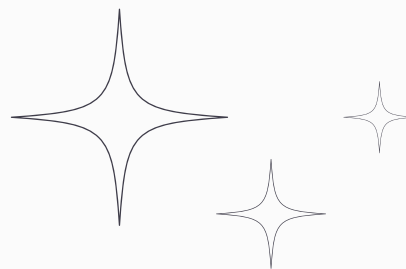


# THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

JUNE 2025 | VOL. 2 ISSUE 11



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

## THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD: A DEVOTIONAL

I am writing this on the eve of Ascension Day (a day that is always on a Thursday). Acts, chapter 1, describes the day Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after Easter. The ascension of our Lord is, in other words, the day Jesus physically left this world. Ascension Day is so important in the Christian church that we confess the ascension of our Lord in all three of the historic creeds, namely the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. Ascension Day is truly one of the most important and least celebrated holy days of the church year.

The good news Luke shares in Acts 1 (Luke wrote the book of Acts) is this: "In the first book (the Gospel of Luke), O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up" (vv. 1-2). That means all the words Jesus spoke and the acts Jesus performed until the day of His ascension were only what He **BEGAN** to do and teach. It means Jesus **KEPT ON** doing things and teaching His people even after He went back to heaven. That means that the ascended Lord Jesus, bodily gone into the heavens, is **STILL** guiding and teaching His people by His Spirit, sent to us at Pentecost just ten days after the ascension of our Lord.

Sometimes it can be difficult to believe that the Lord is always with us and is completely in charge. Why? Because there are times when it seems as though God is not in charge. And, we think, if God is in charge, then God could certainly be doing a better job! In our minds, if God is in charge, then everything would be perfect. And then we think, since everything is not perfect, God must not be in charge. However, there is a third option that Luke and the other Gospel writers had in mind, namely that we are in an "already-not yet" state, wherein the kingdom is present here in Christ's Word and Sacraments but will come in its fullness when our ascended Lord returns. Until our Lord returns, the kingdom will also come to others as the church, energized by the Spirit, goes into the world with the promises of the Savior that we are loved, forgiven and redeemed through the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord -- as Paul puts it -- bearing in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be displayed. In the love of the crucified, risen, and ascended Savior,

*Pastor Dana Allen Branes*



## FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

Dear Saints,

As I am writing this it's the middle of May, and I'm already planning and looking forward to June, July, and the changing of spring into summer. Spring didn't last long enough for me this year. And this summer is already too busy for my taste. And we're not even there yet! And yet, all the "busy things" are great things, so it's not like it's bad. It's just a different season.

Seasons are a (changing) constant. Sometimes as Christians we are in a season of grief. That's ok. Our Lord has room for you and your grief. Sometimes we're in a season of frantic scrambling and we're not all put together. (Am I right, parents?!?) That's a season too, and one your Lord has room in His creation for. It's ok when the seasons change and when things are different or not what you prepared yourself for. There is a season for everything - and Christ and His Word, worship and the assembling of the saints, mercy and forgiveness, learning and prayer and growth in God's Word – these things are God's gifts to you in each and every season. And you are His in every season. He is with you in every season.

Whether the calendar is flipping too fast for you, or each day seems like an eternity, rejoice that you and your situation are known by the Savior who died for you. You and your situation are held in his nail-pierced hand. Do not despair. We may not see how, but in the end, He will use every season for His glory - and your salvation.

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Be with us, O Christ, in every season. Bring us, by your grace, to the time of peace that shall never end.

Amen.

*Pastor Nate McCarty*



## VICAR'S JUNE MESSAGE

Ah, the summertime. A time where the youth run rampant and the parents count how many grey hairs have grown since the beginning of the year. As much as summer is a great time and a time of weeping and gnashing of teeth, there is one really exciting part of summer that I have always enjoyed and that both youth and parents enjoy... Vacation Bible School (VBS)! Since I am in charge of the dramas for the week, I thought it would be fun to tell mini versions of them for you this month. For those who do not know, VBS always has a theme both for the environment and also theologically. This year's theme is Scuba as well as "God is a friend." Each day, we dive into bible stories that expand a little more on the idea of God being our friend. So I hope you brought your scuba gear and swim trunks, because it's time to dive in!

