



Star on the Hill

The Newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lanesboro, Minnesota April 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 February 2026

Income: \$26,227
Expenses: \$30,750



Maundy Thursday

April 2nd
(hosted by FLC)

Services will be held at
7:00 PM

Good Friday

April 3rd
(hosted by BLC)

Services will be held at
7:00 PM

****Easter Sunday****

April 5th
FLC: 8:30 AM
BLC: 10:00 AM

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.



At the recent Councils as Leaders event, Bishop Regina Hassanally explained why she frequently addresses correspondence to "The people of God in the Southeastern Synod of Minnesota". It is because in 1 Peter 2:10 we read, "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (NRSVUE)

We are God's people: called, gathered, enlightened, sanctified, transformed. No longer what we were not, but what we are – forever and ever. Amen.

You will sometimes hear me refer to us as the Easter people. This is not only true the Day of Resurrection (Easter Sunday), but also throughout the season of Easter (seven weeks), and every day of our lives as God's people.

There will be those who do not attend worship on Good Friday. It is a day of darkness, pain, suffering, and death. We have removed the light of Christ from the sanctuary. We focus on an instrument of torture: the cross. And we hear Jesus' words of agony.

Perhaps people are right to not attend worship on Good Friday. The realities of darkness, pain, suffering, and death are not foreign to us. We live, for all intents and purposes, in a Good Friday world where those realities are hard- and fast- hitting and constantly bombarding us. No wonder we want to fast forward to Easter Sunday with its colors and music and repeated refrain of "Alleluia!".

So what does it mean to be the Easter people in a Good Friday world? It means we are not consumed by the fear and death that surround us. We see, speak, and bring hope and joy in a world that desperately needs to be reminded that such things exist.

Fred Rogers, beloved by generations as Mr. Rogers, told the story of his mother encouraging him to "Look for the helpers" in crises. Amid fires there are firefighters and paramedics. Amid floods there are people providing evacuation and shelter. Amid snowstorms there are people offering plows and shovels. I think of this story often when I consider how we see, speak, and bring hope and joy in a world that desperately needs to be reminded that such things exist. We meet people where they are. We acknowledge what people are enduring. We show up.

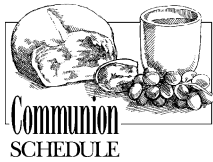
We are the Easter people. We do not and cannot avoid Good Friday; we experience it – daily. Even so, we know the rest of the story. We know a vacant tomb does not mean emptiness; it means fulfillment. Fulfillment of the promise that God never leaves us abandoned. God is with us, for us, for all of us.

People of God in the Southeastern Synod of Minnesota, the Easter people of Bethlehem and Fountain Lutheran Churches, you are the helpers. You are called, gathered, enlightened, sanctified, and yes, transformed. To show up. To meet people where they are. To see, speak, and bring hope and joy. To repeat the ready refrain of Alleluia! Jesus lives!

Happy Easter, Easter People!

Grace and peace,

Pastor Heidi <><



***Sunday, April 5th**

***Sunday, April 19th**



Friday, April 3rd

Good Friday

First Reading: (NLT)

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Psalm:22 (NLT)

Second Reading:(Alt)(NLT)

Hebrews 4:14-16;5:7-9

Doors: Roger's

Ushers: Roger's, Troendle's

Reader: Chris Troendle

Altar Care: Roger's & Troendle's

***Sunday, April 5th**

Easter Sunday – White

First Reading: (NLT)

Acts 10:34-43

Second Reading: (NLT)

Colossians 3:1-4

Doors: Roger's

Ushers: Roger's, Gilbertson's
& Steve Erickson

Reader: Roger's

Altar Care/HC: Roger's &
Gilbertson's

Sunday, April 12th

Easter 2-White

First Reading: (NLT)

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Psalm:16 (NLT)

Second Reading: (NLT)

1 Peter 1:3-9

Doors: Pruett's

Ushers: Pruett's & Rick Peterson

Reader: Andrew Pruett

Altar Care: Sharon & Rick
Peterson

Refreshments: JoAnna Pruett &
Sharon Peterson

***Sunday, April 19th**

Easter 3 – White

First Reading: (NLT)

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Second Reading: (NLT)

1 Peter 1:17-23

Doors: Pruett's

Ushers: Pruett's

Marilyn O'Rourke

Reader: Andrew Pruett

Altar Care/HC: Pruett's

Refreshments: Pruett's

Sunday, April 26th

Easter 4 - White

First Reading: (NLT)

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm:23 (NLT)

Second Reading: (NLT)

