

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Living or Dying to the Lord

“For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” Romans 14:8

My life changed on January 27th. My mother died. But she didn’t just die. She died to the Lord. Her name was Laura and she had just celebrated her 92nd birthday on January 22nd. Yes, the woman who gave birth to me, and then raised me along with my father (who died in 2018), was no longer here. I was baptized with my mother in 1956. My dad was stationed at Lowry Airforce Base in Denver, Colorado, and he knew it was time to find a church. That church was Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Denver. Shortly after becoming members at Bethlehem, I was baptized along with my mother. I guess you could say that I was born from my mother, but we were re-born together.

My mother had been placed in hospice just a few days before her passing. The day before the Lord called her to her heavenly home, I placed a call to her bedside. A family member answered, and I asked for the phone to be placed by my mom’s ear so I could share my final words to her in case I didn’t make it back to Denver in time to speak to her in person. I shared with her the words that any child, young or old, would want to share with the person who brought them into this world – words of love, appreciation, gratitude, and faith. I then asked for the phone to be placed on speaker so that I could have a prayer with my mom and all those gathered around her bedside. I am so thankful for that time because my mom would be taken “home” before I could make it back to Denver the next day.

People are forever paying special attention to the words of those who are dying. My mom’s final word, when asked by the pastor who she wanted to see when she arrived at her heavenly home, was one word only: “Jesus.” I think she knew that when she saw Jesus, she would see everything and everyone else she wanted to see.

Other stories this month:

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Living or Dying (Cont.)

It doesn't matter if it is living or dying that you are facing. God's answer and his help is all the same. If you are facing challenges in your day to day life, or if you are under hospice care facing death in the coming weeks, the one common fact you can rely on is that on the cross Jesus said it all and did it all. In that moment "God and sinners reconciled."

Thank you all, dear members of our beloved Bethlehem in Jacksonville Beach, for all your prayers and support while I was away. It was non-stop activity: arranging for my mom's memorial service, burial at the Fort Logan National Cemetery, caring for my brother who was in intensive care at the time of my mom's passing (and the days following), emptying a house and putting the house on the market, taking care of financial and legal issues, and so much more.

Quite honestly, your prayers and support made possible what was seemingly impossible. Diane and I are grateful beyond words.

"If we live, we live to the Lord," the Apostle says. Therefore, keep living! And when the time comes for us to be called to our heavenly home, remember that then, too, we die to the Lord. Thanks be to God for the mothers who birthed us. And thanks be to God for the new birth we have in and through Jesus. For in him we have life now and in eternity.

With love and gratitude for you all,

Pastor Dana Allen Brones

Hey Jude! (Get to the Point)

About six years ago, on a Saturday afternoon, I found myself in a familiar place. The parking lot of Walmart. Waiting in the van with the kids while the wife ran in and “got a few things really quick.” (She takes such good care of us! We would probably starve without her.) Anyway, it led to a blessed memory I hope I never forget.

Joy and I were having a conversation about the Bible being on our phones, and before I knew what happened, she had my Bible app pulled up on my phone and proceeded to read to me the entire letter of Jude. Aloud. She was eight years old at the time.

I was quickly impressed by two things. First, I was happily surprised with her pronunciation of some rather tricky words. It was definitely a “proud father” moment.

Second, (and the point of this article,) I was stunned by how quickly Jude got to the point in his letter. He said what needed to be said, he pulled no punches, and he got it done. Short and sweet, the letter of Jude is only 25 verses long! (25 verses that lean rather heavily on 2 Peter, or perhaps, vice versa.) But these 25 verses are important. Vital, even. Jude warned the Christians of false teachers and their serious impact. They’re nothing to mess around with. And then he told the Christians to hold fast to the truth of Christ – and then signed off. I started wondering... What if I preached like that?? (People might not appreciate the bluntness, but I imagine they would applaud the brevity.)

Regardless, there’s a place for this in the Christian life, isn’t there? Speaking up, getting to the point. We all have people in our lives we need to speak God’s Word to. Just like Jude did for the recipients of his letter. Just like Joy did for me while waiting in the parking lot. I needed to hear her say those words of God to me. I’m so glad she did.

