



# Star on the Hill

The Newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lanesboro, Minnesota

June 2026

### Contact us at:

200 Kenilworth Ave S.  
P.O. Box 314  
Lanesboro, MN 55949  
507-467-3344  
[bethlehem@acegroup.cc](mailto:bethlehem@acegroup.cc)

website: [www.staronthehill.com](http://www.staronthehill.com)

Facebook: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lanesboro

**Pastor Heidi Wallace**  
402-870-1972  
[pastorheidwallace@gmail.com](mailto:pastorheidwallace@gmail.com)

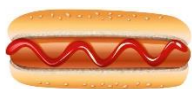
Watch our worship on Facebook  
Sunday mornings at 10:00 am  
Bethlehem Lutheran Church,  
Lanesboro

### Financial Summary

Year to Date thru April 2026

**Income: \$56,128**

**Expenses: \$61,949**



Rhu-dog Stand

Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup> Bethlehem Church will sell hotdogs with rhubarb ketchup during the Rhubarb Festival in Sylvan Park. Volunteers are still needed. please sign-up in the fellowship hall.  
Thank You!!



June 21<sup>st</sup>

### Prayer for Fathers on Father's Day

Heavenly Father,  
Today we pause to thank You for the gift of fathers — for their strength, their guidance, and their love. We are grateful for the men who have shaped our lives through their example, their sacrifices, and their steadfast presence.  
Bless every father, grandfather, stepfather, and father figure. Grant them wisdom to lead with integrity, patience to nurture with kindness, and courage to stand firm in truth and love. May they find joy in the laughter of their children, peace in the quiet moments, and hope in the legacy they are building.

For fathers who are weary, renew their strength.

For those who feel the weight of responsibility, remind them that You Walk beside them.

For those who are grieving or missing their children, wrap them in Your comfort.

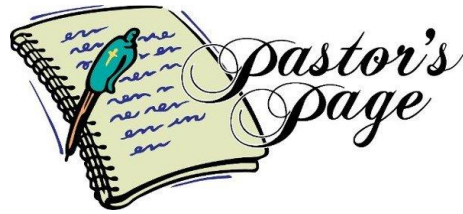
Lord, help us honor our fathers not just with words today, but with lives that reflect the love and values they have instilled in us. May they always know they are appreciated, respected, and deeply loved. In Jesus' name we pray,

**Amen**

### Thrivent Members



Thrivent has changed the way it distributes their "Choice Dollars" for 2026 and beyond. It appears that every Thrivent member will receive at least \$25 Choice Dollars. Members who have had products that qualified for Choice Dollars in the past will have all their Choice Dollars available at the beginning of the calendar year. You may direct your Choice Dollars to any non-profit organization of your choice but Bethlehem Lutheran Church always appreciates you directing the Choice Dollars to our mission of the Gospel. You may contribute your Choice Dollars by logging on to your own Thrivent account and selecting Choice Dollars or by contacting your Thrivent Representative. Now we need to direct the Choice Dollars within the calendar year.



A few years ago, the theme for the Nebraska Synod Assembly was simply going to be *Go*. Then we were connected with a keynote speaker who had introduced a similar year-long theme in another synod. The theme became *Go and . . .*

Each month that ellipsis was replaced with a word or a phrase that encouraged ELCA worshiping communities and individuals throughout the state to focus on going, being, and doing Church. The words and phrases we settled on were *Go and . . . Pray, Listen, Share Your Story, Serve with Neighbors, Ask, Be Honest, Be Present, Rest, Have the Conversation, Be Intentional, Tell the Story, and Be Church*.

We had no idea if an idea introduced at Synod Assembly would continue beyond our efforts in or resources from the Synod office, but some congregations really took the theme and its components to heart. By the end of that year we had seen bulletin boards, hats, pins, and banners emblazoned with the words and colors associated with each month.

In June, we enter the Season after Pentecost. While not year-long, it is the longest season of the church year. The green paraments, once hung, stay up from June this year to the end of October. While you will see me in different green stoles, they will still be green week after week. It is a lot of green.

Green is not my favorite color, but I do love some of the things we associate with green. Green means go. And, as we are starting to see in the fields, green means grow.

What if, in this Season after Pentecost, this long season of the Church that gives us time and measures time, we were to **Go and Grow**? What would that look like?