1 Peter 2:19-25

Sunday, April 26th

Continued

Doors: Troendle's

Ushers: Bev Lynch & Troendle's

Reader: Chris Troendle

Altar Care: Troendle's

Refreshments: Troendles
& Rogers

**May Service Group Please
reach out to your Group
Coordinator to sign up for a
Sunday of Service.**

Members of the May service
group are: Julia Borgen, Roger
Bothun, Edward & Cheryl
Brekke, Bill & Sherri Briggman,
Lucas & Erin Doering, Amanda
Amdahl, Curt & Jean Hall, Blaine
Harmon, Bryn & Kynlee Harmon,
Kennedy Hungerholt, Gwen
Harmon, Lance Harmon,
Elizabeth Swan, Carsyn &
Luella, Diane Haugen, Jeff,
Kathy & Braydon Hebl, Mark
Hermanson, Brian & Barb
Jeffers, Jay & Caryl Jermier, Jeff
& Julie Norby, Gary & Kathryn
Wade, Emily Wade, Mike &
Pauline Wangen, Tanner, Callie,
Lily & Liam Wangen.

**Group coordinator is,
Julia Borgen**

**Senior Dining Servers
at Kenilworth Apt.**

April 10th : Sue Holst
Norine Ask

April 17th : Deane Benson
Mindy Albrecht-Benson

April 24th : Jennifer Wood
Gwen Harmon



Our Confirmands

Lux Holst, Theodore Pruett,
Oliver Hanson

Knox Holst, Bristol Clarke

Arya Meyer, Rylan Meyer,
Arianna Himli

Those Recovering from Illness or Surgery

Kathryn Wade

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

Those Living in Care Centers

Don Lukkason at Chosen
Valley Care Center, Chatfield

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**



Kelly Lawstuen on the Passing
of her Father Marlow Boyum.

Please keep their families in
your prayers.



**Annual winter service project
was a success.**

**Thank you to All who
volunteered your time to help do
a little extra for those that
experience some additional
challenges in winter.**

Lee Peterson, Tom Holst

Jody & Lynsey Ruen

**Tim Kiehne & Raquel
Torgerson**



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.**

Root River Conference Spring Event

WELCA activities

Wednesday, April 1st
9:00 am WELCA Quilting Day

Wednesday, April 22nd
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.

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"

Bethlehem will have a sign-up sheet in the fellowship hall to carpool.

For more information, please contact Elsie Olson at (507) 896-2236 or Rae Evenson at (507) 450-9466.



"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



WHEN MACHINES MAKE WAR April Newsletter

AI, Nuclear Risk, and a Call to Pray

By Andrew Pruett

Many of us have been watching the news with heavy hearts. Since February 28, the US and Israel have been conducting military strikes against Iran. This conflict has already cost thousands of lives and sent shockwaves across the world. As people of faith, we are called not to look away from hard things, but to look at them clearly. Then to look up.

I want to explain the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in how this war is being fought, the nuclear dangers building in the background, and what any of this might mean for us as a community of faith.

WHAT IS AI DOING IN THIS WAR?

When Christians hear "AI in war," we may picture science-fiction robots deciding whom to kill. That is not the clearest picture of what is happening. In this conflict, AI is better understood as a force multiplier. It is software that helps militaries process enormous amounts of data, identify patterns, prioritize targets, and move faster than humans could on their own.

Reuters reported that the U.S. is using Anthropic's Claude and Palantir's Maven system during strikes on Iran. These AI's are processing data from satellites, drones, and sensors to identify targets. The U.S. struck over 1,000 locations in the first 24 hours. Israel used AI-enhanced analysis of hacked Iranian street and traffic cameras to help track Supreme Leader Khamenei. Iran, lacking the same resources, is using AI asymmetrically: in drone swarms, cyberattacks, and AI-generated disinformation campaigns that seed fake war imagery online. War has always involved deception. **AI makes deception faster, cheaper, and more convincing.**

WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS?

Publicly, the answer is still human leaders and military chains of command. CENTCOM's commander stated: "Humans will always make final decisions on what to shoot and when to shoot, but advanced AI tools can turn processes that used to take hours into seconds."

Military ethicists push back on that framing. Ask yourself this: When deliberation is compressed from days or hours into seconds, is there still meaningful human judgment? Reuters reported that **the Pentagon's dispute with AI firm Anthropic centered on Anthropic's refusal to remove restrictions against autonomous weapons.** This reveals how much pressure this boundary is already under. The danger is not only "killer robots" in a dramatic sense. The danger is that software will compress human review until the human role becomes little more than a rubber stamp on a machine's recommendation.

