THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

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2026 Compelled Mission Banquet

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you this autumn, in the name of the One who makes all things beautiful in His time (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

On Wednesday, November 4th, Bethlehem will be hosting a banquet called: COMPELLED: Mission Advancement Initiative. This banquet is being held on behalf of the Florida/Georgia District and is only one of many banquets taking place in mission minded congregations throughout the district (Bethlehem is certainly a mission minded congregation). The purpose of these banquets is to establish a district endowment that sets a foundation for ministry throughout the Florida-Georgia District for years to come. To date, almost $2.6 million has been pledged toward the $10 million goal of the initiative. This is an encouraging step toward building a lasting foundation throughout our district.

COMPELLED exists to invest in the future of ministry by creating sustainable support for three important areas:
Planting New Churches - Supporting New Outreach Ministries - Raising Up New Church Workers

What would our own community look like if more people were connected to Jesus? What would Florida-Georgia look like if more people were connected to Jesus? What can an investment in ministry make possible? Bethlehem is blessed to have an endowment, although much smaller that the one the district is beginning to establish. So, just imagine what the district can do on an even larger scale. In fact, we are already seeing what becomes possible when lasting resources give congregations the capacity to reach their communities in new ways. Here is an example:

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2026 Compelled Mission Banquet cont.

Here is an example:
Tabernacle De La Grace in Fort Lauderdale, one of the largest Haitian congregations in the Florida-Georgia District, recently received a "Kingdom Seed Grant" to help strengthen its ministry to children, families, and the surrounding community. The congregation used grant support to host a special youth event that brought children, families, and neighbors together for a joyful, Christ-centered day of worship and fellowship. But the impact didn't end with one event. Youth leaders are continuing to engage children through biblical teaching, service, prayer, discipleship, worship, and the children's choir. Young people are being encouraged not only to grow in their own faith, but also to learn how to share the Gospel, serve others with the compassion of Christ, and shine His light in their community. Parents are seeing their children become more involved in the life of the church and grow as disciples of Jesus.

This is what investing in ministry can do. Stories like Tabernacle De La Grace help us imagine what can be possible as COMPELLED builds resources for new church plants, new outreach ministries, and the next generation of church workers.

Please join me for our banquet on Wednesday, November 4th, at 6 pm. so we can hear more about this vision and celebrate what God is doing through ministries across Florida and Georgia and discover how we can work together to expand the reach of the Gospel for generations to come.

In His service . . . and yours,

Pastor Dana Allen Brones





Eternal Election? Or Present Headache?

1 Peter 1:1: "To those who are elect exiles…"
Romans 8:29-30: "For those whom God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified."

Whew! "Elect." "Predestined." Words and passages like these tend to bring on a headache like few others do. Most of us Christians are rightfully quick to say we are saved by grace… but then passages like these pop up, we start thinking about it, and then the questions emerge. After all, if only a select bunch of folks are chosen by God for salvation, then logically speaking, the reverse must also be true - all others are chosen by God for hell. But then… that is contrary to many passages about God's desire for all to be saved. So, what gives?

If these verses have ever prompted you to puzzle your puzzler 'till your puzzler was sore… you're not alone! This classic, headache-inducing question is known in Lutheran circles as the crux theologorum, "the cross of theologians." And this question really is something of a cross: a burden that simply must be borne, whether truly "understood" or not. (There are a lot of things like that in life, aren't there?) Still, this question in particular is one of the deepest and most perplexing of all the mysteries God has given us glimpses of.

Let's start here: It's true that the Scriptures often speak of God "electing" us and refers to the faithful as "predestined." The Romans 8 passage is hardly unique. The Scriptures clearly paint the picture that God, outside of time, arranged for and planned the salvation of you and me. That much is clear and easy. The difficulty comes when we try to take that fact and reconcile it with other facts: God desires all to be saved (1Tim. 2:4); but also, not all will be saved (pick any of Jesus' comments on the reality of Hell.) So how on earth do Christians make all these different facts play nice with each other?

Well, different theological traditions do it in different ways. One tradition tends to disregard or downplay the Bible's predestination talk. This approach instead puts the focus and emphasis on man's "decision for Jesus," and says that we are saved by virtue of our decision making power or spiritual commitment. Sadly, these quickly become dangerous waters as the focus tends to shift from what God has done fully and freely for you to yourself instead, and to a focus on what you've done as the final piece of that salvation puzzle. And that self-focus soon leads to either pride or despair. Not a good option.