The first day is all about how "God is a friend who's real!" This story is of Elijah as he is in the middle of a "My God is better than your god" battle (1 Kings 18-19). The prophets of Baal are doing all of these sacrifices and dances and even offering their own blood as a means to show that their god is real! However, their god isn't real because there is no response. Elijah then starts preparing the altar and prays to God one time, and all of a sudden, fire comes from the heavens, consuming the altar! God shows that He is real and that He loves His creation!

The second day tells us that "God is a friend who loves." On this day, we hear the story of Jonah (Jonah 1-3). In the story of Jonah, God gives Jonah a message to give to the people of Ninevah. Now, the Ninevites are the worst people ever at the time, yet God wants them to hear His word and come to know the true God. Jonah doesn't want to help these terrible people, so he runs, but gets captured by a giant whale. Now, God could have started over and told someone else to talk to the Ninevites, but God showed his love to Jonah and gave him another chance. As Jonah appeared to the Ninevites and told them God's message, they turned away from their wickedness, and God loved them and forgave them!

The third day, we hear that "God is a friend we can trust!" The story for this day is Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41). As the disciples are sailing across the treacherous waters, Jesus is sound asleep at the bottom of the boat. The disciples, afraid that they might die, went to wake up Jesus. Jesus wakes up and, in typical Jesus fashion, stops the winds and waters, showing that He is a friend you can always trust in!

Almost done, everyone. On the fourth day, the kids are told, "God is a friend forever!" In this story, we see that Jesus dies, but he comes back to life and lives eternally (John 18-20). As Jesus' disciples have been with him for years at this point, and then for Jesus to die, it feels like he has left us. With Jesus dead, it feels like we have lost a friend. But Jesus can not be stopped by death and is resurrected, showing that He is a friend who will be with us forever!

And lastly, "God is a friend for everyone!" We specifically hear about this when Paul preaches the word to a woman named Lydia (Acts 16:11-15). When Lydia heard the great news, she helped spearhead the first Christian church in Europe as well as open her home to be one of the first churches. This is to show that anyone and everyone is able to hear the Good news of Jesus and come into a friendship with Him!

Woo, that was a brisk swim, but I hope you enjoyed the brief summary of VBS. If you want to know more or get involved in any way, please voice it! We would love anyone and everyone to join us this summer and help tell the little ones all about how God is their friend!

*Vicar Jacob Manning*



# JUNE EVENTS AT BLC!

MON  
JUN  
2

## CARDS, CARDS, CARDS!

9:30 AM

Everyone is welcome to join the Senior Shufflers for their monthly game!



WED  
JUN  
4

## WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

9:30 AM

All women are invited to join.



WED  
JUN  
4

## BLC NEW MEMBER CLASS (LAST WEEK)

6:30 PM

Come to the final new members classes! Wednesday night.



THURS  
JUN  
5

## YOUNG ADULTS' BIBLE STUDY

6:30 PM

All young adults invited, bring a friend! Talk to Vicar for more details.



THURS  
JUN  
9-13

## BLC'S VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

9AM -12 PM

Pray for our kiddos and our wonderful volunteers!



FRI  
JUN  
20

## BLC SERVES AT MISSION HOUSE

4:00 PM

Talk to Vicar about serving at Mission House.



FRI  
JUN  
27

## ALL SAINTS GAME NIGHT + POTLUCK

5:30 PM-9 PM

Games night resumes! Bring a dish to share. Friends are welcome.





# BLC VOLUNTEERS!

## SCREENS

### JUN. 1

8 - Patrick  
9:30 - Romaine  
11 - Gina

### JUN. 8

8 - Susan  
9:30 - Brenda  
11 - Carol

### JUN. 15

8 - Valerie  
9:30 - Kristine  
11 - Lloyd

### JUN. 22

8 - Patrick  
9:30 - Tami  
11 - Toni

### JUN. 29

8 - Patrick  
9:30 - Chris  
11 - Carol

## ALTAR GUILD

### SAT. MAY 31

Set Up - Tami

### SUN. JUN. 1

8 - Valerie  
9:30 - Barbara  
11 - Beth

### SAT. JUN. 7

Set Up - Dee R.