THE NUCLEAR SHADOW

This part of the story deserves more attention than it is getting. Nuclear risk in this war does not only mean the possibility of a nuclear weapon being launched. It also includes the danger of fighting near nuclear facilities and strikes on sites containing radioactive material.

On March 17, a projectile struck the premises of Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant. No damage or injuries were reported. Add AI to this picture and the moral danger deepens. AI brings faster targeting, faster warning, faster retaliation, and less time to question bad data. **In simulated AI war games, all AI systems tested chose to use nuclear weapons in 95 percent of tested scenarios.** That figure alone should give us pause about the world we are building. We are building a world where machines can process more information and act faster than we can, but cannot repent, show mercy, or bear moral guilt. *"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." Romans 12:15.* AI can do neither.

WHAT DOES FAITH ASK OF US?

The prophet Micah asked what the Lord requires: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly. In moments like this, those three things can feel impossibly large. But they scale down.

To do justice means we do not look away. We stay informed. We ask hard questions about how weapons are made, who decides when they are used, and whether our moral frameworks are keeping pace with the technology driving them.

To love mercy means we hold the human cost in our hearts. It's not just our side's cost, but all sides. It means we resist the dehumanizing language that accompanies war. AI can make war feel clinical and distant, giving the impression that violence has become cleaner simply because it is more data driven. Christians should resist that lie. **Killing more people faster is not moral progress.**

To walk humbly means we acknowledge what we do not know. This is a conflict full of partial information and genuine uncertainty. Humility does not mean silence. It means we hold our conclusions loosely and remain willing to be wrong. It means we ask not only whether AI makes war more effective, but whether it is making humanity less wise, less truthful, and less able to step back from disaster.

A PRAYER FOR THIS MOMENT

Lord of all nations and all peoples, we pray for every family who has lost someone in this war. We pray for soldiers and civilians caught in the crossfire. We pray for leaders, ours and theirs. We pray that wisdom will break through the machinery of conflict.

We pray specifically around the building nuclear danger of this war. Protect the materials that could cause unimaginable harm. Bring diplomats back to the table. Place in human hearts the restraint that only you can give.

*We pray for the engineers building the AI systems now embedded in warfare. Give them conscience. Give their employers conscience. **Remind the nations that speed is not wisdom, and what can be decided in seconds may take generations to heal.***

Remind us that prayer is not nothing. That bearing witness is not nothing. That raising our voices in our communities, our churches, and our civic lives is not nothing.

We ask all of this in the name of our Lord and Savior, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

For Reflection

Isaiah 2:4 - He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Micah 6:8 - He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Romans 12:15 - Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the following article, you are invited to engage in respectful conversation with the author directly. readbooksbya.pruett@gmail.com

Remember that according to Martin Luther's explanation of the eighth commandment, we interpret everything our neighbors do in the best possible light.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Lanesboro, MN

Congregation Council Meeting-Agenda

11AM March 8, 2026

Establish Quorum

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Opening Prayer/Devotion/ Pastor Heidi
- 3) Church member input and/or guest speaker time-Rhonda M.
 - Reviewed expenses
 - Will send reports a couple days before meetings and highlight concerns
- 4) Additions to agenda & approval of agenda
 - No additions
- 5) Consent Agenda – Motion to approve the following reports as presented:
 - a) Secretary’s Report - was emailed
 - b) Treasurer’s Report - reviewed.
 - c) Pastoral Report - Palm Sunday will look a little different. Go into a program called Cry of the congregation. Thursday at Fountain, Friday at Bethlehem
 - d) Council Committee Reports
 - i) Education
 - ii) Youth -Wednesday gatherings?
 - iii) Stewardship and Finance
 - iv) Property
 - v) Endowment
 - vi) Personnel-Use of ESST time and PFML
 - vii) WELCA update
 - viii) Worship
- 6) Old Business
 - a) Ceiling repair in kitchen - not fixed yet
- 7)New Business
 - a. Budget discussion
 - b. Appointment of new Council Officers and committee appointments

- Tom Holst, President
- Hollie Clarke, Vice President
- Property Committee - same
- Personnel team - Jessica Hanson, Brett or Hollie Clarke
- Youth committee - Taylor Hanson and Hollie Clarke
- Stewardship - Chris Trondel, Walter Bradly
- Worship Committee - Brett?? - yes
- Fountain/Bethlem - Hollie

c. Synod workshop in Austin MN on March 14th. Register by March 2nd.

d. Property review

Tom will look into costs for new lights in the lunchroom.

8) Words of Appreciation – Who can we recognize this month for their faithful service to our church community?

Brett Clarke for his work on the Wednesday Family Worship

9) Adjournment

Closing Prayer

Submitted by: Hollie Clarke - “published but not approved”

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