

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

JULY/ AUGUST 2025 | VOL. 2 ISSUE 12

Summer
EDITION

5 EASY SUMMER BIBLE STUDY TIPS

Greetings, saints of Bethlehem! I hope your summer is providing you the opportunity for a bit of rest and catching up on your reading goals. I hope you have reading goals. Words are great. Our Savior is the Word of God made flesh. God loves words.

Now, if your reading goals concern obscure Russian novelists, I'm not your guy. But - if your goal is getting to know the Bible better, (and what better summer goal could there be?!?) I do have a few suggestions.

1. Just read the Bible. Don't worry about understanding it all right away. Just read and keep the bigger story in mind. The Bible tells the story of God's creation, its fall, its rescue in Jesus, and even its ultimate restoration. If you're reading a biblical passage, where does it fall in that story? Forget about the confusing details for just a bit and focus on what part of the bigger story is being told just then. Then...
2. Look for Jesus. Jesus said that all (even Old Testament!) Scripture was written about Him, so if you're reading the book of Leviticus, or the story of Joseph or Sampson, or even [especially?] a Psalm, ask yourself, "Where is Jesus here? Does it remind me of Him? Is He its opposite?" He's in there; somewhere, somehow.
3. Read about the Bible, not just the Bible itself. It's a very good practice to use (reputable) resources that aren't the actual Bible in your Bible study. Why? The books that make up the Bible all come out of certain contexts, and anything that can help you learn about those contexts is going to help you understand what the authors of Scripture were getting at - and how it applies to your life today. I tend to avoid most "Study Bibles," as they often turn into "axe-to-grind" Bibles - trying to shoehorn all of God's Word into something immediately relevant for a "Women's Study Bible" or a "Teen Study Bible."

Other stories this month:

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- SUMMER EVENTS
- VICAR JACOB'S LAST ARTICLE





But, with that caveat mentioned, I do heartily recommend the Lutheran Study Bible available from our church body's publishing house, CPH. They have it available super cheap as a phone app now and I've been told repeatedly that it is fantastic. It can read itself to you, you can highlight things, take notes, and save verses. It's filled with helpful comments and short articles by top-tier theologians. It's got prayers for your devotional life and various reading plans you can track along with. It really does pull you even further into God's Word itself.

4. Be humble and kind to yourself. God's written word is complicated and can be confusing. It confuses pastors, too! Don't let pressure to "know it all" keep you from exploring God's riches.

5. Use others! Use your pastor. (He has literally been trained to be a professional Bible reader and understander! If that's a word.) Use your Bible Study group. The Scriptures were written by faithful men of God, in the context of the whole people of God, for the whole people of God. Scripture is a communal thing. There is much to be gained from exploring it together, rather than merely in isolation.

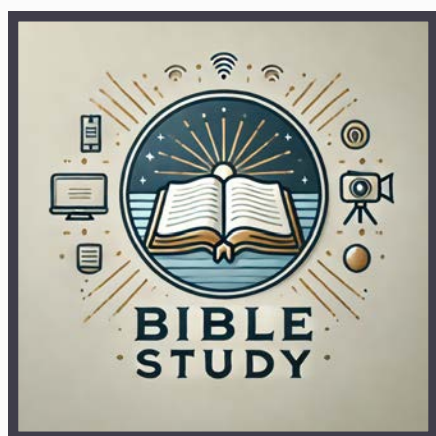
Hope these thoughts help a bit this summer! God bless your reading. Remember the words of Psalm 119: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Yours,

Pastor Nate McCarty



SPEAKING OF BIBLE STUDIES...



While we will be taking a break for the month of July, don't forget Pas. Nate's ZOOM Bible Study ECHO meets on Mondays at 7 PM. Currently, we are working our way through the past week's sermon hymn and the Scripture that inspired the hymn. A great chance to dive deep into the Word of God with your BLC family from the comfort of your own home. If you are interested in joining in August, please send an inquiry to the church office at officeadmin@bethlehemlutheranjaxbeach.org and we will send you an invitation link. Don't miss out on this opportunity to grow in your faith with others!