### SUN. JUN. 8

8 - Susan  
9:30 - Nina  
11 - Carol

### SAT. JUN. 14

Set Up - Carol

### SUN. JUN. 15

8 - Valerie  
9:30 - Dee R.  
11 - Diana

### SAT. JUN. 21

Set Up - Dee R.

### SUN. JUN. 22

8 - Jamie  
9:30 - Tami  
11 - Kathy

### SAT. JUN. 28

Set Up - Anna

### SUN. JUN. 29

8 - Jamie  
9:30 - Brenda  
11 - Carol

## ELDERS

### SUN. JUN. 1

8 - EIC Paul & Gordon  
9:30 - EIC Joe  
11 - EIC Dan & Brandon

### SUN. JUN. 8

8 - EIC Jamie & Gordon  
9:30 - EIC Joe  
11 - EIC Alex & Al

### SUN. JUN. 15

8 - EIC Gordon & Jamie  
9:30 - EIC Joe & John  
11 - EIC Dennis & Allan

### SUN. JUN. 22

8 - EIC Paul & Jamie  
9:30 - EIC Joe  
11 - EIC Dan & Bruce

### SUN. JUN. 29

8 - EIC Jamie & Gordon  
9:30 - EIC Joe & John  
11 - EIC Al & Allan

## BLC APPRECIATES YOU!

## COUNTING

### JUN. 1

Paul/Allan

### JUN. 8

Diane/Barbie

### JUN. 15

Paul/Greg

### JUN. 22

Barbie/Diane

### JUN. 29

Holly/Bob

## STREAMING

### JUN. 1

Margie

### JUN. 8

Brandon

### JUN. 15

Jerry

### JUN. 22

Jeannie

### JUN. 29

Bob

# JUNE BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

## BIRTHDAYS

Dan Dablow	3-Jun	Barbara Jacobs	15-Jun
Susan Heimbach	4-Jun	Blaire Matthews	15-Jun
Laurene Arthur	5-Jun	Andrew McGiveron	16-Jun
Tony Mazzeo	5-Jun	Lindsay McGiveron	16-Jun
Rhoda Newton	5-Jun	Polly Navarro	17-Jun
Alanna Tostovarsnik	5-Jun	Amber Sherrill	17-Jun
Rita Wells	5-Jun	Jose Cardona	18-Jun
Donny Barley	6-Jun	Emma Ley	18-Jun
Rev. Dana Brones	6-Jun	Alex Spock	18-Jun
Maxwell Florey	6-Jun	Keith Bicknase	19-Jun
Madison Potratz	6-Jun	Addilyn Kline	19-Jun
Lisa Smith	6-Jun	Nina Gregor	21-Jun
Kaitlyn Spock	6-Jun	Jennifer McEwen	21-Jun
Steve Boone	8-Jun	Margaret Parnaby	21-Jun
Stacey Hampton	8-Jun	Mark McGiveron	23-Jun
Nathan Johnson	8-Jun	David Bavle	24-Jun
Harry Baum	9-Jun	Chris Johnson	24-Jun
Gina Parrish-Parsons	9-Jun	Norman Mattmuller	24-Jun
Cruz Rangel	9-Jun	Jan Sifferath	26-Jun
Mary Hayden	11-Jun	Hannah Malmind	27-Jun
Jonathan Gregor	12-Jun	Will Romer	28-Jun
Traci Almaguer	13-Jun	Dianne Reed	29-Jun
Valerie Gruhn	13-Jun		

## ANNIVERSARIES

Mark and Emma Bolyard	3-Jun	Scott and Cindy Cooper	14-Jun
Jose and Sarah Cardona	7-Jun	Logan and Elizabeth Dellinger	14-Jun
Jerry and Shirley Kirkman	7-Jun	John and Lynda Potratz	14-Jun
Dennis and Barbara Larson	8-Jun	John and Renee Hornsby	17-Jun
Rev. Dave and Sabra Horn	9-Jun	Wayne and Angela Orzeske	18-Jun
Tom and Carole Barry	10-Jun	Christopher and Eva Culbreth	22-Jun
Joe and Robin Leaptrott	12-Jun	Dan and Jan Runko	23-Jun
		Adam and Julie Geis	29-Jun