Eternal Election? Or Present Headache?

There is another, and opposite danger, though. A different theological tradition "solves" our dilemma by placing more weight on the Scriptures' talk of predestination than the Scriptures themselves do! Advocating a "Double Predestination," this approach would suggest that while God predestined our salvation, He also actively predestined everyone else's damnation. And that is simply something the Bible never states. Indeed, there are many instances where the Scriptures call us to be actively involved in our faith, and even, from a human perspective, to "choose Jesus" on a daily basis. And so, in the Scriptures, when the subject of damnation comes up, it is sinful humanity who gets the credit there, not God. (Paul's warning not to "make shipwreck" of your faith comes to mind.)

So... which is it? Does God do it all in our salvation? Did he predestine us, call us into the faith, make us good before God, all by Himself without any help from us? YES! He gets all the credit and all the glory! And we get all the assurance of knowing that our salvation is unshakeable. Because if we sinners were responsible for even one billionth of it, we could never, really, totally, be sure we'd done it completely and flawlessly right. And the whole point of the Bible's predestination talk is to give you comfort. Salvation is what God does. Start to finish. Trust Him. You don't have to achieve it.

At the same time... Are we actively called to live lives consistent with the faith God has called us into? Should we daily choose to follow in God's ways and bind our wills to His? Is it even possible that we might harden our heart to the point where we reject God's free gift of salvation and His actions on our behalf? YES!

Are we saying two different things at once??? Yep. Because the Scriptures do. And if the Scriptures speak this way, I reckon we're in pretty good company. Even if we do have a headache.

Pastor Nate McCarty



Greetings from Micah, Eleanor, and Gideon!

I would love to share a little bit more about our roots and our context especially as it regards our Lutheran Church. Both of our parents grew up in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and we both attended Lutheran schools attached to the Church we went to. Eleanor attended Evansville Lutheran School from Kindergarten to 8th grade and her mom helped out the school as the school secretary. My mom also helped out as a substitute teacher at my school in Plano, Texas. Faith Lutheran School is a classical Lutheran school, which serves preschool all the way through high school, and we extend a live, online opportunity to learn side-by-side the students in-person if you want to experience the beauty of classical Lutheran education. It may be interesting for you to learn that our school teaches us Latin from third grade to junior year of high school, and in our school you can also learn Biblical Greek! I am a firm believer in teaching schoolchildren multiple languages like Spanish, Greek, and Latin as young as possible. Learning another language teaches us more about our own language with a lot more clarity and understanding.

But perhaps another cool aspect of our lives is that both Eleanor and I have a grandparent who served as either a missionary or a pastor. Listening to the people who serve in ministry is one of the greatest motivators for deciding to serve in the ministry yourself!

Eleanor's grandpa served as a Missionary in Papua New Guinea! His name is Gary Parker and he served there for ten years. Gary and his wife had Eleanor's mom and two other children while they were there. They started serving as missionaries after they went through some training immediately after college at Concordia University Nebraska (CUNE). They had a delightful time in Papua New Guinea, serving the native people, and bringing them the Gospel and other physical necessities such as furnaces and how to produce healthier crops. Eleanor always loved when Grandpa would show pictures of themselves, their house, their primitive school, and the different individuals in Papua New Guinea.

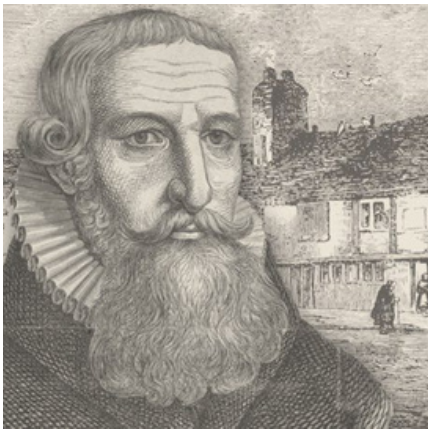
My grandpa, James Cumming, served as a pastor in the LCMS after attending the Springfield seminary of the LCMS. He graduated in 1964. In the years that followed, people gave him harsh criticism that he held the Bible contains no errors and it records actual history, not just made-up stories. But my grandpa responded that what God has written in the Bible is the factual and exact words God spoke from His own mouth – there is no need to change the Bible because "it was a different time." I deeply appreciate that my grandpa holds that the Bible contains no errors and has taught me the same.