SUNDAY STUDIES FOR YOU TO CHECK-OUT

Pastor Bicknase's Sunday School Class: Pas. Bicknase leads his class through Scripture on Sunday mornings at 9:30 in Disciples' Hall. Right now, they are covering the story of Joseph and the journey of the Israelites. Stop in for some coffee and a chance to go deeper into the Bible.

Misfits Sunday School Class: The Misfits have started a new study of the book of Revelation. From the publisher: "Revelation is a Bible book that either fascinates or repels the reader. Sometimes doing both at once. Throughout Christian history, believers have struggled with the book of Revelation. These nine studies by Greg Clarke tread a path through the minefield of interpretations, avoiding speculation and making sure to stick to what the Bible is in fact saying."

Children and Youth Sunday School Classes: All children from Pre-K to High School Youth are invited to attend our Sunday School classes.



ONE LAST MESSAGE FROM VICAR JACOB

"The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you." (2 Timothy 4:22)

I really don't like the season of the "lasts." "Last" youth group, "last" bible study, "last" meeting....well, maybe I am ok with that one being the "last" (I'm kidding...kind of). The season of the "lasts" is a time of reflection, which usually incurs some sort of somber attitude. In the passage I quoted at the beginning of this newsletter, Paul is writing his "last" words to his beloved disciple and friend, Timothy. He is giving Timothy all of the "last" minute information before God takes Paul to his heavenly home. After Paul has told Timothy every "last" minute thing, he ends the chapter saying, "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you."

First off, I am not dying...so let's not be too dramatic. However, when I am gone, some of you may not see me again (yes, there is Facebook and stuff, but I am talking more physically). Consider this my letter to you, congregation of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, filled with my "last" minutes. Warning: may contain extreme sappiness.

When I held my "last" confirmation class, it felt very surreal. I had grown attached to seeing these youth every week and getting to tell them about the Bible and fielding their questions. Teaching confirmation is something I had never done before, and yet Bethlehem Lutheran Church gave me the amazing opportunity to do so. We played stump the Vicar. I thought that they would ask me religious questions, and some did, but a lot of their questions were more about me. "What's your fiancé's name again? Are you teaching us next year? Are you coming back?" I wasn't ready for any of those questions. It made me realize something...I'm going to miss these kids! I always asked the kids how they were doing, if there was anything they needed prayers for, etc. I never thought I would be met with the same. It was truly a blessing, and to this day, I still look back on the "last" confirmation and remember it fondly.

I had my "last" bible study only a short while ago, and again it felt very surreal. We had been trucking along through the book of Acts together, and I enjoyed the back-and-forths, discussions, and different insights from everyone. And the best part of it was obviously MaryAnn's cookies she brought almost every week. It hasn't really hit me till now, I am going to miss teaching Bible Study! I'm going to miss everyone who usually showed up, getting to know YOU on a deeper level, and sharing prayer requests with one another. It was truly a blessing, and to this day, I still look back on the "last" Bible Study and remember it fondly.



This isn't going to age well, mainly because I am writing this late June, and you will have this newsletter for all of July and August. This means that there are some “lasts” that are yet to happen as I am writing, but when you read this, the “lasts” may have already come and gone. I wonder if this happened with Paul and Timothy. When Paul wrote to Timothy, did Timothy know that this was to be his “last” letter? The “last” time he heard or saw him? I think that's why the end of Timothy's letter is so important. “The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.”

Congregation of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, I have been so honored and privileged to be your Vicar for the year. I have learned so much regarding what it means to be a Pastor and how to serve God faithfully by serving His sheep. Special thanks to Pastor Brones for teaching, molding, and guiding me throughout this year. You are both an amazing supervisor and someone I call a friend! Another special thanks to Pastor Nate. A lot of my Vicar duties aligned with a lot of your responsibilities and duties. You were so kind to me, patient with me, and gave me opportunities to learn through experience. Bethlehem is so blessed to have you both as their Pastor! I can't give honorary mentions to everyone, or else this newsletter would be longer than it already is. However, I do want to say thank you so much to everyone at BLC for how much you love us Vicars. I have developed friendships with so many of you, and have been blessed in so many different ways by all of you, and you are the reason why these “lasts” are going to be so difficult (it's all your fault! hahaha). I can never say thank you enough to all of you. As Paul wrote to Timothy, I say to you as well:

“The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.”

