



Star on the Hill

The Newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lanesboro, Minnesota

September 2026

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Pastor Heidi Wallace

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Financial Summary

Year to Date thru July 2026

Income: \$103,065

Expenses: \$104,753

**September 6th Blessing of
Professions**

**September 13th Blessing of
Back backs**

**September 20th Blessing of
Teachers**

**September 27th Blessing of
Musicians**



**Quilting will resume on
September 2nd at 9 AM.
Potluck at 11:30 and a
WELCA business meeting to
follow, All are welcome for
lunch and meeting even if
not quilters.**

**Choir Practice will resume
on September 13 at 9 Am**



**Sunday school will resume
on September 13th**

Growing in Faith Together
will begin on September 16th.
The first two months will be at
Bethlehem. Look for a signup
sheet in the fellowship hall for
meal providers.



Every year of elementary school, my grandma prepared an apple for me to take to my teacher on the first day of school. She chose the biggest, reddest apple she could find, polished it until it shone, and wrapped it in cellophane

I do not know how much my teachers appreciated those apples. There are varieties that are much more delicious than those red ones. And, having two parents who were both teachers (my dad taught fourth grade; my mom, kindergarten), there were enough apples to decorate a Christmas tree with just those, leaving no room for our family ornaments.

Still, I appreciated the tradition. It meant Grandma, a retired teacher, was just as excited about the new school year as I was.

I loved everything about a new school year: packing my schoolbag with fresh supplies, wearing new clothes, learning who my classmates were, and finding out who my teacher was.

As to the last point, there were no letters sent out beforehand. In primary school, we sat in the gym and waited for our names to be called by our respective teachers. At the intermediate school, the process was the same for fourth graders, but as fifth and sixth graders we got to wander around their wings until we found our names on a classroom door.

Was it the anticipation, the “not knowingness” that kept us all quiet and patient until our names were called? I did know that my name would be called eventually. Every single one of us would be named and claimed and given a home[room]. There was some certainty in the uncertainty.

So, why, as a baptized Christian who has been named and claimed and given a home, do I find it so hard to keep quiet and patient when I am waiting for God to make a new thing in my life? Why am I frustrated by uncertainty when God has proven year after year to be loving and faithful?

“But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine . . . Do not be afraid, for I am with you.” These words of assurance are found in Isaiah 43:1, 5a. Besides being our reminder that we are named and claimed and redeemed, perhaps they hold the answer to why an apple was so important to Grandma and to me.

Yes, Grandma was just as excited about the new school year as I was. However, she also knew that there was the “not knowingness” that went along with that. Did I have all the supplies I would need? Would people notice and like my clothes? Would any of my friends from the previous year be in my class this year? Would I like my teacher? Would my teacher like me?

My teacher was not going to like me because of an apple. The apple, which I did not understand until years later, was more for me. It was my reminder that I had no reason to be afraid. Grandma was with me. God was with me. I was not alone. I was known.

I might not have known what each new school year held. Still, one thing was certain: an apple would be prepared. And with it, I would be prepared for the wondering, the waiting, the watching as student after student was named and claimed and God made something new.

May God be with you in the wondering, the waiting, the watching, the “not knowingness” of life.

Grace and peace, Pastor Heidi



***Sunday, September 6th**

***Sunday, September 20th**



***Sunday, September 6th**

(Pentecost 15-Green)

First Reading: (NLT)

Ezekiel 33:7-11

Second Reading: (NLT)

Romans 13:8-14

Doors: Luther Olson

Ushers: Tom Brudvig and Pam Engbretson, Luther and Corky Olson

Reader: Tom Brudvig

*Altar Care/HC: Luther and Corky Olson

Refreshments: Pam

Engbretson and Tom Brudvig, Luther and Corky Olson

Sunday, September 13th

(Pentecost 16-Green)

First Reading: (NLT)

Genesis 50:15-21

Psalm 103:1--13 (NLT)

Second Reading: (NLT)

Romans 14:1-12

September 13th continued

Doors: Mike Wilford

Ushers: Mike, Laura and Prailey Wilford, Ben and Darla Taylor

Reader: Ed Taylor

Altar Care: Corkey Olson

Refreshments: Laura Wilford and Darla Taylor

***Sunday, September 20th**

(Pentecost 17-Green)

