

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

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And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
-Acts 2:21

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Who is Your Advocate?

*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus
1 Timothy 2:5*

In Proverbs 22:22-23 we are advised not to take advantage of people who stand helpless in the courtroom because God will argue their case for them. We've got an arrangement like that in our nation's legal system. If a person stands alone and helpless to see to his or her own defense in our courts, the government provides for the person, and gets a public defender to argue the case on their behalf.

Well, we can't just leave that hanging out there without at least a brief commentary on how this relates to our lives. For example, who is going to argue about the seemingly helpless situation in which we find ourselves today? At every level of life - the world, nation, church, and, worst of all, at that level where our individual hearts lie open and bared and our private lives are up for judgment - we are beyond ourselves, over our heads in deep water, unable to throw together any kind of adequate defense. We have nobody to argue our case for us, and not much of a case to argue under any circumstances. Surely that sums up our private situation. Not only are we helpless, but we are also so vulnerable. Anybody can take advantage and pick on us, and many do.

When I was in high school my dad purchased some property on the outskirts of Denver. The property was about an acre in size and was zoned for both industrial and commercial use. The property had everything my dad needed to establish his own business as a cabinet maker. For years my dad had worked for a cabinet-making company while he moonlighted in our garage, but the time had come to venture out completely on his own.

Other stories this month:

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- PENTECOST SEASON
- LOTS GOING ON AT BLC!
- VBS-COMING SOON!





Who is Your Advocate? (Cont.)

Within a year or so, just as my dad's business in his new cabinet making shop was taking off, he received a letter saying that he was going to lose the property because of "eminent domain." Yes, the city decided that they wanted the property for the building of a new Fire House. There was nothing my dad could do. There was no mediator. There was no advocate. There was no one to argue his case. Within a few months, my dad lost the property. Yes, he received "just compensation" (the so-called fair market value) but it paled in comparison to his dreams and the work he had already put into the property.

When it comes to our eternity or place in heavenly paradise, there is One to argue our case for us, the Great Advocate. He is the champion sent by God to stand up for us, Jesus Christ. We do not need to feel so helpless. Those who seek to take advantage of our vulnerability better watch their step. Whatever impasse you have reached in your personal relationships and your journey through life, a way is being found out of your forest, and the divine Public Defender is ready to plead your case. And, best of all, He will argue your case based on His perfection and His Kingdom ownership, not yours or mine. We go from being helpless and vulnerable to living confident and strong.

By the way, my dad did eventually find another property. His dreams thrived there for many years, and he continued to do beautiful woodwork in his own shop until he was 85 years old. My dad had an Advocate all the time, even though he couldn't always see how the Mediator, Jesus, was working.

The next time you feel helpless and without defense, take some time to remind yourself that there is One who loves you and speaks for you and establishes your worth - and that nobody can ever take these away from you.

God's peace,

Pastor Dana Allen Brown



The Acts 2 Pentecost: Truth Over Legend

“Urban legends” can develop over anything. We certainly have them today, but I grew up during the tail end of what some would argue was the height of the phenomenon, back in the eighties. “Urban legends” are semi-folklore tales about things that are assumed to be true – even though they may in fact have only remote connections to actual, specific, on-the-record happenings. Examples include the mass concern over the tainting of Halloween candy, as well as the tales of hook-handed killers my dad used to entertain me with. Urban legends spread because they’re exciting and sensational, although not strongly rooted in truth. This month brings us the holiday of Pentecost, and it struck me that within Christendom we sometimes develop our own urban legends. Exciting ideas that aren’t actually borne out by the Scriptures. So, in that spirit (that’s a Pentecost pun!) I present: Two Possible Misconceptions about Pentecost – and Two Surprising Biblical Truths.

Misconception #1: Pentecost shows us that speaking in tongues should be a regular part of the Christian life – and maybe even the ultimate indication of whether one is truly saved. Sadly, there are some Christians who teach this “urban legend.” However, there is nothing in the text of Acts 2 that tells us this. Certainly, God worked a wonderful miracle by equipping the apostles to speak in languages they did not know. But there is nothing in the text indicating this would be a definitive mark of a Christian – or a perpetual gift, for that matter. And the languages were not given for show or to prove bona fides. They were given for the express purpose of the clear proclamation of the Gospel. If you see “tongues” happening and the Gospel is not clearly understood from it, something is off – to say the least.