It has been an honor to be your Vicar,

Vicar Jacob Manning

SUMMER EVENTS



CAMPFIRMATION 2025

Campfirmation 2025 attendees, please plan to meet at the church on July 6th at 8:00 AM. We will pack up, say a short prayer, and head out to Camp Linn Haven. Check those packing lists twice!

CARDS, CARDS, CARDS!

JULY 7TH, 2025 AT 930 AM

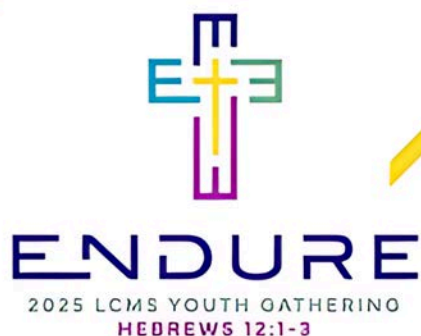
Join us for Vicar Jacob's last Senior Card Day. There will be food and fellowship as stay cool and play some cards. **All ages** are invited and you're welcome to bring a friend. No experience is needed, you will be taught!



LCMS NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING

Youth and Adult participants:

We will be meeting on Friday, July 18th at Grace Lutheran Church (12200 McCormick Rd.) at 6:30 AM. Make sure to have two packed meals for the trip.



MORE SUMMER FUN!



VICAR CALEB INSTALLATION & WELCOME!

AUGUST 10TH

Join us as we install our 15th vicar at BLC! Vicar Caleb will be installed at the 8 AM service and there will be a Celebration Meal following the 11 AM service that Sunday.

BLC WOMEN'S RETREAT

AUGUST 22ND - AUGUST 24TH AT LUTHER SPRINGS

Keep a look out for more information about our 2025 BLC Women's Retreat this August. Sign-up sheet and information will be posted on the bulletin board and website soon.



ALL AGES GAMES NIGHT

AUGUST 29TH - 5:30 PM

Adults...young adults...youth? All are invited to our first monthly games night of the fall! It is a potluck again so please bring an appetizer or a side dish. It is a lot of fun, please come out! Friends are always welcome.



SUMMER EVENTS AT BLC!

THURS
JULY
3

YOUNG ADULT BIBLE STUDY 5:30 PM

Join us for our YA Bible Study in the Upper Room. See FB page for more details.



FRI
JULY
4

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY 4TH OF JULY!

Church Office and Preschool Closed for the Holiday.



MON
JULY
7

CARDS, CARDS, CARDS!

9:30 AM

Join the Senior Shufflers for our monthly game of Hand and Foot!



SUN
JULY
27

VICAR JACOB'S LAST SUNDAY!

Come and join us for Vicar Jacob's last Sunday at BLC and help us send him off!



MON
AUG
4

HELP VICAR CALEB MOVE IN!

Please help us welcome Vicar Caleb and help him get settled into the Vicarage house. Time announced closer to date.



THURS
AUG
7

YOUNG ADULT BIBLE STUDY 5:30 PM

Join us for our YA Bible Study in the Upper Room. See FB page for more details.



SUN
AUG
10

VICAR CALEB INSTALLATION 8:00 AM SERVICE & NOON

Welcome Vicar Caleb to BLC at his installation service at 8 AM and celebration meal at Noon.

WELCOME

FRI
AUG
22

BLC WOMEN'S RETREAT

AUG. 22-24TH AT LUTHER SPRINGS
More details to come.



A BIG THANK YOU!