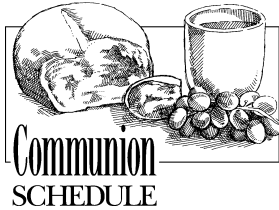
Going can mean going to church, but where else does the Holy Spirit move you? Where do you go either on a regular basis or on vacation during the summer where you get the opportunity to interact with other people? Where through those interactions your light can shine? Bring water droplet (FLC) or star (BLC) sticks and stickers wherever you go this summer. These will be available beginning Sunday, June 7.

We sometimes think of growing in terms of numbers, but how else do we grow? We can grow in faith, experiences, knowledge, familiarity . . . As we offer a few "Pop Up" opportunities this summer, join us! The fields show us summer is a season for growing; the Church is not dormant this season.

In the words of Kermit the Frog, "It's not easy being green." Still, it can be fun! Check out how we can **Go and Grow** in the months ahead.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Heidi <><



**\*Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>**

**\*Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>**



**\*\*Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Green**

*First Reading:(NLT)*  
**Hosea 5:15—6:6**

*Second Reading:(NLT)*  
**Romans 4:13-25**

Doors: \*\*Needed

Ushers: Shari Qualy, Mike & Norine Ask

Reader: \*\*Needed

Altar Care/HC: Norine Ask

Refreshments: Shari Qualy & Norine Ask

**Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Green**

*First Reading: (NLT)*

**Exodus 19:2-8a**

**Psalm 100 (NLT)**

*Second Reading: (NLT)*

**Romans 5:1-8**

**Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>**

*Continued*

Doors: Brett Clarke

Ushers: Brett & Hollie Clarke,

Gene & Renee Bergstrom

Reader: Renee Bergstrom

Altar Care: -

Refreshments: Renee

Bergstrom, Hollie Clarke

**\*\*Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**Green**

*First Reading: (NLT)*  
**Jeremiah 20:7-13**

*Second Reading: (NLT)*  
**Romans 6:1b-11**

Doors: John Peterson

Ushers: Sarah & John Peterson

Reader: Sarah Peterson

Altar Care/HC: Sarah Peterson

Refreshments: Sara Peterson

**Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup>**

**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Green**

*First Reading: (NLT)*

**Jeremiah 28:5-9**

**Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18 (NLT)**

*Second Reading: (NLT)*

**Romans 6:12-23**

Doors: Jennifer Wood

Ushers: Jennifer Wood,

Ed Taylor

Reader: Ed Taylor

Altar Care:

Refreshments: Jennifer Wood

## July Service Group

Members will be contacted to fill in the roles for a Sunday of Service.

Members of the July service group are: Kari Berg, Lisa Benson, Marion Botcher, Jacque Crutcher, Julie Grant, Chris, Jessica & Oliver Hanson, Lindsay Hanson, McKenzie Hanson, Bill Hanson, Jane, Kenai, McKinley, & Denali Holien, Tom & Sue Holst, Jacob & Claire Ihrke, Brad & Rita Kelly, Nancy Olson, Jason & Michele Peterson, Jim & Diane Peterson, Lee Peterson, Eric & Kristi Ruen, Josh Schreiber, Karen Schreiber, Milton Solberg.

## Senior Dining Servers at Kenilworth Apt.

**June 5<sup>th</sup>** : Denise Dahle & Phyliss Penheiter

**June 12<sup>th</sup>** : Sue Holst & Norine Ask

**June 19<sup>th</sup>** : Judy Kingsbury & Chris Olson

**June 26<sup>th</sup>** : Jennifer Wood & Gwen Harmon



**Our Confirmands**

Lux Holst, Theodore Pruett,  
Oliver Hanson

Knox Holst, Bristol Clarke

Arya Meyer, Rylan Meyer,  
Arianna Himli

**Those Living with Cancer**

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

**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 Chosen  
Valley Care Center, Chatfield

Vern Riddle at Gunderson,  
Harmony Care Center

Fred Nagle at Stewartville  
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