Misconception #2: Pentecost shows us that amazing signs and wonders indicate the presence of God the Holy Spirit. This is a trickier urban legend. Because both wonders and the Holy Spirit were indeed present at Pentecost. However, as we look at the entirety of God’s Word we see that while visibly amazing signs and wonders can be a result of the presence of God, the two are not to be equated. In the Old Testament, we see Pharaoh’s pagan sorcerers replicating amazing feats – “miracles” in a sense – but certainly not by the power of the Holy Spirit. So just because there is a “spirit” and just because we see or sense something amazing is no guarantee that the true God is at work among us. On the flip side, in the New Testament, we hear Jesus’ promise that, “Where two or three are gathered” He is present. There’s nothing visibly stunning about gathering with two of your fellow Christians in a room for prayer or Bible reading – but the Almighty King of the Universe promises He is there anyways. Understood rightly, Pentecost teaches us not to look to signs and wonders for assurance, but to the person of Jesus. Which leads us to...



The Acts 2 Pentecost: Continued...

Surprising Truth #1: Acts 2 spends much more time on the preached word of God than it does the cool arrival of the Holy Spirit. Luke spends 3-4 verses describing the memorable coming of the Holy Spirit. We remember these brief verses so well because they are vivid - rushing wind and tongues of fire! Still, it's just a few verses. On the other hand, Luke spends almost 30 verses documenting the sermon that Peter preached about Jesus' coming, death, and resurrection. And it was after hearing the sermon - not seeing the cool tongues of fire - that the Holy Spirit worked faith in the hearts of many present. Based on Scripture, then, I would dare assert that if we spend more time on Pentecost talking about cool flames and rushing wind and speaking in tongues than we do talking about Jesus and what He has done to save us, we are assuredly doing it wrong. Finally...

Surprising Truth #2: Salvation through Christian Baptism is an integral part of Pentecost. "Now when they heard Peter's sermon they were cut to the heart, and said to him and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.' And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them.... So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:37ff)

This Pentecost, rejoice not that you can speak in another language, but rather, that you have been baptized, and that the Holy Spirit continues to be present in your life through God's powerful Word!

Pastor Nate McCarty



Summertime & Sabbath

Summer is almost here! You can almost taste it! With the start of summer comes all the summer fun, and perhaps most important of all summer fun for kids is the long awaited break from school. Kids finally have a three month break all for themselves with no homework, no school, and no school obligations. Whether you're just catching a breath from school events, or even just taking a long awaited or long deserved vacation with your whole family, we too, look forward to summer so that we can finally catch our breath. In some way, shape, or form, you and I get to take some sort of a break from the craziness of life that so often occurs throughout the school year. These breaks are good for all of us. God even gives us the commandment to, "remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy". God himself recognizes how important rest is to the life of his creatures, that is you and me. As this rest rejuvenates us, refreshes us, and prepares us to return to our everyday rhythm of life. Rest itself revitalizes us for all of life's duties, and therefore should be held in highest regard, especially in the lives of the most faithful Christians.

Rest. Luther has this to say concerning the third commandment, "We should fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching and God's Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." (Luther's Small Catechism: Explanation to the Third Commandment). I have a friend who was recently telling me about their Sabbath rest. As they were talking to me about it, they were explaining how distracted they can be sometimes, even while in church. It's not that they aren't trying to give their full attention to God, rather in the fears, worries, and distractions of everyday life, as they explained it, "no matter how small it was, there always seemed to be something on the back of my mind". And I think that's really just what it's like to live in this world. There's always something on our mind, no matter how small or insignificant it is. Now, this is not wrong, no, this is actually what God created our minds to do, to think. And into all our thinking, God tells us to take rest. This rest. Jesus even says, in Matthew 11, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). You and I as God's dearly beloved children gladly listen to his Word and his promises everyday. From this sense, the Sabbath rest isn't just a single day in church like Sunday, but rather our prayers, our daily devotions, the Bible studies we go to, and of course church on Sundays. All these function as our rest from all the thinking we are required to do at work, for our families, or just throughout life. Yet everyday, here in God's Word, we don't have to work, we simply receive. You and I receive his promises first and foremost.

