

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2025 | VOL. 2 ISSUE 13

BACK TO SCHOOL

BUILDING A NEW BETHLEHEM PRESCHOOL

On August 3rd our beloved Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Preschool held a voter's meeting to discuss the possibility of building a new preschool. After my opening prayer and initial thoughts about the importance of this project our church president, Gordon Gruhn, gave an important overview about the need and purpose of this project. The purpose of the presentation was simply to get the affirmation of the congregation to move forward with planning, selecting an architect, securing a general contractor, and preparing a budget to be presented for approval at a later congregational voter's meeting. The voters gave unanimous approval to move forward, and I am so grateful. I want to encourage you to prayerfully consider how God is leading Bethlehem in this endeavor. Your voice, participation, and support are crucial as we seek to move forward together in faith.

Please allow me to share with you a few personal thoughts on the importance of our school and this project. It's easy to think of preschool ministry as simply "babysitting," but I see a much bigger picture. I see a vision of little children worshipping freely and getting their first glimpses of what it means to know they are loved by Jesus . . . and what it means to follow Him. I see kids learning the foundational biblical truths that they will build on and plant seeds in their hearts for the rest of their lives. Some might say this is the parent's job, but the fact is that few parents teach (catechize) their children regarding the foundations of the Christian faith. Bethlehem has the wonderful privilege of doing just that - teaching about Jesus. This is our greatest mission field, and we don't have to go anywhere - the children come to us! Thank you, Lord, for this awesome opportunity.

Years ago, in a different church, I heard someone say that they had already raised and educated their children and didn't feel "compelled" to do that for other children. I don't recall the pastor's response to that statement, but I have one now: "Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Indeed, we live for Jesus whose love extends from generation to generation, and who beckons the little children to come to him (Mt. 9:14).

Other stories this month:

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FROM OUR SHEPHERDS.....	1-3
FROM THE VICAR.....	4
BLC NOTES.....	5
BLC PRESCHOOL LIGHTS.....	6
FROM OUR CHURCH PRESIDENT...	7
SUMMER RECAP.....	8-10
BACK IN SESSION.....	11
VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE.....	12
MEMBER MILESTONES.....	13
SUMMER CALENDARS.....	14

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- SPOTLIGHT ON BLC PRESCHOOL
- VICAR CALEB'S FIRST ARTICLE



BUILDING A NEW BETHLEHEM PRESCHOOL

(Continued)

One thing preschoolers love is worship! Pastor Nate, Vicar, and I lead chapel every Wednesday morning (except for summer break). We can tell you that the children love our children's messages. They also love singing, wiggling, and worshipping. Our world's culture can sing songs all day about everything! In chapel, though, we sing songs about Jesus, prayer, praising God, thanking God, the Bible - anything related to Jesus' love for us. Indeed, we have a great privilege at Bethlehem to have such a wonderful children's ministry in our preschool.

You will be hearing much more in the coming months about our building campaign. In the meantime, please begin praying now about this wonderful opportunity. And, if you would like, you can begin making contributions earmarked for "building fund." We have already received a \$50,000 donation!

In my twilight years of ministry, I can't think of a better project to support.

In His service . . . and yours,

Pastor Dana Allen Brunes



What happens at BLC Preschool Chapel?

Every Wednesday, starting in September, Pastor Dana, Pastor Nate and our Vicar lead Chapel for our little scholars. The Pastors and Vicar begin with a warm welcome and Birthday Buddies. (The children with birthdays get a special small stuffie from the Pastors and Vicar.) They go over the Bible verse they will work on for the year as well as several songs the kids will share with their family and friends at the end of the year.

Then, Pastors Dana and Nate or Vicar will share a devotional lesson with the students that focuses on a lesson from the Gospel on Sunday. The kids engage with the lesson in a variety of ways from object lessons, skits, and props. The chapel closes with a song and lots of hugs! This sanctuary becomes a mission field where Pastor Dana, Pastor Nate, and Vicar share the love of Jesus with our BLC Preschool students. How awesome that every Wednesday we know these children are experiencing the Word of God! Please pray for our ministerial staff, Vicar, Preschool teachers and children this year; that the little children would come to know Jesus, who waits with open arms.





BACK TO SCHOOL: DON'T BE SPARRING!

“If we wish to have excellent and able persons both for civil and church leadership, we must spare no diligence, time, or cost in teaching and educating our children.”

- The Large Catechism (written by Martin Luther), on the Fourth Commandment

There are areas in life where it's a good thing to be stingy, or as I prefer to call it, “resource aware.” By nature, I'm quite cautious, not wanting to invest too much time, energy, or resources into certain endeavors. And there's nothing wrong with that, per se. God has made us all different for a reason.

However, my bias is not perfect for every scenario. Not everything in life is to be approached with a “least effort possible” mindset. While talking about the importance of children honoring their parents and other authorities in the fourth commandment, Luther reminds us of the inverse. Parents and others in authority are strongly commanded in Scripture to care for children, particularly by bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In other words, to care for them spiritually above all. And in doing this, Luther says, we should spare no effort, time-consideration, or financial cost. This is a top priority.

But it's not just “church stuff.” Education of the young in general was a top priority for our favorite Reformer. He once preached a sermon titled, rather bluntly, a Sermon on Keeping Children in School. The temptation at the time, I think, would have been to pull your kids out of school so you could put them to work and make more money for yourself or your family unit. But some things are more important than money (or a sacrifice of time or effort.) And for Luther and the scriptures, education is one of those things. “How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver” (Prov. 16:16).