We all face difficult challenges, but that is why we return to the Scriptures, to hear what our Lord says to us. The Bible tells us the Truth: Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished for us. ✞
God bless you,

Vicar Micah Cumming

Did you know...?

Now Thank We All Our God



Did you know that the beloved Lutheran hymn Now Thank We All Our God was written around 1636 by Lutheran pastor Martin Rinkart? Rinkart served in Eilenburg, Germany, during the Thirty Years' War, a time marked by war, famine, and plague. Despite these hardships, he wrote this hymn of thanksgiving that continues to be sung by Christians around the world today.

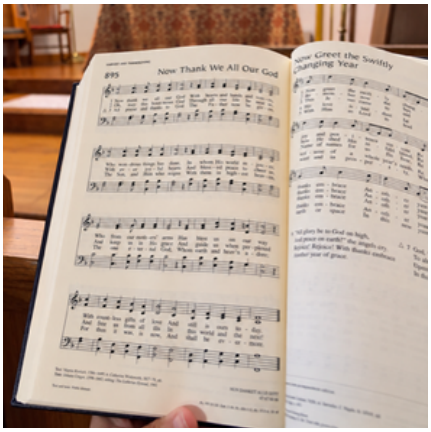
Spiritual Significance



Rinkart's hymn reminds us that Christian thanksgiving depends on God's faithfulness, not on favorable circumstances. Its words encourage believers to thank God for His gifts, mercy, and provision in every season of life. The hymn echoes the biblical call to "give thanks in all circumstances" because our hope rests in Christ.

Connecting to Today

LCMS congregations continue to sing Now Thank We All Our God as a confession of faith and gratitude. When we sing it today, we join generations of Lutherans who trusted God's promises through both joyful and difficult times. As we celebrate Thanksgiving this month, the hymn reminds us to give thanks for God's enduring grace and daily blessings.



Lutheran Service Book #895 - lcms.org - hymnary.org

Fall Clean UP Highlights:













A heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped with our Fall Cleanup. Your time, energy, and dedication helped beautify our campus and prepare it for the season ahead. We are grateful for your service and the many hands that made the work light!

BLC VOLUNTEERS

ELDERS

November 1st

8:00 Paul B. EIC
Jon W.
9:30 Joe G. EIC
John H.
11:00 Dan R. EIC
Alex L.

November 8th

8:00 Paul B. EIC
Gordon G.
9:30 Joe G. EIC
11:00 Dan H. EIC

November 15th

8:00 Gordon G. EIC
Jon W.
9:30 Joe G. EIC
John H.
11:00 Bruce D. EIC
Brandon A.

November 22nd

8:00 Jamie H. EIC
Gordon G.
9:30 Joe G. EIC

11:00 Allan W. EIC
Al C.

Thanksgiving Eve
(11/25/26)
7:00 Jamie EIC

November 29th

8:00 Paul EIC
Jon W.
9:30 Joe G. EIC
John H.
11:00 Dan R. EIC
Rob H.

ALTAR GUILD

Sat 10/31: Tami

11/01:
8 AM - Valarie
9:30 AM - Nina
11 AM - Diana

Sat 11/07: Carol

11/08
8 AM - Nancy
9:30 AM - Barbara
11 AM - Beth

Sat 11/14: Anna

11/15:
8 AM - Valarie
9:30 AM - Barbara
11 AM - Erica & Joy

Sat 11/21: Dee R.

11/22:
8 AM - Susan
9:30 AM - Nina
11 AM - Diana

Wed 11/25:
Set up - Carol
Clean up - Valarie

Sat 11/28: Dee R.

