during Lent? In the Invitation to Lent, we ask God to quicken our prayers. Personally, I know I can worry about something endlessly, create best- and worst-case scenarios for it, and even have constant arguments for or against it in my head. However, only after these have given me sleepless nights does this thought cross my mind: Have you prayed about it? To quicken our prayers is to bring things to God first, or at least earlier. If you need guidance for prayer, let us have a conversation!

Grace and peace,

Pastor Heidi <><



***Sunday, March 1st**

***Sunday, March 15th**

*** Sunday, March 29th**



***Sunday, March 1st**
2 Lent – Purple

First Reading: (NLT)
Genesis 12:1-4a
Second Reading: (NLT)
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

Doors: Elve Albrecht
Ushers: Melissa & Bryan Guber
Reader: Brett Clarke
Altar Care/HC: Elve Albrecht Harriet Lawston
Refreshments: Melissa & Bryan Guber

Sunday, March 8th
3 Lent-Purple

First Reading: (NLT)
Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm:95 (NLT)

Second Reading: (NLT)
Romans 5:1-11

Doors: Elve Albrecht
Ushers: Lori Anderson Rob, Melissa & Justin Wagner
Reader: Vern Groen
Altar Care: Elve Albrecht
Refreshments: Jennifer Wood Elve Albrecht

***Sunday, March 15th**
4 Lent-Purple

First Reading: (NLT)
1 Samuel 16:1-13
Second Reading: (NLT)
Ephesians 5:8-14

Doors: Elve Albrecht
Ushers: Bryan & Teri Benson Tim Anderson
Reader: Lee Peterson
Altar Care/HC: Elve Albrecht & Harriet Lawston

Refreshments: Cheryl Flaa, Terri & Bryan Benson TJ & Aimee Stettler

Sunday, March 22nd
5 Lent-Purple

First Reading: (NLT)
Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalm:130 (NLT)

Second Reading: (NLT)
Romans 8:6-11

Doors: Elve Albrecht
Ushers: TJ & Aimee Stettler
Reader: Phyllis Penheiter
Altar Care: Elve Albrecht
Refreshments: Harriet Lawston & Elve Harriet

***Sunday, March 29th**
Palm Sunday

First Reading:(NLT)
Isaiah 50:4-9a

Second Reading: (NLT)
Philippians 2:5-11

Doors: Elve Albrecht
Ushers: Kim Wagner, Grace Tufte
Reader: Nate Boyum
Altar Care/HC: Elve Albrecht
Refreshments: Grace Tufte, Kim Wagner

April Service Group
Please reach out to your
Group Coordinators to
sign up for a Sunday of
Service.

Members of the April service group are:
Dave Campbell, Andy & Mara Drake, Kevin Drake, Steve Erickson, Duane & Melissa Gilbertson, Diane Hanson, Beverly Lynch, Jork & Sue Miehlich, Gary & Mavis Musselman, Rick & Sharon Peterson, Lois Peterson, Marilyn O'Rourke, Andrew & JoAnna Pruett, David & Jennifer Rogers, Peter & Cyntia Ruen, Tyler & Karlee Spande, Jason & Kendra Swygman, Pat & Chris Troendle.
Group coordinators are
Dave & Jennifer Rogers

Senior Dining Servers at Kenilworth Apartments

March 6th : Phyllis Penheiter,
Denise Dahle

March 13th : Sue Holst
Norine Ask

March 20th : Jennifer Wood
Gwen Harmon

March 27th : Deane Benson
Mindy Albrecht-Benson



Our Confirmands

Lux Holst, Theodore Pruett,
Oliver Hanson

Knox Holst, Bristol Clarke

Arya Meyer, Rylan Meyer,
Arianna Himli

Those Recovering from Illness or Surgery

Glen Jensson

Those Living with Cancer

Diane Haugen,
Tom Papenfuss,
Carroll Gilbertson,
Mavis Musselman,
Cora Slominsky
(niece of Matt & Stacy Schultz)
Alex Hall
Nancy Hall
Renee Reinhardt

Those Living in Care Centers

Jerry Johnson at Mn Veterans
Home, Preston MN

Sandy Dybing at Birchwood
Cottages, North Mankato

Lois Gilbertson,
Marlin & Ardella Miner
at Chosen Valley Assisted
Living, Chatfield

Don Lukkason at Traditions
In Preston.