First Reading: (NLT)

Jonah3:10-4:1

Second Reading: (NLT)

Philippians1:21-30

Doors: Trent Olson

Ushers: Trent, Tracy, Peyton and Reid Olson, Carrie Hanson

Reader: Sarah Pieper

*Altar Care/HC: Corky Olson

Refreshments: Tracy Olson and Carrie Hanson

Sunday, September 27th

(Pentecost 18-Green)

First Reading: (NLT)

Psalm 150

Jonah3:10-4:1

Second Reading: (NLT)

Philippians1:21-30

Doors: Nate Boyum

Ushers: Nate and Sharon Boyum, Luther and Corky Olson

Reader: Nate Boyum

*Altar Care/HC: Corky Olson

Refreshments: Nate and Sharon Boyum, Luther and Corky Olson

October Service Group

Members of the October service group are:

Elve Albrecht, Tim Anderson, Lori Anderson, Bryan & Teri Benson, Walter & Susie Bradley, Jackie Christian, Phillip Erickson, Cheryl Flaa, Carroll & Anna Gilbertson, Lois Gilbertson, Bryan & Melissa Guber, Caleb & Samantha Hareldson, Diane Hareldson, Harriet Lawston, Fred Nagle, Steve Rahn & Susan Lance, Sue Rosa, Matt & Jessica Schnebly, Tom & Barb Schramm, TJ & Aimee Stettler, Duane & Elve Thompson, Alison Tufte, Blaine, Mary & Grace Tufte, Kim Wagner, Robert & Melissa Wagner.
Group coordinators are Elve Albrecht and Walter & Susie Bradley.

Senior Dining Servers at Kenilworth Apartments

September 4th : Phyllis Penheiter, Denise Dahle

September 11th Deane Benson, Jeniffer Wood

September 18th Gwen Harmon: Judy Kingsbury

September 25th Norine Ask Sue Holst



Our Confirmands

Lux Holst, Theodore Pruett,
Oliver Hanson

Knox Holst, Bristol Clarke

Arya Soppa, Rylan Soppa,
Arianna Himli

Those Living with Cancer

Kent Lawston

Diane Haugen,
Carroll Gilbertson,
Mavis Musselman,
Cora Slominsky
(niece of Matt & Stacy Schultz)

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

Bev Hanson at The Bluffs of
Preston

Don Lukkason at Chosen
Valley Care Center, Chatfield

Vern Riddle at Gunderson
Harmony Care Center

Fred Nagle at Stewartville
Care Center

Linda Peterson at
Spring Valley Care Center

Those Recovering from Surgery

Elve Albrecht

Nate Boyum

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**



Ardella Miner's sister
Averlene Marzolf
passed away July 23.

Jacque Crutcher's cousin
Stephen Wagge passed
away on August 4th.

Pastor Heidi's mom passed
away on August 8th. The
funeral was on August 21st.

Lois Peterson's Celebration of
Life will be on September 6th at
the Sons of Norway Hall from
11:00-2:pm

Tim Kiehne's mom Annette
passed away on August
4th. The funeral will be
September 19th at St John's
Lutheran church in Austin at
11 AM. A gathering to
celebrate her life and legacy
will be September 20th from
1:30-3:30pm at the Old Legion
Hall in Harmony.



WELCA September activities

The Quilters will meet again in
the fellowship hall starting on
September 2nd. A WELCA
business meeting will follow
at 11:30. All are welcome.

WELCA Bible study
September 23rd

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.

Save the Date-Root River
Gathering will be at

AI Is Moving Fast

Artificial intelligence is no longer merely a fascinating new computer tool. Some of the people building the most powerful AI systems believe they are working toward machines that will eventually perform much or all of the cognitive work now done by humans. Others warn that increasingly autonomous AI will become extraordinarily difficult to control. Those two possibilities, tremendous benefits and tremendous danger, exist side by side.