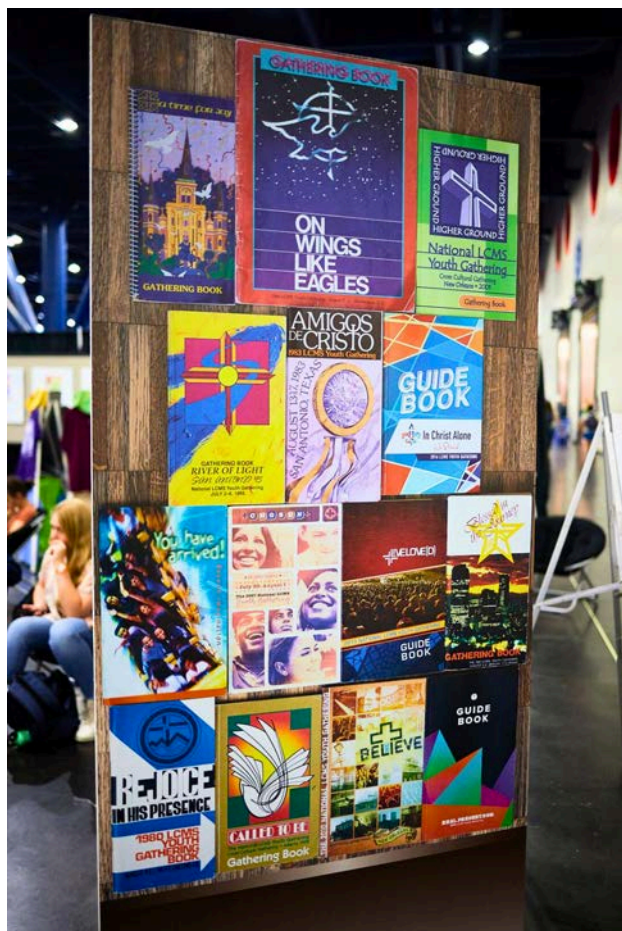
Thanks just doesn't seem like enough for all that you did for our SCUBA VBS. We're so incredibly grateful for each of you and each life that Jesus touched here at Bethlehem. Countless seeds were planted with over 160

Volunteers and VBS Kids attending VBS@blc

To GOD be the Glory!



LC-MS NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING



A Shared History...

Held every 3 years since 1980, the LCMS Youth Gathering provides thousands of youth and adults the opportunity to come together as a community of God's people to be encouraged in their walk with Jesus Christ and learn about the Christian faith and their Lutheran identity.

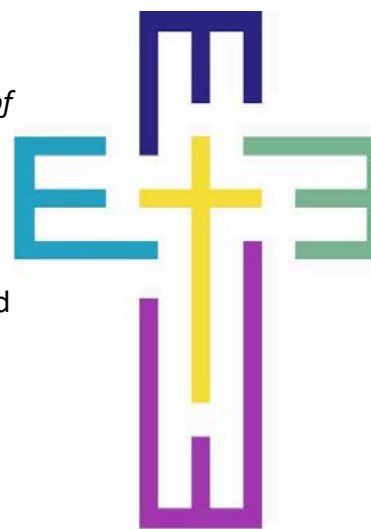
The Gathering is more than the five days of the event. The preparation process for the Gathering brings together young people and supportive adults to encourage each other in their baptismal identity. The Gathering provides young people a vision for the vastness of Christ's Church and equips them for vocational service as they continue their walk with Jesus.

For many of our youth this will be their first NYG! For some of the adults at BLC, they can remember their first National Gathering. Was it San Antonio? Atlanta? Orlando? Or even New Orleans? What an amazing connection to share between all generations- gathering together with over 20,000 other Lutheran youth from all over the country to grow in God and share of His love with all.

...and Enduring Faith!

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted." (Hebrews 12:1-3)

In the 45 years of the National Gathering, the one thing that **ENDURES** is the faith in Christ alone. Themes, locations, events and hosts will change every three years but the Word of the Lord remains. It remains as a guide to our youth in the life they endure as ones called to live and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What's awesome about NYG? It reminds you that we do not do this alone. We are a part of that great cloud of witness (aka saints) and that gives us strength and hope to carry on... to endure. We pray for our BLC youth, adult leaders, the NYG volunteers and speakers and musicians, and all those attending in New Orleans that God will be with you and make this an experience to remember, an experience that **ENDURES!**



TAKE JESUS WITH YOU THIS SUMMER!

(Literally. Seriously. Cut out this Jesus and attach Him to a popsicle stick and include Him in all your Summer plans and photos. Jesus is with you everywhere, right? 😊 Then submit those photos to officeadmin@bethlehemlutheranjaxbeach.org to be featured in our next issue.)