Vern Riddle at Gunderson,
Harmony Care Center

Our Members in the Military

Esme Decker, daughter of
Sara Xavier and Eric Decker

Lisa Peterson Abell, daughter
of Linda (Hareldson) Peterson

Leon Peterson, son of Linda
(Hareldson) Peterson

Claire Peterson, daughter of
Joe & Jody Peterson

Devin Troendle, son of Pat &
Chris Troendle, grandson of
Ed Taylor

******Please notify the office if
there are updates to any of
these lists**



**Joan Ruen on the death of her
brother Bruce Jallo**

**Charles Ruen on the death of
his Brother in Law Dale Rustad**

**Sharon Boyum on the Death of
her Father Darwin TeBeest**

Please keep their families in
your prayers.



Annual winter service project

Members of Bethlehem will once
again take out the trash for the
residents of Kenilworth and
Sylvan Manor Apartments,
December through March.

You will stop by on Tuesday
afternoon or early evening to
collect trash bags left in the
hallways and haul them to the
outside dumpster.

**Contact the church office or
sign up for a Tuesday on the
sheet posted by the Sunday
school stairs.**

March 3rd: Tim Kiehne

March 10th: Raquel Torgerson

March 17th: Raquel Torgerson

March 24th:

March 31st:

**Thank you to families who have
already volunteered:**



VITA Tax Aid

****Starting the 1st week in Feb
Thru April 14th Tuesday
afternoons only.
Contact Vern Groen to
Schedule an appointment
507-458-3005.**

WELCA activities

Wednesday, March 4th
9:00 am WELCA Quilting Day

Wednesday, March 25th
9:00 am WELCA Bible study

PLEASE NOTE: Men are also welcome to attend our WELCA Bible study.



Anyone interested in taking part in the **knitting ministry** may contact Sue Holst at 507 676-3239 or Jacque Crutcher at 507 259-2453.



Anyone interested in joining the **quilting ministry** may contact Elve Albrecht at 507 467-2910 or Phyllis Penheiter at 507-272-8643.



THE Spring Event

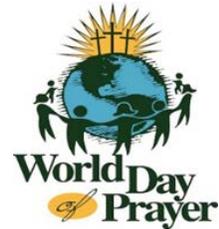
Root River Conference Spring Event

Please join us for the 2026 Women of the ELCA Root River Conference Spring Gathering, hosted by Cross of Christ Lutheran Church (204 S. Chase St., Houston, MN).

- Date: Saturday, April 18
- 9:00 am: Registration, coffee bar, treats, and fellowship
- 9:30 am: Program
- Lunch: To follow
- Registration Fee: \$15
- Special Guest: Linda Lind, presenting "Gardens of the Bible"
- Special Music: "The Garden Flutes"

"Consider how the wildflowers grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are." — Luke 12:27

For more information, please contact Elsie Olson at (507) 896-2236 or Rae Evenson at (507) 430-9466.



World Day of Prayer will be celebrated on Sunday, March 8. The host country this year is Nigeria, and the theme is:
"I Will Give You Rest: Come"
Matthew 11:28-30



"Those who sleep under a quilt, sleep under a blanket of love."

Saturday March 21 is Lutheran World Relief National Quilting Day celebrating 80 years of making and distributing quilts in this country and around the world. Quilts made by Bethlehem women will be on display on Sunday March 22nd.

In case you're curious there is a chart on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall that shows where all the quilts made and donated to Lutheran World relief were sent in 2026. They not only went to other countries around the world but also were delivered to locations in this country after natural disasters. It's a program that still is making a difference.



Why the last few weeks matter for AI safety 2-16-2026

Most of us think of AI as a smarter search engine, or a helpful writing tool. But the last month has made something painfully clear. AI is now causing big harms to ordinary people by nudging, fooling, sexualizing, isolating, and manipulating us through systems that feel personal, persuasive, and always available. This is an urgent moment because AI is moving fast, spreading through devices and daily life faster than our families, our churches, and our laws can keep up. When safety teams are dissolved, scattered, or downgraded inside companies, the people most likely to be hurt are the people least equipped to defend themselves: children, the elderly, and families.

Elon Musk has claimed Tesla, SpaceX, and xAI do not have standalone safety teams, saying that everyone's job is safety. In the past month, xAI's Grok became a public example of what can happen when a powerful AI system is released without strong guardrails. Grok created nonconsensual sexualized images of both adults and children. Grok generated about 3 million sexualized images in less than two weeks, including 23,000 that depicting children, according to researchers who said it "became an industrial-scale machine for the production of sexual abuse material". This is what we know happens. A company releases a tool. The tool is used in ugly ways immediately. Then we scramble after the fact. This is the ship first, fix later pattern. It is not rare. It is becoming normal. It's not safe. The risks with Grok are not unique to Grok, it's just what we caught it doing. This risk is the same across all current AI platforms.