Who do you have in your life that you need to speak God’s Word to? I think you know who it is. I’m almost sure you do. Be brave this week – and speak it! And don’t feel like you need to write a treatise on the topic or deluge the individual with your many words. Sometimes less is more. Just say what you have to say – and what they need to hear. Elsewhere in Scripture it’s called “speaking the truth in love.” You care for this person, and so you share God’s Word with them.

Perhaps they won’t like it. Doesn’t matter. You need to say it. Maybe they’ll love it! Maybe they’ll ignore it. Doesn’t matter. You need to say it. Because maybe they won’t ignore it. Maybe it will take root in their mind and God will use that short sentence or two mightily. You never know. Our witness need not be fancy, or clever, or prolonged. It just needs to BE.

Hey Jude (cont.)

We are well into Lent by now. This year in our Lenten series we're looking at what it means to die to our vices and live within the true life of Christ. Who doesn't need to hear that?? Lenten midweek services are a great time to invite someone into the church with you - and grab dinner after, maybe. They wouldn't even have to give up a Sunday morning! Lent is a great opportunity to invite someone you think might just be curious about God's Word. Many people are right now. They just need to hear it. And we need to share it. May God bless you this Lenten season as you say what needs to be said.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Nate McCarty

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

~ Jude 1:24-25

How Do You Pray?

How do you pray? I remember when I was younger and I was first being taught to pray, “fold your hands, bow your heads, close your eyes” were the wise words of my parents. Then as I grew up prayer looked a little more complicated and went from just saying mealtime prayers to saying nightly prayers as well. Then, eventually I reached confirmation, where we studied the petitions to the Lord’s Prayer, and were even taught how to model our own personal prayers. Eventually, the time came for me to lead prayer in front of a group of people before a big church event. Now, I’ve heard pastors make the most beautiful prayers for years. They’d use the most creative words, intricately weaving God’s Word and God’s promises together so seamlessly. Yet now was I ready? I bring all this up, not to make prayer a complicated matter, but rather simply to talk about how prayer life itself goes through many different stages throughout our lives, and every Christian is walking through their own stage at their own pace.

Starting anything new for that matter is a daunting task. Maybe if you’ve ever had to try something new you can understand what it’s like to begin. How or where do you start if you’ve never done it before? Starting something new, especially something like prayer for a Christian, can be a humbling experience. When I first started, I always worried about saying the right words, saying the most eloquent things, or ascribing God the proper glory he’s due. However, for any matter, whether it is prayer, a meal, or a task, there truly is no better place to start than in God’s mercy toward you. This conversation we have with God through prayer, doesn’t begin with anything we do, nor in anything we will ever do, but rather has already begun long ago in God’s promise to you, his promise to never leave you nor forsake you. Prayer doesn’t depend upon human effort or human exertion, but in God’s mercy and compassion toward us as his loving children. When God begins this conversation in his promises new every morning, we respond in thanksgiving, supplication, and prayer. Through this lens, our whole life is a life of prayer, through our thoughts, words, and deeds, or as the apostle Paul say, “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This is how prayer begins for every person, no matter what prayer stage you find yourself in. Prayer starts with God’s grace and mercy for you.

I think another challenge throughout one’s prayer life, lies not just in beginning to say the right words, but rather lies in letting our problems, our troubles, or even our wills known before God. In this part of this prayer stage, frustrations arise. Sometimes we pray and pray and wait longer and longer for an answer. Frustrations and disappointments from our own expectations begins to pit our own will and what we want, against God’s will and what He ultimately wants. Through this stage of prayer, I think it’s important to come back to the basics, beginning with God’s grace and mercy, in order for faith and trust to build up within us. Prayer was never designed to manipulate God and His will as if we, his creatures, know better. But rather prayer was designed to help us transcend our problems and our wills by focusing on God. It’s the reorientation of looking inwardly unto ourselves, to now looking outwardly to God, our loving Creator, who leads us exactly into how we’re supposed to live our lives in this world, by faith alone. Each and every day we come to our loving Father, trusting in his mercy, no matter what stage our prayer lives are in.

