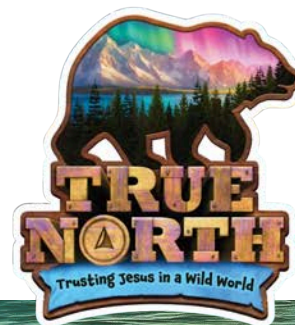




THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH



BLC VBS 2026 Edition

The Sending God

Bethlehem is a church with a God-given mission. That’s right, if we are to speak rightly of Mission, we must begin with the realization that mission belongs to God.

We are accustomed to speaking of “the church’s mission,” but to speak that way is to start wrong. Yes, God has given His Church a mission, but that mission begins with God – the Mission of God. That’s because “mission” in the Bible doesn’t come to us as a noun. It comes to us as a verb: *Shalach*, in the Hebrew, *pempo* and even more importantly *apostello*, in the NT. Those are the mission words – the verbs for “to send.” Mission is **sending**. It is “the mission of God” – it belongs to God, not the church, because mission is sending. And the only sending that really counts is that which God does.

We worship the One from whom all blessings flow – because God **sends** those blessings. Missio Dei – God’s **sending**: The great mission of God was to send his Son into the world, not to condemn but to save. But still his mission was not complete.

John 15:26 “When the Counselor comes, whom I will **send** to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” Missio Dei: Father and Son **send** the Spirit so the world might know the Son who reveals the Father. But still his mission is incomplete.

He **sends** “apostles” – their very name meaning literally, “the sent ones.” They are **sent** under the Spirit’s power and authority who was **sent** by the Son who was **sent** by the Father. We hold the words of these men as the inspired words of God, for they were **sent** by God, to testify about the Son he **sent**. The very Mission of God.

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The Sending God (Cont.)

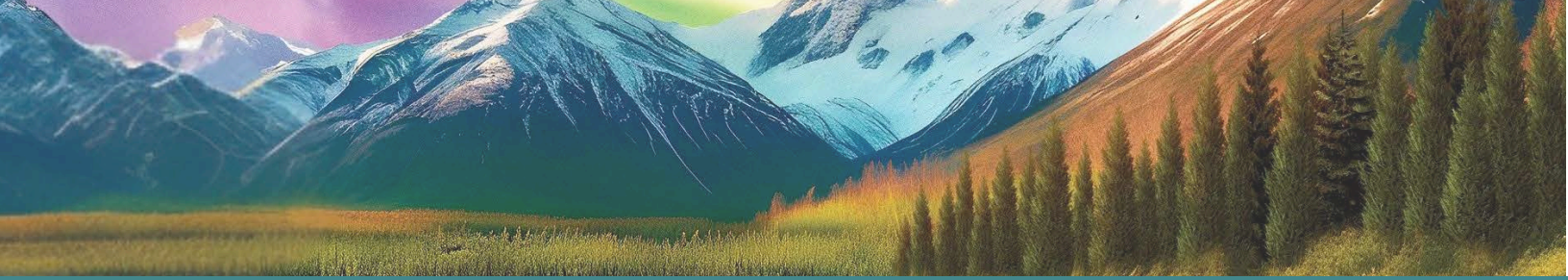
But still the mission goes on, for God **sends us** – you and me as his disciples – on his very specific mission and tells us, “As you go, disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to keep all that I have commanded.” With that, it becomes crystal clear: The mission of the church is forever what **God sends us** to do. God owns the mission. He defines it. Our mission, the Church’s mission, is ever God’s mission. We are simply, yet profoundly, part of the current generation of those he **sends**.