Even though we take a break this summer from the chaos of everyday life, we never take a break or rest from God's Word and his promises. For in this rest, God's promises flow to us and through us. This is true rest, not in doing anything, but true rest in receiving the gifts of God in Word and Sacrament to deliver you God's never ending love. Even amidst the break from school, or the break of life coming up this summer, we never take a break from God's promises. This is how we remember the Sabbath day, this is how we receive true rest. We remember the Sabbath and the day of rest. For this reason, we honor the Sabbath even more by emphasizing his promises and His Word through our daily devotions, daily prayers, and through church on Sunday.

Vicar Caleb Gustafsson



Did you know...?

One of the first Vacation Bible Schools was held in a rented Beer Parlor in NYC in 1898.

This year at VBS at BLC (June 8th-12th, 2026) we will be exploring the book the Matthew and what it looks like to trust Jesus in this wild world! Our volunteers and Tribe Leaders will be taking our kids on a wild journey through the stories of John the Baptist, the faith of the centurion, Christ's death and resurrection and the miracle of Pentecost. Each day will bring a new focus:



Monday: **Trust Jesus to be our guide!**

Tuesday: **Trust Jesus to care for us!**

Wednesday: **Trust Jesus to give us power!**

Thursday: **Trust Jesus to give us hope!**

Friday: **Trust Jesus to be our friend!**

Our kids will learn more about each theme through song & motions, crafts, drama, and games. We hope throughout this week our children grow in God and trust in Him and grow with each other. It is amazing opportunity to share Christ's love with the kids at BLC and our Beaches community.

We would love to have you help and serve and share that love. If you are interested in volunteering on this WILD expedition, check out the VBS website at the QR code below to sign-up. If you would love to have your kids participate, please also use the QR code below to register them for True North VBS.

We cannot wait for you to join us this summer!



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT BLC

MON
MAY
4

BLC SENIOR SHUFFLERS

9:30 AM

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



WEDS
MAY
6

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY AT THE COTTAGE

9:30 AM

Come and be in God's Word with your sisters in Christ!

WEDS
MAY
6

BLC YOUTH GROUP RESUMES!

5:30 PM

Come and be in God's Word with your sisters in Christ!



THURS
MAY
7

BLC YOUNG ADULTS BIBLE STUDY

6:30 PM

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

SUN
MAY
10

FCWS BABY BOTTLE CAMPAIGN STARTS

Pick-up a FCWS Baby Bottle and fill with your change to help change young families' lives all over Jax!



WEDS
MAY
13

NEW MEMBER CLASS WITH PAS. BRONES

6:30 PM

THURS
MAY
21

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY & DINNER

6:00 PM

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

SUN
MAY
24



PENTECOST SUNDAY

**Incense at 8 AM Service*

FRI
MAY
29

PRESCHOOL GRADUATION

6:30 PM

Pray for our littlest scholars as they graduate BLC VPK!



SUN
MAY
31

GUEST PREACHER AND LUNCHEON!

Join us as Pas. Schultz shares his ministry with BLC and as we celebrate with a luncheon with the Holy Smokers!



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

ELDERS

SUN: 5/3

8: Jamie-EIC & Jon W.
930: Joe-EIC & John H.
11: David-EIC & Brandon

SUN: 5/10

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

SUN: 5/17

8: Paul-EIC & Jamie
930: Joe-EIC & John
11: Dan H.-EIC & Allan

SUN: 5/24

8: Jamie-EIC & Paul
930: Joe-EIC
11: David-EIC & Dan R.