BLC VOLUNTEERS!

COUNTING

JULY 6

Paul/Allan

JULY 13

Bob/Holly

JULY 20

Paul/Greg

JULY 27

Diane/Barbie

ELDERS

JULY 6

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

JULY 13

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

JULY 20

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

JULY 27

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

ALTAR GUILD

SAT. JULY 5

Set Up - Dee R

SUN. JULY 6

8 - Susan
9:30 - Brenda
11 - Carol

SAT. JULY 12

Set Up - Carol

SUN. DEC. 8

8 - Valerie
9:30 - Nina
11 - Diana

SAT. JULY 19

Set Up - Tami

SUN. JULY 20

8 - Susan
9:30 - Tami
11 - Kathy

SAT. JULY 26

Set Up - Anna

SUN. JULY 27

8 - Valerie
9:30 - Brenda
11 - Beth

SCREENS

JULY 6

8 - Patrick &
Nancy
9:30 - Kristine
11 - Gina

JULY 13

8 - Val
9:30 - Chris
11 - Carol

JULY 20

8 - Susan
9:30 - Romaine
11 - Toni

JULY 27

8 - Val
9:30 - Brenda
11 - Lloyd

BLC APPRECIATES YOU!

*Special Note: The Newsletter will be taking a break for August. Please talk to the head of your group for August schedules.

JULY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Birthdays

| | | | | | |
|----------|--------------|-------|---------|----------|-------|
| Carole | Barry | 07/01 | Amy | Case | 07/27 |
| Ivy | Richards | 07/01 | Jon | Wuggazer | 07/27 |
| Oliver | Stanfield | 07/02 | Jim | Schrader | 07/28 |
| Jean | Christ | 07/04 | Barbara | Larson | 07/30 |
| Renee | Hornsby | 07/04 | Luke | Huber | 07/31 |
| Brian | Kientz | 07/04 | | | |
| Otto | Gruhn | 07/05 | | | |
| Marvin | Ley | 07/05 | | | |
| Kristine | Perryman | 07/05 | | | |
| Paul | Gundian | 07/06 | | | |
| Elijah | Addison | 07/07 | | | |
| Renee | Boone | 07/07 | | | |
| Bruce | Dellinger | 07/07 | | | |
| Catalina | Carr | 07/08 | | | |
| Summer | Dellinger | 07/08 | | | |
| Morgan | OConnor | 07/08 | | | |
| David | Thiemann | 07/08 | | | |
| Paul | Huber | 07/09 | | | |
| Amanda | Beaty | 07/10 | | | |
| Larry | Hosley | 07/10 | | | |
| Zachary | Harms | 07/11 | | | |
| Jan | Dablow | 07/12 | | | |
| Paul | Briggs | 07/13 | | | |
| Andrew | Sherrill | 07/13 | | | |
| Susan | Albrecht | 07/15 | | | |
| Diane | Brones | 07/15 | | | |
| Jessica | Skorusa | 07/15 | | | |
| Freya | Helberg | 07/16 | | | |
| Ace | Lee | 07/16 | | | |
| Angela | Orzeske | 07/16 | | | |
| Gordon | Gruhn | 07/17 | | | |
| Dan | Tostovarsnik | 07/17 | | | |
| Sam | Florey | 07/18 | | | |
| Richard | Raddant | 07/18 | | | |
| Susan | Findell | 07/19 | | | |
| Rachel | Leaptrott | 07/19 | | | |
| Olivia | Harrison | 07/21 | | | |
| Tammy | Barley | 07/22 | | | |
| Matt | Reichard | 07/22 | | | |
| Lily | Wuggazer | 07/22 | | | |
| Samantha | Maloney | 07/23 | | | |
| Ginny | Collins | 07/26 | | | |
| Janet | Wiegmann | 07/26 | | | |

Anniversaries

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Dee and Terry Parker | 07/01 |
| Erica and Pas. Nate McCarty | 07/03 |
| Linda and Stephen Reed | 07/11 |
| Kelly and Kenny Sly | 07/11 |
| Danielle and Nick Huckaba | 07/13 |
| Jan and Dan Dablow | 07/25 |
| Nancy and Bernie Brewer | 07/25 |
| Tammy and Ron Zarski | 07/25 |