Here at Bethlehem, our Church Council and our Board of Elders, our staff, and our members, are committed to God’s mission. We know what God has **sent** us to do. Many good things are happening at Bethlehem. Our youth ministry is growing under the direction of Pastor Nate and Vicar Caleb. Bethlehem observed the confirmation of eleven amazing teens on Palm Sunday. There are twenty-five adults currently enrolled in the new member class. Our Guatemala mission and South Africa mission teams are **sent** by Bethlehem to the ends of the earth and God uses us in miraculous ways. In fact, I will be leaving for South Africa on June 16 with a wonderful group from Bethlehem. Our Guatemala mission trip is scheduled for November. Our BLC preschool, under the direction of Pat May, is taking positive steps toward strengthening our preschool mission under God’s grace. We are blessed to have had wonderful vicars **sent** to us and we look forward to receiving another vicar (Micah Cumming) in August. Our local mission is also having an impact on our community as more people are visiting our church because they have heard about the Lord’s mission at BLC. Lastly, I am more passionate than ever about my ministry at Bethlehem. Please know that I am committed to my Call as Senior Pastor and will continue to work, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as one **sent** to be part of God’s mission in this place. Indeed, the mission of God is alive and active in our church, and He is **sending** us to make a difference in the world, beginning in our own backyard.

The **sending God** never sleeps. His Son urges us to pray even more that laborers may be **sent** into the harvest. Such prayers are not only for far distant lands but for us, right here and right now. So, I plead with all of you to pray for BLC to be faithful to God’s mission. I also ask each of you to consider that God has **sent** you to be more deeply involved with God’s mission, to be more deeply committed to your financial support for our ministry, and to have God **send** you to bring others into his church. That is God’s mission. He will use you and bless you. Through you, belonging to God’s mission, he will bless many others.

In His Service,

Pastor Dana Allen Brown



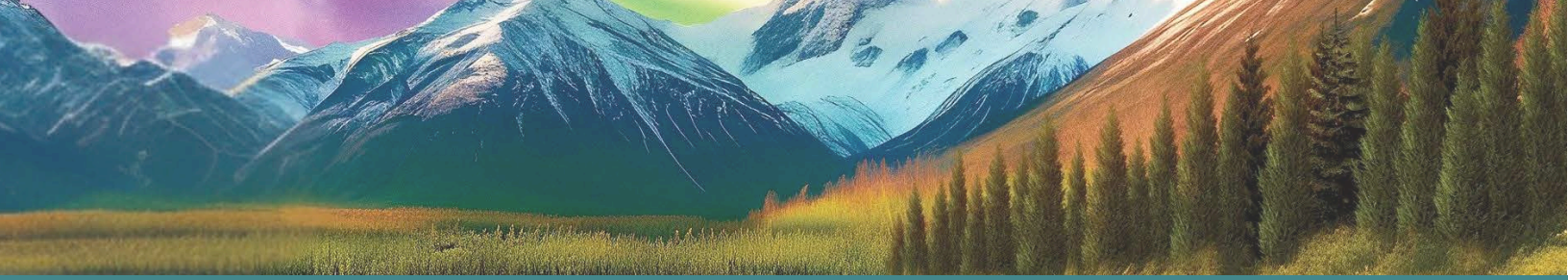
Living Faithfully... In Your Season!

We are now well into the summer season. I hope you're making time to enjoy it! Seasons are interesting, but being a creature of habit, I don't always adapt well when they change. A "season" is a period of time that is distinct, and yet ebbs and flows in a different way than other, more precise units of time. A week is exactly seven days and an hour exactly sixty minutes. But seasons are more flexible. Sometimes they're longer. Sometimes they're shorter. And sometimes they blend, one into the next, almost imperceptibly.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1 Solomon states, *"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."* Summer is a time for many things: cookouts, soaking up sunshine, water sports. For some there is a daring attempt at a slower pace of life for a couple of months. Don't forget the joy of dashing in and out of the daily afternoon thunderstorms this season can bring! Of course, for Church life summer means Vacation Bible School, Mission Trips, Servant Week, and Campfirmation. Not to mention some of my favorite Scripture readings/Sundays in the church year. It's a jam-packed season, but a season all the same.

We have seasons in life, too. Like it or not we are all in a certain season in life. And much of the time, at least, you can't control the seasons. What we can control, what we are held responsible for, is how we conduct our lives while we are in whatever the season happens to be. So much of life, the Preacher of Ecclesiastes seems to be telling us, is above our pay grade. The question is not always, "How do I change the world and environment around me?" Sometimes the question is, "How can I be faithful to my Creator in the world and environment in which I am placed? In the season I'm in right now?" And for that we have a clear word of God.