Vicar Caleb Gustafson

Did you know...?



Confirmation—a profession of faith has been around since the early church and while not a sacrament, an important part of our Christian journey that began in the waters of baptism.

On Palm Sunday, Bethlehem Lutheran will joyfully celebrate the confirmation of 11 youth during the 11:00 AM service. (Praise be to God!) Under the faithful guidance of Pastor Nathan, these students have spent the past two years studying God’s Word and Luther’s Small Catechism, preparing to publicly confess their faith.

On this special day, they will:

- Publicly confess the Triune faith
- Affirm the promises once spoken on their behalf at Baptism
- Vow to remain faithful to Christ and His Word

They will also receive the Lord’s Supper for the first time. While these past two years have been an important time of preparation, their journey began at Baptism, when God first claimed them as His own. Confirmation is not a graduation from church, but a beautiful new beginning — stepping more fully into the life of the congregation through worship, service, study, fellowship, and outreach.

Studies continue to show the lasting impact of confirmation, with the vast majority of LCMS youth and parents describing it as an important milestone in growing and living out their Christian faith.

We warmly invite you to join us on March 29 at 11:00 AM to celebrate and encourage our confirmands and their families. Your presence and prayers mean more than you know. Please also keep Pastor Nathan and our church leaders in prayer as they prepare for this meaningful day.

If you would like to begin the confirmation process for a child or youth in your life, Pastor Nathan would be glad to speak with you. Classes begin each school year, typically in 7th grade, though students may begin at other times as well.

May God continue to bless our confirmands and our congregation as we nurture faith in every generation.



Our 1955 Confirmation class at BLC—
We cannot wait to add our 2026
Confirmation Class to our
Confirmand Wall in Disciples’ Hall!

✧ *Celebrate the Risen Savior!* ✧

Easter at Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Sunday, April 5th

— *Worship Services* —

7:00 AM

9:00 AM

11:00 AM

“He is not here; He has risen!” – Luke 24:6

— *Easter Breakfast* —

8:00 – 9:00 AM

Join us for fellowship and food between services!



— *Children’s Easter Egg Hunt* —

8:30 AM

Fun for all children! Bring a basket and a friend!



*Come celebrate the joy and hope of Easter with us.
All are welcome!*



Bethlehem Lutheran Church

1423 8th Ave N Jax Beach | www.blc.org | (904) 249-5418

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT BLC

MON
MAR
2

BLC SENIOR SHUFFLERS
9:30 AM

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



TUES
MAR
3



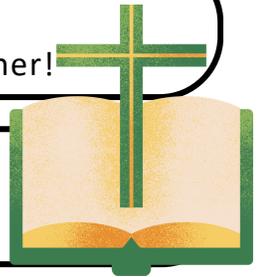
BETHLEHEM
LUTHERAN CHURCH & PRESCHOOL

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
6:30 PM

WEDS
MAR
4

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY
9:30 AM

All women welcome to join us for digging deep into God's word together!



THURS
MAR
5

BLC YOUNG ADULTS BIBLE STUDY
6:30 PM

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

TUES
MAR
17

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY

THURS
MAR
19

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY & DINNER
6:00 PM

Come and enjoy some food, fellowship & the Word of God with your brothers from BLC!

FRI
MAR
20

Mission House
Compassion by the Sea

MISSION HOUSE TEAM B AT 430 PM

FRI
MAR
27

FAMILY GAME NIGHT
5:30 PM

Have a great time with friends and family playing games and eating food at BLC!

SAT
MAR
28

Spring Clean-Up @ 9-12 PM

All help is appreciated.