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Birthdays

| | | |
|------------|------------|-------|
| Remington | Heilig | 08/04 |
| Addison | Siebenaler | 08/05 |
| Kyle | Wilhelm | 08/05 |
| Harry | Baum | 08/06 |
| Dennis | Reese | 08/06 |
| Michael | Gregor | 08/06 |
| Amberleigh | Usher | 08/06 |
| Marianne | Johnson | 08/08 |
| Edward | Boyajian | 08/08 |
| John | Potratz | 08/08 |
| Erika | Gajdos | 08/08 |
| Monica | Cook | 08/08 |
| Barbara | Cooper | 08/08 |
| Lynda | Potratz | 08/09 |
| Patricia | Burgains | 08/10 |
| Saralyn | Crafton | 08/10 |
| Dennis | LaForty | 08/11 |
| Donald | Adkison | 08/12 |
| Shelly | Sly | 08/12 |
| Paul | Winter | 08/13 |
| Matthew | Smith | 08/14 |
| Isaiah | Harrison | 08/15 |
| Sandy | Parker | 08/16 |
| Al | Clawson | 08/16 |
| Logan | Skorusa | 08/18 |
| Judie | Knudtson | 08/18 |
| Karen | Wilhelm | 08/19 |
| Kathy | Lawler | 08/21 |
| Darlene | Maxwell | 08/22 |
| Julio | Gundian | 08/22 |
| | DeLos | |
| Anna-lise | Santos | 08/22 |
| Kristine | Gundian | 08/22 |
| Tom | Barry | 08/23 |
| Laurie | Brauer | 08/23 |
| Shirley | Kirkman | 08/25 |
| Henry | Huckaba | 08/25 |
| Brenda | Johnson | 08/25 |
| Steve | Florey | 08/28 |
| Wes | Kuehlthau | 08/28 |
| Lynn | McGiveron | 08/29 |
| | De Los | |
| Ryott | Santos | 08/29 |

| | | |
|----------|------------|-------|
| Mary Ann | Lawrence | 08/29 |
| Rob | Wortelboer | 08/29 |
| Kimberly | Cotea | 08/30 |
| Diana | Clawson | 08/31 |
| Triston | Alderson | 08/31 |

Anniversaries

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Janine and David Thiemann | 08/01 |
| Stephanie and Christopher Stubbs | 08/03 |
| Vicki and Paul Green | 08/06 |
| Alanna and Dan Tostovarsnik | 08/08 |
| Darlene and Billy Maxwell | 08/12 |
| Kathy and John Poe | 08/12 |
| Julie and Julio Gundian | 08/22 |
| Beverly and Russ Furtick | 08/24 |
| Erika and Josh Gajdos | 08/25 |
| Brenda and Bob Murray | 08/26 |
| Polly and Robert Navarro | 08/27 |
| Judianne and Larry Hosley | 08/29 |
| Teri and Brian Kientz | 08/30 |
| Karen and John Woodsmall | 08/31 |
| Joan and Jeff Carr | 08/31 |



JULY 2025



AUGUST 2025



| | | | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 930 AM AA |
| 3 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School | 4 Vicar Caleb Move-In | 5 | 6 11 AM Staff Meeting 7 PM Limbaugh Bible Study | 7 630 PM Young Adult Bible Study | 8 | 9 930 AM AA |
| 10 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School | Installation SERVICE | | 12 7 PM Elders | 13 11 AM Staff Meeting 7 PM Limbaugh Bible Study | 14 | 15 430 PM Mission House BLC WOMEN'S RETREAT |
| 17 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School | 18 | 19 | 20 11 AM Staff Meeting 7 PM Limbaugh Bible Study | 21 6 PM Men's Bible Study | 22 530 PM Family Game Night & Potluck | 23 930 AM AA |
| 24 31 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School | 25  | 26 7 PM Exec. Council | 27 11 AM Staff Meeting 7 PM Limbaugh Bible Study | 28 | 29 | 30 930 AM AA |