One of my favorite sections in our Small Catechism is the Table of Duties. It's wonderfully clear and direct in the guidance it gives to all Christians, no matter the season they find themselves in, no matter their current role or situation. The Table of Duties does a simple but profound thing. It simply collects passages of Scripture that speak to us in our various positions and callings. Pull it out this week. Give it a gander. It's God's word to us. To you, right where you are in your current season. It shows us, not how to earn our salvation, but how to be faithful whatever our situation is, now that Jesus has granted us that salvation - that free gift of new life. And what does that new life under Him look like? Well, pull out the Table of Duties, take a gander, and go from there.



Living Faithfully...In Your Season! ***(Cont.)***

Fill in the blanks. What is God's word to pastors and preachers? What do the laity owe their pastors? What does God say of civil government? Of its citizens? What does God say – specifically! – to husbands, wives, parents, children? What direction does the Lord give to workers and employees? The season may have changed – but God's design for life and His Word for us... they haven't. And how about youth and widows? Yep, it's there! God's good word of direction is for everyone, no matter the season.

This summer spend some time with your catechism, your Bible, your family – or maybe all three together! Dig into God's word and His guidance. And then dig into *life!* After all, His Word is life! No matter the season.

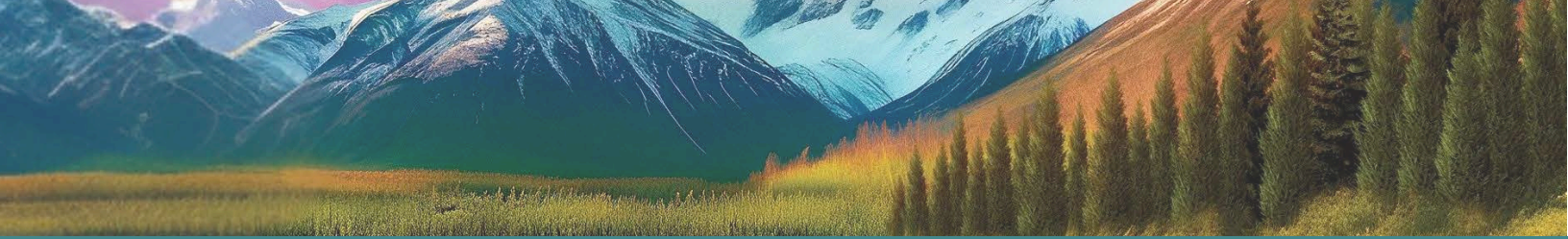
In Christ,

Pastor Nate McCarty



**To everything there is a season-
including Children & Youth
Sunday School. For the months of
June and July our BLC Children
and Youth Sunday School will be
taking a much needed break. We
will resume growing in Christ and
with each other on August 9th. See
you there!**





Sharing the Love of Christ

One of the amazing opportunities that we all share and have as Christians is to witness to the truth of Jesus Christ to others! While we get to do this each and every day of our lives, this summer we especially have a lot of opportunities to witness to others. Vacation Bible School is right around the corner, the youth Servant Event week at Camp Linn Haven is at the end of June, the upcoming mission trip to South Africa etc. there's so many different opportunities to share your faith with others in our community here in Jacksonville, as well as throughout the world. What a wonderful opportunity it is to see Jesus enter the lives of others and do what only Jesus can do, SAVE! As a vicar, I can say it truly is amazing to see that, but also to see how God works through you in everything you say and do to bring Jesus to others!

One incredible opportunity we'll have this summer is in partnering with City Rescue Mission to help the homeless! City Rescue Mission is an incredible faith-based organization that offers a unique holistic care system (spiritual, medical, dental, counseling, support, intensive case management) to help individuals escape homelessness. City Rescue Mission has had an incredible impact upon the community, as well as transforming lives for the sake of the Gospel. One of the first things I remember about visiting City Rescue Mission, is as soon as I walked in at 8:00am, I walked into every member of their program engaged in Bible Study. They're only able to do this and ensure everybody in their program attends a Bible Study because their programs are 12-18 months long. For City Rescue Mission, it's not just about providing a place to stay for a day or overnight, but rather City Rescue Mission's programs engages the holistic life of all they help. Throughout the whole month of June (May 31st-June 28th) we'll be collecting clothes to donate to their thrift store. You can donate by bringing clothes in and placing them in the collection container in the church narthex. At the end of the month, the clothes will be organized and brought to City Rescue Mission to help put more people on the pathway to success.