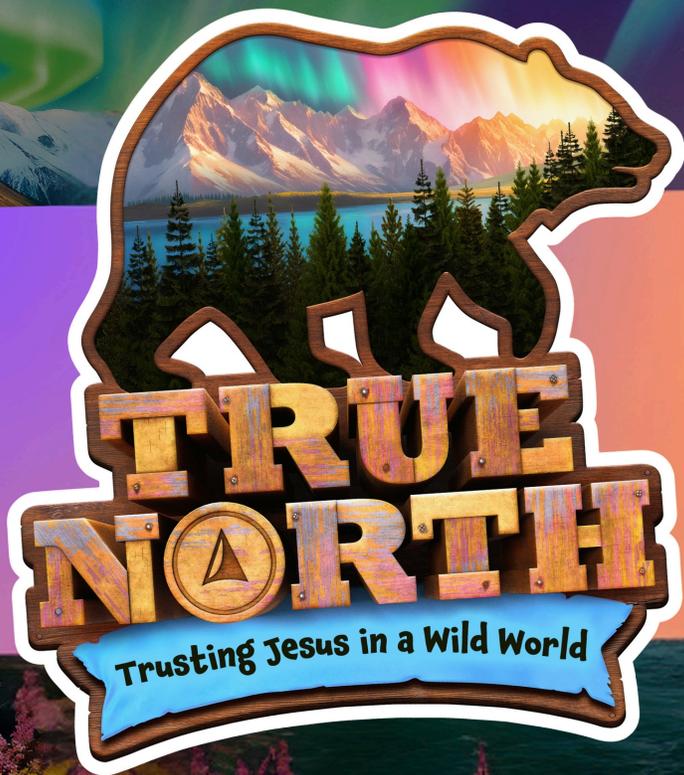
SUN
MAR
29

CONFIRMATION & PALM SUNDAY

Confirmation is at the 11 AM Service.



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



SAVE THE DATE!

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

JUNE 8TH - 12TH, 2026



Volunteer with us this Summer

We'd love for you to join us. There's always a spot to share your gifts !!

Elementary Tribe Leader (8:30 am - Noon) Share the love of JESUS as you move through the stations with your tribe.

Elementary Tribe Helper (8:30 am - Noon) This is a great transition for youth entering 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade to be role models and shine your light for JESUS.

Greeters (8:15-9:15 am) We need smiling faces to welcome families as they arrive each morning, guiding them to sign in daily at the Registration Table and help finding their way to the tribe pews.

Integrity Keepers (8:30 am - Noon) Watch over high traffic areas while you Shine your Light for Jesus.

One-on-One Volunteer (8:30 am - Noon): Helpers for one-on-one care during the various activities.

Station Helper (8:30 am - Noon) Sign up for your spot in one of these stations: Help with Temple Games, MarketPlace Crafts, Tribe Time Cafe, or Holy Land Drama.

Tech Crew (8:30 am - Noon) Assist with the technical aspects of media, promos, sound & video.

We could always use help with Set-up on the Sunday before or Clean-up on Friday, June 12th, after our Cookout, about 8 pm. We'd love to have some muscles and extra help to assist in setting and resetting BLC for Sunday 🏠

For the Safety of the children, all adults are required to FILL out a background check.

BLC VOLUNTEERS!

ELDERS

SUN: 3/1

8: Paul-EIC & Gordon
930: Bruce-EIC & John
11: Rob-EIC & Brandon

SUN: 3/8

8: Jamie & Jon W.
930: Joe-EIC
11: Alex-EIC & Al

SUN: 3/15

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

SUN: 3/22

8: Paul-EIC & Jon W.
930: Joe-EIC
11: Dan H.-EIC & Dan R.

SUN: 3/29

8: Jamie-EIC & Gordon
930: Joe-EIC & John
11: Al-EIC & Brandon

MIDWEEK

WEDS: 3/4

12: Allan
7: Brandon

WEDS: 3/11

12: Dennis
7: Alex L.