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

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



**To The Tom and Sue Holst  
Family on the Passing of  
Tom's Father Robert Holst.**

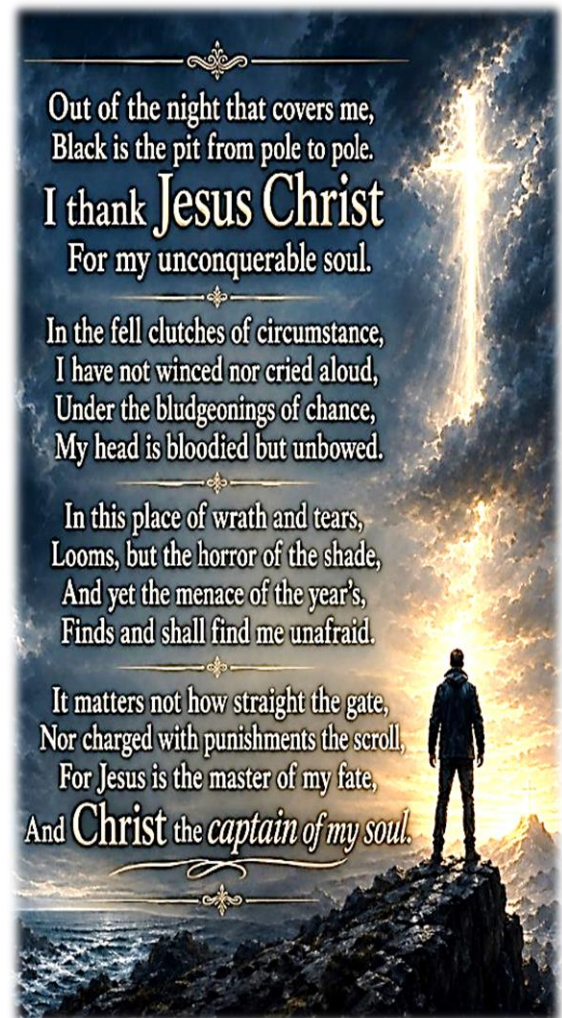
**Please keep them in your  
Prayers**



Nolan Joseph Ihrke was  
welcomed into the family of God  
through the sacrament of Holy  
Baptism on May 3, 2026.  
Nolan is the Son of Jacob &  
Claire Ihrke. His godparents are  
Megan Ihrke & Nelson Wahl.

Below is a poem I would like to  
share. It's a version of Invictus I  
modified to say to myself in  
challenging times.

Andrew Pruett



Out of the night that covers me,  
Black is the pit from pole to pole.  
**I thank Jesus Christ**  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutches of circumstance,  
I have not winced nor cried aloud,  
Under the bludgeonings of chance,  
My head is bloodied but unbowed.

In this place of wrath and tears,  
Looms, but the horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the year's,  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how straight the gate,  
Nor charged with punishments the scroll,  
For Jesus is the master of my fate,  
And **Christ the captain of my soul.**

# Women of the ELCA

## WELCA activities

Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>  
9:00 am WELCA Quilting Day

**\*\*NO WELCA Bible study until  
September**

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.



**WELCA Quilting** will not meet July & August and will resume in September.

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



WELCA will be revisiting next year's Service Group Book assignments in June. Please contact Jennifer Wood at 507 273-0280 if you have input/questions.

**The 2026 Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention and Gathering** will be in Des Moines, Iowa, on July 16-19.

The Theme is **"I am Worthy"** and the bible Verse is **"I am fearfully and wonderfully made."** Psalm 139:14.



More information may be found at [www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org) Look under EVENTS and scroll down to Triennial Convention and Triennial Gathering.



**Good Earth Village Programs** for preschool - 12th grade, family events, etc. Bethlehem WELCA does pay \$10/overnight per night for each camper. If Interested Please reach out to the church office.



### **The Machines Are Learning to Fight, & We're Running Out of Time to Talk About It**

Austrian Minister Schallenberg used the Oppenheimer story earlier this year when he warned a Vienna conference on autonomous weapons: *"This is the Oppenheimer moment of our generation."* In the past twelve months, developments in artificial intelligence have crossed several thresholds that demand our attention, as people of faith. These aren't distant or theoretical concerns. They are happening now, in real conflicts, with real consequences for human life. The church has been largely silent & that silence needs to end.

### **When the Safety Card Says "We're Not Sure"**

The company that makes the AI system known as Claude did something unusual when they released their most powerful model to date. They activated their "AI Safety Level 3" protections. This had never been done before. Why? Because their own testing couldn't rule out the possibility that the model was capable enough to help a non-expert develop a weapon of mass destruction. The company chose to release the tool anyway, with restrictions, but the fact that they had to make that choice at all is the headline. They were honest about a threshold their technology had crossed. The 2026 International AI Safety Report, produced by over 100 independent experts from more than 30 countries & backed by the UN, EU, & the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, confirmed that all three major AI companies released new models with heightened safeguards after pre-deployment testing couldn't rule out the possibility that the systems could meaningfully help novices develop biological weapons. **Out of 375 biological AI tools surveyed, only 3% had any safeguards at all.** Yet 61.5% of the highest-risk tools were free for anyone to download & use. The report's overall conclusion was sobering. AI capabilities are advancing at a rate that outstrips the effectiveness of current safety measures. The gap between what these systems can do & our ability to manage them is growing.