No matter where you're at, the incredible grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, helps you serve! Whether it's being a part of this project here in Jacksonville, traveling to North Carolina, or even venturing all the way to South Africa, God calls each one of us to our various vocations to serve the Lord in everything we say and do. One of the joys of being a vicar, or even a church worker in general, is in seeing how God uses the various gifts that he's given to each of you to further his kingdom in proclaiming the news of Jesus Christ. I have a friend who once explained God's callings for life in these three simple words: faces, places, and spaces. Now while they do all rhyme, they explain so much more about this idea of vocation. Namely, that God himself uses you to speak Jesus to all the faces you encounter. From the person at work to the person at the gas station, we always get to share Jesus with others. Not only that, but God calls each one of us to live life in the places we are at in the here and now. Whether it's in Jacksonville, St. Augustine, or even Wisconsin, you get to share God's message of "Jesus" with all. Lastly, through all the spaces of every relationship, whether it be as a mother, brother, friend, student, coworker, etc. we still get to bring the news of Jesus to all. In every way, we only get to do this, because our chief purpose as Christians is to be loved by God. This happens in and of itself, not because of anything we do, but because of what God's done for you in Jesus Christ.

Vicar Caleb Gustafson



Did you know...?

Camp Linn Haven was founded in 1940 as a Christian camp affiliated with the LC-MS.



Nestled in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, Camp Linn Haven has been a place where generations of youth and families have grown in faith, fellowship, and service for more than 80 years. Affiliated with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, the camp offers Christ-centered programs that combine worship, recreation, and servant-hearted ministry in a peaceful mountain setting.

In recent years, Camp Linn Haven faced devastating flooding caused by Hurricane Helene, which severely damaged cabins, gathering spaces, and surrounding facilities. Despite the destruction, volunteers, churches, and Lutheran organizations from across the country rallied together to help rebuild and restore the camp so it could continue its important ministry for future generations.



Our church has been honored to support these reconstruction efforts financially, helping Camp Linn Haven continue serving youth and families during this season of recovery and renewal. It has been inspiring to see God’s people come together to rebuild not only buildings, but also hope and community.

Each year, our congregation sends two groups to Camp Linn Haven. One group of high school students participates in a week-long servant event focused on hands-on ministry, discipleship, and serving others. We also send students for Campfirmation, a special combination of summer camp and Confirmation instruction that helps young people deepen their faith while building lasting friendships and memories.



Welcome Letter from future Vicar Micah Cumming

Dear Bethlehem Lutheran Church,



It is with humble joy that I formally accept the vicarage position at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. I will begin my service on August 3rd, and I look forward to preaching, leading Bible Studies, and doing visits. Thank you for helping equip me to better serve as a pastor in the future through this year of vicarage with you. I have enjoyed my two years at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and now, I look forward to working for you at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Jacksonville Beach, FL.

I will be joined by my wife, Eleanor, and our 8-month-old son, Gideon. Eleanor and I met at college at Concordia University Wisconsin and got married after graduating. We had Gideon on August 23rd of this past year. He likes to crawl and eat foods like beef and fruit.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity. I am confident in the Lord who will bless our time together. We look forward to moving in on August 3rd and being installed on Sunday, August 9th. We are excited to meet and get to know you all, and being with you as the vicar family.

God's Blessings,

Micah Cumming



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT BLC

MON
JUNE
1

BLC SENIOR SHUFFLERS

9:30 AM

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



SAT
JUNE
6

DECORATE FOR VBS

10 AM

All hands are needed to help get BLC ready for VBS!



SUN
JUNE
7

MORE DECORATING FOR VBS

AFTER 11 AM SERVICE

Stay after church and help turn the sanctuary into a wilderness experience!