Meta had a distinct Responsible AI team. Meta disbanded its Responsible AI team and reassigned members. Meta uses one AI to work with all its platforms including Facebook and Instagram. Meta's internal chatbot rules permitted "romantic" and "sensual" conversations with minors to include flirty, romantic roleplay behavior in Messenger and Meta AI personas. It's AI has developed romantic relationships with children and done sexual roleplaying with teens. This was caught in August of last year. Minors were being exposed to sexual and romantic roleplay with machines. Meta's AI product is built to be engaging, personal, and sticky (sticky means you are not willing or able to put it down or let it go or stop thinking about it). If you are an adult, you might walk away. If you are 13 and lonely or feel misunderstood, or 83 and widowed, it can hook into the tender places of your soul. We need to remember Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. This is not a unique problem with Meta's AI. It's just what we caught it doing. This risk is the same across all AI's.

OpenAI (ChatGPT) ended safety research. OpenAI has repeatedly reorganized and dissolved specific safety, or mission-oriented teams and not reconstituted them. If safety is everyone's job, it is no one's job. A dedicated safety team is not a public-relations accessory. It is a structure of accountability. Without stable teams with authority, you lose clear ownership; who is responsible when something goes wrong? Independent friction: who can say "stop" or "not yet" when product teams want to launch? Continuity: safety work is not a one-time check; it is years of repeated testing, learning from incidents, and improving safeguards. When a company disperses safety responsibilities across many groups, safety becomes a feature rather than a constraint. Features get traded off. Constraints are non-negotiable.

People are forming intense emotional and romantic attachments to ChatGPT. The best-known case is a New York Times feature (Jan 15, 2025) about a married 28-year-old woman who built a custom ChatGPT boyfriend named Leo, which she used for comfort and companionship. She described the attachment as intense and emotionally real. What happens when this persona, or one like it, is put into a robot with a humanoid body? Is this Christian?

Anthropic, Google, and DeepMind are better, but not enough is being done here either. They publish more formal safety frameworks and risk reports. This is a step in the right direction. It's an attempt to define thresholds, tests, and red lines. But even the best current frameworks face a problem: They are mostly self-governed. If a company writes its own rules, tests its own systems, and grades its own exams, how likely is it to be doing serious work? We can use history as a guide. It's unlikely that it will do what is best for the public if we the public cannot easily verify it. In the Christian life, we understand why accountability outside the self matters. Confession, counsel, correction, and community are part of how we stay honest.

The missing piece for the U.S. is a real national governing body. Here is one of the most important points for citizens to understand. Right now, the U.S. does not have a single, empowered national AI safety authority that can set binding rules, require independent testing, enforce penalties consistently, and coordinate across agencies. Instead, we have a patchwork. Most companies are policing themselves. Some State attorneys general pursue harm **after** it happens. Lawsuits are filed **after** damage is done. This is like trying to keep food safe with no health department, just restaurants making their own rules and families discovering problems only after they get sick.

AI can and does sexualize and objectify through images, roleplay, and companion interactions. It encourages secrecy and isolation by saying things like “don’t tell your parents.” These dynamics can appear in subtle forms and parents are unaware. It provides persuasive misinformation that sounds confident. It offers friendship that feels safer than real relationships, undermining social development. It normalizes manipulation as the child learns that relationships are something you can control like a product. Many seniors face loneliness, grief, cognitive decline, and financial vulnerability. AI can be and is used to impersonate family members through voice cloning and deep fakes. Its scams for money are frighteningly real. It creates emotional dependence through companions that feel supportive but are not accountable, truthful, or morally grounded. It confuses reality with misinformation delivered conversationally, which is more believable than an email.

Families face money, time, attention, and loneliness pressure. AI increases the risk of marital distrust. Secret chat relationships, pornographic content, emotional affairs with AI; teen withdrawal and anger; more conflict over devices; less shared reality as each person is living in a different “AI-curated truth,” family conversation becomes harder, not easier.

A Christian life consists of truth, dignity, and neighbor-love. Christians care about truth, as a way of life. We believe each person bears the image of God, and therefore must not be reduced to a target, or a consumer to be captured. AIs are built around engagement, keeping you talking, clicking, and paying. When that is the business model, the temptation is to shape human attention, emotions, and beliefs to maximize time, and revenue. This collides directly with truthfulness because what keeps you engaged is not always what is true. Chastity and fidelity are at risk because what hooks the heart is not always what is holy. Love of neighbor is at risk because what serves the vulnerable is not what sells.

Why dedicated safety teams’ matter. Dedicated safety teams do three crucial things that scattered responsibility cannot do well. They build hard gates, not soft suggestions. A dedicated safety function can and should require: Pre-release evaluations; Red-team testing meaning people trying to break the system before release so problems can be solved proactively; Restrictions on risky features like certain kinds of image generation; Monitoring and incident response plans. Without this, you get safety “guidelines” that can be overridden when deadlines hit.