In a *TIME* magazine article, technology leaders described AI in terms usually reserved for the largest turning points in human history. Google CEO Sundar Pichai has compared its importance to humanity's most profound technologies, while Google DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis has suggested its social impact will eventually resemble fire or electricity more than the arrival of smartphones. At the same time, people including Elon Musk, Sam Altman, Dario Amodei, Max Tegmark, and others have publicly discussed the possibility that sufficiently advanced AI will create catastrophic risks if humans lose control of it. We ignore their warnings at our own peril. Scripture says: **"The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty."** Proverbs 22:3 Prudence means recognizing a danger and taking action to prevent disaster.

The Race Is Part of the Danger

One of the most troubling issues raised in the *TIME* articles is that the economic and geopolitical system surrounding AI rewards people for moving faster than is wise. AI companies are competing with one another. The US is competing with China. Investors expect returns. Companies want their product released before their competitors' products. Meanwhile, slowing down for additional safety testing can carry an immediate financial cost. Companies and the government are putting profits over people.

Helen Toner of Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology told *TIME* that competition has pressured AI teams to rush releases and omit safety steps. The concern is that even responsible people make dangerous decisions when the incentives surrounding them reward speed rather than caution. Max Tegmark, president of the Future of Life Institute, summarized the regulatory imbalance this way: **"right now, there are more safety standards for sandwich shops than for AI companies in America."**

There is also disagreement over open-source AI. Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg has argued that distributing powerful AI among many people and organizations may make the technology safer by preventing any single corporation or government from controlling it. Others argue that once a sufficiently dangerous AI model is freely distributed, its safety protections can be removed, and there likely will be no way to call it back.

There is a deeper Christian question: **Who benefits, who bears the risk, and what happens when the desire for wealth and/or power overwhelms wisdom?** Jesus asked: **"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"** Mark 8:36 That question applies well to the AI race. Being able to build something does not establish that we should build it as quickly as possible.

A Government Commissioned Warning

Another *TIME* article reported on a 247-page AI safety study prepared by Gladstone AI after a State Department contract. The authors interviewed more than 200 government officials, experts, and employees of leading AI companies. They identified two broad dangers: that powerful

AI could be **weaponized**, and the possibility that increasingly capable systems would eventually escape meaningful **human control**.

The report recommended government oversight of the largest AI training projects, stronger controls on advanced computer chips, additional AI safety research, and possible restrictions on releasing the internal model “weights” of extremely powerful systems. (Another word for weights is ‘brains’). **Its recommendations are those of Gladstone AI not the official position of the current State Department or the this administration.** Its central question is: **What evidence should a company have to provide before releasing an AI system that could cause enormous harm?** The US government does not require any safety proof from AI companies before they release any AI systems.

We require aircraft manufacturers to demonstrate that airplanes are safe. We regulate medicines, nuclear reactors, automobiles, electrical systems, food preparation, and medical devices. AI is now capable of controlling computers, writing software, conducting research, impersonating people, and is acting with increasing autonomy. It is reasonable to ask what level of independent safety testing should accompany that power. Yet we do not require AI safety testing.

Our Children Will Have What We Build

The issue becomes especially important when we consider children. Responsible-AI expert Kay Firth-Butterfield argues that simply banning AI from schools is unrealistic. Today's children will almost certainly use artificial intelligence in their adult lives. They need to understand it. But that does not mean surrendering education to machines. **“We can’t just give education to AI; we need to keep humans in the loop,”** Firth-Butterfield told *TIME*. Teachers can use AI to reduce administrative work or help develop educational materials, she argues, while remaining responsible for the actual education and care of their students.

AI can generate an answer. It cannot assume moral responsibility for the child receiving it. Like a psychopath, it can imitate compassion without possessing compassion. It can provide information without possessing wisdom. Christians therefore do not need to choose between blindly embracing AI and blindly rejecting it. Scripture gives us better instructions: **“but test them all; hold on to what is good” 1 Thessalonians 5:21** That may be one of the best principles Christians can carry into the age of artificial intelligence. Use what serves us and our neighbors. Reject what harms us or them. Preserve human responsibility. Protect children and the vulnerable. Insist that power be accompanied by accountability.