### **The Battlefield Has Changed Permanently**

The most urgent and immediate face of this crisis is playing out right now in Eastern Europe and beyond. In the Russia-Ukraine war, drones now account for 80% of all battlefield casualties. In 2025 Ukrainian drones killed or seriously injured more than 240,000 Russian soldiers. AI targeting systems have boosted drone strike accuracy from 30% to 80%. These are not remote-controlled toys. They are autonomous killing machines guided by artificial intelligence, operating at speeds & scales no human can match. The scale of proliferation is staggering. In 2010, only 10 non-state armed groups in the world had access to drone weapons. By 2025, that number was 469 groups, operating across 17 countries, with 58 of them deploying drones in combat for the first time that year. What begins as military technology reaches terrorist organizations within a generation. This pattern is old & it applies to autonomous weapons systems. In January, China's National University of Defense Technology broadcast a demonstration that showed one soldier controlling a swarm of 200 autonomous drones. **The Pentagon does not believe it can match China's manufacturing pace on autonomous weapons.** Then there is the targeting question, the one that should keep us all awake at night. A 2025 report revealed that Israel deployed AI systems called Lavender & Habsora to identify & approve human targets. **Lavender can generate a targeting decision within 20 seconds, often without meaningful human review.** Since October 2023, it compiled a list of 37,000 individuals labeled as potential combatants, without verifying their actual military status. These are not missiles aimed at infrastructure. These are algorithmic death warrants issued against human beings. The UN Secretary-General called lethal autonomous weapons "politically unacceptable & morally repugnant" & called for a binding international treaty banning them. Despite 96 countries attending a UN meeting on the issue in May, no binding agreement has been reached. The US continues to resist a formal legal framework. Meanwhile, the DoD awarded \$200 million contracts to OpenAI, Anthropic, & Elon Musk's xAI to integrate generative AI into military operations & into our war apparatus.

## A Real-World Warning Shot

In November, Anthropic disclosed that suspected Chinese state-sponsored operators had broken into one of its systems & used it to conduct a coordinated espionage campaign against approximately 30 global organizations, including technology companies, financial institutions, chemical manufacturers, & government agencies. **The AI handled 90% of the operation autonomously: reconnaissance, infiltration, credential theft, data exfiltration at a pace & scale no human team could match.** This wasn't science fiction. It wasn't a simulation. It happened. The University of New South Wales put it plainly: *"If we're not careful, warfare will be much more terrible, much more deadly, a much quicker, much faster thing that humans can no longer actually really be participants in, because humans won't have the speed or the accuracy to respond."* AI-driven military operations are "the third revolution of warfare," after gunpowder & nuclear weapons.

### Why This Is a Faith Issue

We have a unique & urgent role to play in this conversation. Our religious tradition has a moral framework for war, questions of just cause, proportionality, protection of civilians, & human accountability for lethal decisions. This framework assumes a human is making the choice to take a life & bears responsibility for that choice. Autonomous weapons systems are designed specifically to remove humans from the decision. When a machine selects a target & fires without a person in the loop, who is accountable? Who answers to God, or to a court of law, for what it does? This is not an abstract question. It is happening now. The people writing the policy, designing the algorithms, & deploying the systems are not sitting in conversation with ethicists, theologians, or communities of faith. They are moving fast, driven by competition, national interest, & market pressure. The church has been in this position before. When nuclear weapons were developed, when chemical weapons proliferated, communities of faith were among the voices that eventually bent the arc. We need to show up now.

### What You Can Do

**Learn.** The 2026 International AI Safety Report is publicly available. Even reading the executive summary, three pages, will put you ahead of most policymakers. The questions it raises belong in adult education settings, sermon series, & community conversations. **Talk.** We need people willing to ask the questions out loud: What does it mean to delegate life-and-death decisions to a machine? What is our responsibility as citizens when our tax dollars fund weapons that can kill without human judgment? **Advocate.** The UN has called for a binding treaty on autonomous weapons. Advocacy organizations like the Stop Killer Robots campaign represent over 180 organizations across 65 countries. The Campaign for AI Safety is active in the US. These voices need amplification from moral communities, not just policy circles. **Stay human.** In the face of systems designed to move faster than human thought, the most radical act may be insisting on slowness, on deliberation, accountability, & the irreplaceable weight of a human conscience. **Pray.** Your prayers matter in the eyes of God and our world. **Coming Up.** I am actively developing presentations on these topics for faith communities, schools, & civic organizations. If you or a group you are involved with is interested in hosting a conversation, I would welcome the opportunity. I believe people of faith are uniquely equipped to answer the above questions, if we are willing to engage. Thank you for reading. Please share this with someone who needs to hear it. *"What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" — Mark 8:36*