SUN: 5/31

8: Paul-EIC & Jon W.
930: Joe-EIC & John H.
11: Rob R.-EIC & David

ALTAR GUILD

SAT SET-UP: 5/2

Tami

SUN: 5/3

8: Susan
930: Barbara
11: Beth

SAT SET-UP: 5/09

Carol

SUN: 5/10

8: Valerie
930: Nina
11: Diana

SAT SET-UP: 5/16

Dee R.

SUN: 5/17

8: Nancy
930: Brenda
11: Erica & Joy

SAT SET-UP: 5/23

Anna

SUN: 5/24

8: Carol
930: Tami
11: Kathy

SAT SET-UP: 5/30

Dee R.

SUN: 5/31

8: Susan
930: Tami
11: Diana

SCREENS

5/3:

8: Patrick
930: Kristine
11: Gina

5/10:

8: Val
930: Brenda
11: Blaine

5/17:

8: Nancy
930: Romaine
11: Lloyd

5/24:

8: Victoria
930: Chris
11: Roy

5/31:

8: Susan
930: Tami
11: Toni

COUNTING

5/3

Allan/Terry

5/10

Barbara/Holly

5/17

Gordon/Allan

5/25

Paul/Bob

5/31

Barbie/Diane

STREAMING

5/3:

Jerry

5/10:

Brandon

5/17:

Bob

5/24:

Jeannie

5/31:

Roy

MAY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Birthdays

Tami	Moe	1-May	Gene	Wells	26-May
Brianna	Addison	2-May	Damarion	Addison	27-May
Richard	Findell	5-May	Marvin	Beaty	27-May
Sloan	Mattila	5-May	Nancy	Florey	27-May
Holly	Dellinger	7-May	Beverly	Furtick	28-May
Russ	Furtick	7-May	Matthew	Zikeli	30-May
Ben	Bryant	8-May	Scarlett	Will	31-May
Kristen	Lee	8-May			
Mary	Tereszkiewicz	8-May			
Alexander	Heilig	9-May			
Jeff	Ford	10-May			
Hannah	Gruhn	12-May			
Jacob	Florey	13-May			
Renee	Zingales	14-May			
Laramie	Fredell	15-May			
Paisley	Johnson	16-May			
Reed	Richards	16-May			
Kathe	Herrick	17-May			
Tom	Thompson	18-May			
Dennis	Reed	19-May			
Robin	Ford	20-May			
Dean	Spencer	20-May			
Michael	Werner	20-May			
Paul	Freeborn	21-May			
Judy	Gjestson	21-May			
Bob	Wortelboer	22-May			
Estella	Coe	23-May			
John	Hornsby	23-May			
Zach	Heisler	24-May			
Robert	Navarro	24-May			
Brian	Stafford	25-May			
David	Jacobs	26-May			

Anniversaries

Victoria & Christian Putnam May 4th
Heidi & Jon Wuggazer May 6th
Dianne & Dennis LaForty May 14th
Monica & David Cook May 15th
Janene & Frank Swain May 19th
Patricia & Brandon Burgains May 20th
Kristen & Jeremy Randolph May 21st
Kaitlyn & Alex Spock May 21st
Susan & Marvin Beaty May 29th

MAY 2026

<p><i>Bible Studies Every Week:</i></p> <p>Mon: ECHO Bible Study 7 PM Weds: Limbaugh Bible Study 7 PM Thurs: Vicar's Bible Study 930 AM</p>					1	2 930 AM AA
3	4 930 AM Senior Cards	5	6 930 AM Women's Bible Study 530 PM Youth Group	7 630 PM BLC YA Bible Study	8	9 930 AM AA
10 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	11	12 7 PM- Elders	13 530 PM Youth Group 630 PM New Member Class	14	15 430 PM Mission House	16 930 AM AA
17 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	18	19	20 530 PM Youth Group 630 PM New Member Class	21 6 PM Men's Bible Study & Dinner	22	23 930 AM AA
24 Guest Preacher & Luncheon	25	26 630 PM- Exec. Council	27 530 PM Youth Group 630 PM New Member Class	28	29 630 PM Preschool Graduation	30
31						