Above all, remember that intelligence is not the same thing as wisdom. AI machines may already know more facts than any human who has ever lived. It calculates faster, writes faster, diagnoses faster, and discovers things that humans have overlooked. None of that makes it God. The Christian concern should therefore be neither **“How do we stop technology?”** nor **“How quickly can we build it?”** Questions we should ask are: **How do we use this extraordinary human creation in a way that loves God and serves our neighbor? How do we make sure that, in our eagerness to gain its benefits, we do not surrender the things that make those benefits worth having?**

Sources

1. Billy Perrigo, “The ‘Oppenheimer Moment’ That Looms Over Today’s AI Leaders,” *TIME*, March 13, 2025.
2. Billy Perrigo, “Exclusive: U.S. Must Move ‘Decisively’ to Avert ‘Extinction-Level’ Threat From AI, Government-Commissioned Report Says,” *TIME*, March 11, 2024.
3. Sanya Mansoor, “Kay Firth-Butterfield On Harnessing AI’s Power Responsibly,” *TIME*, February 9, 2024.
4. Scripture quotations: *Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV)*: Proverbs 22:3; Mark 8:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

Sincerely,
Andrew Pruett



ELCA Requests Donations for Kits

Imagine having to choose between a meal or purchasing a notebook. Lutheran World Relief school kits are sent to places where even the few required school supplies may be more than a family can afford. Your donation of pencils and paper can help write a positive future!

School supplies are on sale right now. Please see the list of specific supplies needed for each school kit. Place supplies in the drawstring bags that are available in the narthex. Lutheran World Relief is also in need of personal care kits, baby care kits and fabric kits. Please see a List of items to be included in each kit.

Please compile kits

The WELCA asks for your donations to fill kits for Lutheran World Relief. Items may be brought to the church any time **on or before September 13th** to be included in this year's shipment to LWR.

Please do not add other items or leave out any of the items listed. All items should be new and in good condition. Remove excess packaging.

Each personal care kit should include:

- ✓ One bath-size towel (approximately 52" x 27") preferably a dark color
- ✓ Two bath-size bars of soap in original wrapper
- ✓ One adult-size toothbrush in original wrapper*
- ✓ One sturdy comb (remove wrapper)
- ✓ One metal nail clipper -attached file optional (remove wrapper)

*Toothbrush multi-packs may be used by sealing an individual toothbrush in a business envelope; no plastic bags or wrap.

Wrap all items in the towel and tie securely with ribbons or yarn. Do not enclose the kit or any of its contents in plastic bags.

Each school kit should include:

- ✓ Four 70-sheet Spiral notebooks of wide or college-ruled paper approximately 8 x 10 ½ inch. No loose-leaf paper.
- ✓ One blunt scissors (safety scissors with embedded steel blades work well)
- ✓ One 30-centimeter ruler, or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other
- ✓ One pencil sharpener
- ✓ Five new, unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers; secure together with a rubber band
- ✓ One eraser approximately 2 ½ inches long
- ✓ Five black or blue ballpoint pens (no ink gel); secure together with a rubber band
- ✓ One box of 16 or 24 crayons

****Place items in a drawstring backpack available in the narthex.**

Each fabric kit should include:

- ✓ Two pieces of cotton or cotton-blend fabric (No knits or 100% polyester).
- ✓ Fabric should be cut into pieces measuring either 2¼ yds of 60" wide fabric or 3 yds of 44" wide or 4 yds of 36" wide.
- ✓ Two spools of neutral-colored general-purpose thread, 250-300 yards each.

Fold thread and one piece of fabric inside second piece of fabric and tie with yarn.

Each baby care kit should include:

- ✓ Two lightweight cotton t-shirts
- ✓ Two long- or short-sleeved gowns or sleepers (without feet)
- ✓ Two receiving blankets, medium-weight cotton or flannel, or crocheted or knitted with lightweight yarn, up to 52" square
- ✓ Four cloth diapers, flat fold preferred
- ✓ One jacket, sweater or sweatshirt with a hood, or include a baby cap
- ✓ Two pairs of socks
- ✓ One hand towel, dark color recommended
- ✓ Two or three bath-size bars (equal to 8-9 oz) of gentle soap, in original wrapper
- ✓ Two diaper pins or large safety pins

New items only. Wrap items in one of the receiving blankets and secure with diaper pins.

Do not put in plastic bags. Sizes should be 6 to 24 month.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
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