WEDS: 3/18

12: Al
7: Paul

WEDS: 3/25

12: Bruce
7: David

ALTAR GUILD

SAT SET-UP: 2/28 SAT SET-UP: 3/14

Dee
SUN: 3/1
8: Susan
930: Barbara
11: Diana

Carol
SUN: 3/15
8: Valerie
930: Nine
11: Kathy

SAT SET-UP: 3/7 SAT SET-UP: 3/21

Tami
SUN: 3/8
8: Nancy
930: Tami
11: Beth

Anna
SUN: 3/22
8: Carol
930: Tami
11: Erica & Joy

SAT SET-UP: 3/28

Dee R.
SUN: 3/29
8: Susan
930: Barbara
11: Diana

MIDWEEK SERVICES

SET-UP: 3/3

Dee/Valerie
WEDS: 3/4
7: Tami
Clean-up: Valerie

SET-UP: 3/24

Dee/Valerie
WEDS: 3/25
7: Carol
Clean-up: Brenda

SET-UP: 3/10

Dee/Valerie
WEDS: 3/11
7: Carol
Clean-up: Brenda

SET-UP: 3/17

Dee/Valerie
WEDS: 3/18
7: Tami
Clean-up: Valerie

SCREENS

3/1:

8: Patrick
930: Chris
11: Gina

3/15:

8: Nancy
930: Kristine
11: Lloyd

3/29:

8: Susan
930: Tami
11: Roy

3/8:

8: Val
930: Romaine
11: Blaine

3/22:

8: Victoria
930: Chris
11: Toni

STREAMING

3/1:

Jeannie

3/29:

Jeannie

3/4: Weds

Brandon

3/8:

Jerry

3/12: Weds

Bob

3/15:

Roy/Bob

3/18: Weds

Bob

3/22:

Brandon

3/25: Weds

Jerry

COUNTING

3/1

Terry/Holly

3/22

Barbie/Diane

3/8

Allan/Paul

3/26

Allan/Bob

3/15

Gordon/Barbara

MARCH BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES



Kimberley Barteau	3/1	Chloe OConnor	3/27
Robin Buckner	3/1	Marilyn Seibel	3/27
Madison Gray	3/1	Jackie Fuller	3/29
Lucy Barley	3/2	Cindy Stafford	3/29
Bob Johnson	3/3	John Garner	3/30
Eva Culbreth	3/4	Dr. David Pietrasiuk	3/30
Sarah Cardona	3/8	Carter Radtke	3/30
Catherine Hanratty	3/8	Ayden Zarski	3/30
Benjamin Huckaba	3/8	Reese Williams	3/31
Margie Buerkle	3/9		
Jackson Geis	3/9		
Susan Helberg	3/9		
Kim Salvesen	3/9		
Seth Smith	3/10		
Veronica Allen	3/12		
Brian Sherrill	3/15		
Claira Williams	3/15		
John Blaine	3/17		
Logan Gruhn	3/18		
Margaret Limbaugh	3/18		
Daniel Heumann	3/19		
Patricia May	3/19		
Judianne Hosley	3/22		
Joan Carr	3/23		
Mary Spreier	3/23		
Shari Gruhn	3/24		
Emily Lambert	3/24		
Angela Matthews	3/24		
Bonnie Arndt	3/25		
Charlotte Stanfield	3/26		
Cade Werhner	3/26		
Brenda Murray	3/27		



Kristy & Rusty Huseman	March 4th
Rita & Gene Wells	March 17th
Lesley & Travis Berkey	March 18th
Debbie & Johnny Corbett	March 21st
Margaret & Dennis Reese	March 27th



MARCH 2026



1	2 930 AM Senior Cards	3	4 Women's Bible Study Noon & 7 PM- Lenten Services 530 PM Confirmation	5 630 PM Young Adult Bible Study	6	7 930 AM AA
8 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	9	10	11 Noon & 7 PM- Lenten Services 530 PM Confirmation	12	13	14 930 AM AA
15 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	16	17	18 Noon & 7 PM- Lenten Services 530 PM Confirmation	19 6PM Men's Bible Study	20 430 PM Mission House	21 930 AM AA
22 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	23	24	25 Noon & 7 PM- Lenten Services 530 PM Confirmation	26	27 5PM- Family Game Night	28 9- 12 PM Spring Clean-up Day
29 8/ 930 AM Palm Sun. Service 11 AM Confirmation	30	31 630 PM- Exec. Council	HOLY WEEK			
					<i>Bible Studies Every Week:</i> Mon: ECHO Bible Study 7 PM Thurs: Vicar's Bible Study 930 AM	