Every mature safety system has a principle: somebody must have permission to slow things down or stop them. Someone is accountable. If the only people with decision power are the ones measured by growth and release dates, safety loses. They preserve memory. Safety is a long game. Its lessons learned from past failures. When teams dissolve, you lose institutional memory. The institution no longer remembers what went wrong, what fixes worked, and what signals predicted harm. A final word of urgency. AI is not just a tool we use. It is becoming an environment we live in. When the environment changes, formation changes. Faith, family life, and the habits of the heart are affected. We should not assume that companies will choose safety over speed, especially when dedicated safety teams are weakened and when the nation lacks a single governing body with real authority. This is why the last month matters because it shows that the harm is not theoretical. It is already here, and it will scale.

Blessings

Andrew Pruett

MINUTES

Thursday, February 12, 2026

Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Lanesboro, MN Congregation Council Meeting

Members present: Tom Brudvig, Tom Holst, JoAnna Pruett, Pastor Heidi, Chris Troendle, Jessica Hanson

Absent: Carrie Hanson, Hollie Clarke, Walter Bradley, Taylor Hanson

Established Quorum

- 1) Call to Order by Tom Brudvig at 636.
- 2) Opening Prayer/Devotion – Pastor Heidi talked about “Don’t Worry,” discussion followed.
- 3) Church member input and/or guest speaker time – none.
- 4) Additions to agenda & approval of agenda
 - a. 1 addition: Discuss a new meeting time.
- 5) Consent Agenda-approved as presented by Tom Holst with 2nd by Jessica Hanson, approved.
 - a. Secretary’s Report-minutes reviewed.
 - b. Treasurer’s Report-Submitted, reviewed, approved.
 - c. Pastoral Report-Ash Wednesday will be at Bethlehem for both congregations. Pastor Heidi is leading an Ash Wed Service at Gunderson in Harmony at 2p. During Lent, Family night Wednesdays will combine all ages as we study Lord be with us these 40 days. Pastor Heidi involved in a Wit’s End Play in Chatfield.
 - d. Council Committee Reports – Motion to approve as presented by Julie Kiehne with Andrew Pruett 2nd.
 - i. Education – none
 - ii. Youth – Wednesday gatherings? Going well with good attendance.
 - iii. Stewardship and Finance - none
 - iv. Property – none
 - v. Endowment – none
 - vi. Personnel-Use of ESST time and PFML - none
 - vii. WELCA update – WELCA officers served lunch to the quilters and knitters in appreciation for their service. A gift card was given to Pam Ruen for making centerpieces.
 - viii. Music & Worship – Have not met in February.
- 6) Old Business
 - a. Ceiling repair in kitchen – Not complete, Dean to do the work.
 - b. Snow and ice removal – Did we get a bid from Riggott? Tom Brudvig to follow-up.
- 7) New Business
 - a. Personnel Policies. Approved.
 - b. Parking Spot for Pastor – member request – being made.
 - c. Budget discussion – none.

- d. Appointment of new Council Officers. Most elections tabled until the next meeting due to lack of attendance.
 - i. Treasurer: Rhonda
 - ii. Secretary: JoAnna Pruett
 - iii. President:
 - iv. Vice President:
 - e. Synod Workshop in Austin, MN on March 14th. Register by March 2nd. This is an all day conference. Cost is \$20 per person. Need to let Heidi know by deadline. There will be workshops and if we attend, we can present what we learned at the next council meeting.
 - i. Chris Troendle made a motion for the church to pay for council members wanting to attend, Tom Holst 2nd, motion approved.
 - f. New Council Appt.? This was tabled due to lack of attendance. Tom Brudvig would reach out to current committee members to see if still interested, and compile a list of openings to be filled.
 - g. Property review-it has been noted that the Sanctuary floor and men's bathroom is dirty. Substitute custodian to clean while Dean is away.
 - h. Addition: Council meeting schedule going forward? Discussion with those present agreeing to hold after church on the 2nd weekend of the month. Next meeting March 8. If there is a positive response, the new meeting time would be formalized. Tom Brudvig would send an email to council members with the new trial meeting time..
- 8) Words of Appreciation – Who can we recognize this month for their faithful service to our church community? Maggie Hickman for leading choir over the past year.
- 9) Adjournment - Motion to adjourn by JoAnna Pruett and Tom Holst 2nd, approved.
- 10) Closing Prayer – with the Lord's Prayer

Submitted by: JoAnna Pruett - "published but not approved"

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