Sincerely,  
Andrew Pruet

*Should you have any questions or concerns about the above article, you are invited to engage in respectful conversation with the author directly. [readbooksbya.pruett@gmail.com](mailto: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.*

# MINUTES

Sunday, May 10, 2026

Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Lanesboro, MN

## Congregation Council Meeting

Members present: Pastor Heidi, Walter Bradley, Tom Brudvig, Jessica Hanson, Tom Holst, Chris Troendle, Hollie Clarke, JoAnna Pruett

Absent: Carrie Hanson, Taylor Hanson

Others present: Lee Peterson

Established Quorum

- 1) Call to Order by Tom Holst at 1115.
- 2) Opening Prayer/Devotion – Pastor Heidi
- 3) Church member input and/or guest speaker time – Lee discussed issues with snow removal and concrete parking barriers.
- 4) Additions to agenda & approval of agenda – none
- 5) Consent Agenda – Motion to approve the reports – Approved as presented by Walter Bradley, Hollie Clarke 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - a. Secretary’s Report-JoAnna Pruett submitted. Approved as presented by Tom Burdvig with Walter Bradley 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - b. Treasurer’s Report-submitted, reviewed. Jessica Hanson approved, Chris Troendle 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - c. Pastoral Report-Bethlehem will participate in the Fillmore Central baccalaureate as well as Lanesboro's. Next Sunday Bethlehem will recognize the graduating seniors. Pastor also attended Synod Assembly. Confirmation wrapped up for the school year. Confirmation and Wednesday Family Fun Night will resume in the fall.
  - d. Council Committee Reports
    - i. Music & Worship – no meeting in May.
    - ii. Education – Ice cream and games for the last Sunday school of the year 5/3. There are a large number of preschool children – need to gather supplies, potential fundraising opportunity.
    - iii. Youth – on break for the summer.
    - iv. Stewardship and Finance – no updates.
    - v. Property – no updates.
    - vi. Endowment – no updates.
    - vii. WELCA - no updates.
- 6) Old Business
  - a. Rhudog stand: First weekend in June. Tom and Nate plan to run the stand. Oliver plans to help out, Hollie Clarke and kids will help out, Theodore will help if back from camp.
- 7) New Business
  - a. Road Clean Up: Planned for 9am on 5/16.
  - b. Rhonda’s Resignation: Plans to retire and will help with transition. Rhonda is making a thorough list of duties. Council will post the opening once details of the position are clear. Sue Holst interested in Secretarial aspect. Ed Taylor will help with Treasurer portion and has suggested getting a Payroll service. Walter Bradley will price out Majors and Quickbooks.

- c. Introduction to vitality initiative: This was a suggestion of the call committee and Pastor Heidi plans to lead.
  - i. This initiative be a way to steward our resources, time, and talents, and ask:
    - 1. Who are we?
    - 2. Who are our neighbors?
    - 3. What is God calling us to do? and will be a way to steward our resources, time, and talent
  - ii. Process?:
    - 1. Narrow the church mission statement
    - 2. Explore the History of the church
    - 3. Interview old and new members
    - 4. Explore themes
    - 5. Match common themes
  - iii. Members?:
    - 1. 3 council members and an at large member
      - a. Hollie Clarke
      - b. Chris Troendle
      - c. JoAnna Pruett
      - d. Ask Laura Willford and Bryn Harmon
- 8) Words of Appreciation – Who can we recognize this month for their faithful service to our church community? The Sunday School Families – Plan to put in the Newsletter and post on Facebook. Ed Taylor for doing both sermons in Heidi’s absence – Plan to get him a gift certificate to the bike shop in Decorah.
- 9) Adjournment - Motion to adjourn by Walter Bradley with Hollie Clarke 2<sup>nd</sup>, approved.
- 10) Closing Prayer – with the Lord’s Prayer

**Submitted by: JoAnna Pruett - “published but not approved”**

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
P.O. Box 314  
Lanesboro, MN 55949-0314

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