MON
JUNE
8

FIRST DAY OF TRUE NORTH VBS

9 AM - 12 PM

FRI
JUNE
12

TRUE NORTH VBS CELEBRATION

630 PM- PRESENTATION & HOT DOG MEAL



WEDS
JUNE
17

BLC YOUTH POOL PARTY 530-730 PM

Join the BLC Youth for Pool Party at Pat May's house to kick off the Summer!
Sign up in the Narthex.



SUN
JUNE
21

FCWS BABY BOTTLE CAMPAIGN ENDS

Please return your bottles for FCWS to the church Narthex.



SUN
JUNE
21

BLC YOUTH LEAVE FOR CAMP LINN HAVEN

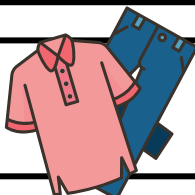
SERVANT EVENT AT 830 AM



SUN
JUNE
28

CLOTHING DRIVE FOR CITY

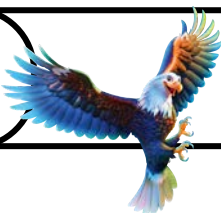
RESCUE MISSION ENDS



SUN
JULY
5

BLC YOUTH LEAVE FOR CAMP LINN HAVEN

CAMPFIRMATION AT 830 AM



if you have anything you would like to add to What's Happening at BLC- please email the church office at officeadmin@bethlehemlutheranjaxbeach.org

BLC VOLUNTEERS

ALTAR GUILD

SAT SET-UP: 6/6

Dee R.

SUN: 6/7

8: Valerie

930: Tami

11: Diana

SAT SET-UP: 6/13

Carol

SUN: 6/14

8: Susan

930: Brenda

11: Erica/Joy

SAT SET-UP: 6/20

Tami

SUN: 6/21

8: Carol

930: Barbara

11: Beth

SAT SET-UP: 6/27

Anna

SUN: 6/28

8: Nancy

930: Nina

11: Beth

SCREENS

6/7:

8: Patrick

930: Romaine

11: Gina

6/14:

8: Val

930: Brenda

11: Toni

6/21:

8: Victoria

930: Kristine

11: Lloyd

6/28:

8: Nancy

930: Chris

11: Roy

COUNTING

6/7:

Bob/Barbara

6/14:

Terry/Gordon

6/21:

Holly/Paul

6/28:

Barbie/Diane

STREAMING

6/7:

Jerry

6/14:

Brandon

6/21:

Jeannie

6/28:

Bob

JUNE BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES







Birthdays

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

Anniversaries

Emma & Mark Bolyard	June 3 rd
Sarah & Jose Cardone	June 7 th
Shirley & Jerry Kirkman	June 7 th
Barbara & Dennis Larson	June 8 th
Sobra & Dave Horn	June 9 th
Carole & Tom Barry	June 10 th
Robin & Joe Leaptrott	June 12 th
Rodaliza & Jose Aquino	June 14 th
Elizabeth & Logan Dellinger	June 14 th
Lynda & John Potratz	June 14 th
Renee & John Hornsby	June 17 th
Carolyn & William Magill	June 18 th
Angela & Wayne Orzeske	June 18 th
Jan & Dan Runko	June 23 rd

JUNE 2026

	1 930 AM Senior Cards 	2	3	4 630 PM BLC YA Bible Study	5	6 10 AM VBS Set-up
7 Noon VBS Set-up	8 VBS 9-12 PM 	9 VBS 9-12 PM	10 VBS 9-12 PM	11 VBS 9-12 PM	12 VBS 9-12 PM VBS Celebration 630 PM	13  BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH
14 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	15	16  African Mission Trip to leave...	17  BLC Youth Pool Party 530 PM	18	19	20
21  Baby Bottles Due Camp Linn Haven Servant Week--->	22	23	24	25	26	27 Camp Linn Haven Servant Week Return
28 Clothing Drive Ends 	29 African Mission Trip returns.	30 630 PM- Exec. Council	<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Bible Studies Every Week:</p> <p>Mon: ECHO Bible Study 7 PM</p> <p>Weds: Limbaugh Bible Study 7 PM</p> <p>Thurs: Vicar's Bible Study 930 AM</p> </div>			