11/29:
8 AM - Valarie
9:30 AM - Tami
11 AM - Carol & Judy

SCREENS

11/01
8 AM - Patrick
9:30 AM - Tami
11 AM - Gina

11/08
8 AM- Carol
9:30 AM - Kristine
11 AM - Toni

11/15
8 AM - Susan
9:30 AM - Romaine
11 AM - Roy

11/22
8 AM - Nancy
9:30 AM - Kristine
11 AM - Lloyda

11/29
8 AM - Val
9:30 AM - Tami
11 AM - Toni

COUNTING

11/01
Diane / Barbie

11/8
Gordon / Barbara

11/15
Allan / Paul

11/22
Bob / Holly

11/29
Terry / Gordon

STREAMING

11/01
11 AM - Bob

11/08
11 AM - Brandon

11/15
11 AM - Jeanie

11/22
11 AM - Jerry

11/25
7 pm - Bob

11/29
11 AM - Roy

NOVEMBER

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Birthdays

Travis Hardy	11/01
Dee Reichard	11/02
Cyndi Briggs	11/03
Julie Gundian	11/03
Travis Berkey	11/03
Kristen Randolph	11/04
Liam Will	11/04
Becca Hill	11/05
Jamie Mazzeo	11/05
Nevaeh Diekmann	11/05
Ron Zarski	11/05
Joanne Dengler	11/06
Danny Barley	11/07
Emma Bolyard	11/07
Maureen Murphy	11/07
Abigale Hardy	11/08
Copper Heisler	11/08
Theresa Potratz	11/09
Ava Garner	11/10
Judy TenBroeck	11/10
Madilyn Garner	11/10
Summer Porter	11/11
Dawn Barrett	11/15
Elizabeth Thies	11/15
Jackie Thompson	11/15
Barbara Bendick	11/17
Frue McAvoy III	11/17
Logan Wortelboer	11/17
Robbie Wortelboer	11/17
Dave Horn	11/19
Jan Aleschus-Runko	11/19
Jerry Kirkman	11/21
Loren Sifferath	11/21
Owen Carlson	11/21
Angela Smith	11/22
Eric Hensley	11/22
Ken Carlson	11/22
Areigh Sherrill	111/23
Candace Orr	11/23
Nicole Diekmann	11/23
Bob Van Ness	11/24
Easton Werhner	11/24
Alex Limbaugh	11/25
Dan Runko	11/26
James Holz	11/26
Kyle Hanratty	11/28
Janene Swain	11/29
Jesse Shimp	11/29
Randall Wardin	11/29
Barb McCombs	11/30
Brook Porter	11/30
Candice Moore	11/30



Anniversaries

Candace & Matthew Gray	11/03
Katie & Evan Satterfield	11/07
Cheri & John Porter	11/07
Jessica & Logan Skorusa	11/07
Anna & Greg Adams	11/17
Robin & Jeff Ford	11/23



November 2026

1 **All Saints' Day** 8/ 9:30/ 11 AM Service 9:30 Sunday School	2 Dellinger Bible study 6:30 PM	3 	4 9:30 AM Women's Bible Study - Chapter 7 (Cottage) Mission Advancement Banquet 6-8:15 pm	5 Chior Practice 6:15 PM	6 FL/GA Middle School Youth Gathering	7 Girl Scouts 10:30 AM
8 8/ 9:30/ 11 AM Service 9:30 Sunday School	9 Senior Cards 9:30 AM 	10	11  Office & Preschool Closed Confirmation 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:30PM	12 Chior Practice 6:15 PM Young Adults 6:30 PM	13	14 LWML Coin Stocking Making
15 8/ 9:30/ 11 AM Service 9:30 Sunday School	16	17 Elder's Meeting 7:00 pm	18 Confirmation 5:30 PM Youth Group 6:30PM	19 6 PM Men's Bible Study - CH 10 (Disciples Hall) Chior Practice 6:15 PM	20 Mission House Team A 4-7 PM	21 Girl Scouts 10:30 AM YA Friendsgiving event 5 pm
22 8/ 9:30/ 11 AM Service 9:30 Sunday School	23	24 Executive Council Meeting 6:30 PM	25 Thanksgiving Eve Service 7 PM	26  Preschool & Church Office Closed	27 Preschool & Church Office Closed	28
29 8/ 9:30/ 11 AM Service 9:30 Sunday School **1st Sunday in Advent**	30					

Bible Studies Every Week:

Mon: ECHO BIble Study 7 PM
Weds: Elder Led Bible Study 7 PM
Thurs: Vicar's Bible Study 9:30 AM

Anything you would like to add to the calendar at BLC, please email the church office at officeadmin@bethlehemlutheranjaxbeach.org