Why is this so? Because all truth ultimately comes only from The Truth. So yes, it is good to prioritize learning the truth of God's revelation in His written Word, the Scriptures. But any true knowledge on any topic ultimately connects back to the Giver of all truths. Really, we need Him from the start if we desire to attain any true wisdom, especially in matters of salvation. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Pov. 9:10). In the pursuit and development of this knowledge, wisdom, and truth, it is never too early to begin. And we do not want to be sparing in our efforts.

As Bethlehem considers the development of a new building for our Preschool - and how to better utilize the space God has blessed us with for our growing congregation - these thoughts shouldn't be far from our minds. Please join me in prayer during these exciting days of opportunity. Please pray for wisdom, prudence, insight, and the supply of all our needs. Please pray that we would value most highly what the Scriptures call us to value: Christ crucified for sinners, and the proclamation of that good news to all the world. Young and old alike.

In Christ,

Pastor Nate McCarty



A BIG THANK-YOU!

First off, I want to say to you, a huge THANK YOU! As I've begun to settle in here at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, I cannot begin to describe just how blessed I have been by you! Upon arrival, I immediately met several of you as you helped me unpack my car and even brought dinner, and only one word came to mind... Blessed. You've blessed me so much already with your prayers, time, and gifts, and I look forward to doing life together here in Jacksonville Beach with you over the course of this next year. I too, desire to be a blessing to you, to be with you in the highest of the highs of your life, and through the lowest of the lows of your life. Already in the few short weeks of me being here, I've gotten to know several faces, and I cannot wait to get to know each of you more and more throughout this next year!

As you get to know me better, you might notice that I like to be active, I always like doing something. Growing up I looked for any opportunity to run, which often involved playing sports, so I learned very quickly to love all kinds of sports. I've played soccer, basketball, baseball, tennis, pickleball, and believe it or not even dance. As much as I love playing sports, I also enjoy watching sports. As much as I love exercising, I try to be mentally active too. I love playing board games with friends and family, and I even brought some of my favorite board games with me here to Jacksonville Beach! I grew up in Minnesota, but ended up moving to Wisconsin when I was just nine years old. I've always considered the church a second home, as I'm a pastor's kid. I remember spending hours in the church with my dad, having fond memories in the church pews. As I come into this new vicar position, I want to take just a minute to share one verse that's been on my mind throughout my travels to Florida. "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore" (Psalm 121:8).

The end of summer marks change, a change in the season, a change of weather, a change of scheduling, the changing of vicar etc. For kids, the end of summer transforms the hours spent at home into hours spent at school. As I reflect upon the change from living in Central Wisconsin to living in Florida, I can't help but think of the constants in our lives as Christians. Now, if you're like me, you might've traveled this summer to a new place, you might've experienced changes to your routine life, and as summer comes to an end you might think of all the changes that come with it. Yet amidst all the changes in life, what a BLESSING it is to be firmly rooted in God's Word. Here, he blesses you. He keeps your "going outs" and your "coming ins" throughout all of life's fluctuations. Here in his Word, he baptizes you into his most holy name. Here in his Word, God gives you his promises of forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation. No matter where you are or where you find yourself, God continually keeps your "going outs" and your "coming ins" secured in his promises.

Vicar Caleb Gustafson



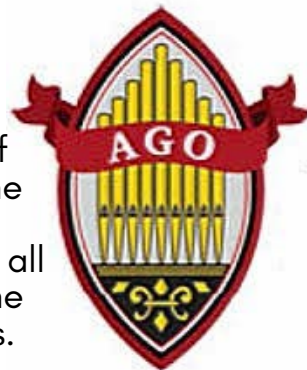


Organ Concert ft. Our Own BLC Organist

The Jacksonville Chapter of the American Guild of Organists (AGO) will present an organ recital at the Riverside Presbyterian Church on Sunday, September 14 at 3:00 p.m. The players featured are all professional organists representative of many of the churches in Jacksonville and the surrounding areas.

Featured players will be: Steven Ackert, James Freeman, Mary Holladay, **Tim Huber**, Bette Mattox, Ray McDonald, Clifford Parrish, and Jean Spyksma. They will be playing the church's Colby-Walker organ, the harpsichord, and the piano. The church is located at 849 Park St. in Jacksonville. The recital is free and open to the public. There will be a reception following the concert.

Go and see our amazing music director, Tim Huber and some fabulous organists!



Choir

BLC Choir is back in session! BLC Choir will be resuming rehearsals on Thursdays at 6:15 PM- starting on September 18th. If you have any questions or are interested in joining, please feel free to email our Choir Director, Tim Huber at timmerjax66@gmail.com.

Handbells



BLC Handbells are back as well! Rehearsals will be moving to Wednesday nights at 6 PM. Rehearsals will be starting on August 27th. If you are interested in joining call Kristine Perryman at 904-536-0826 or email her at murraykr@hotmail.com.



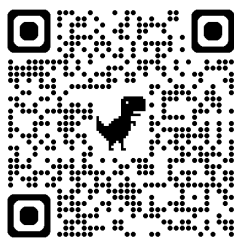
Let your light shine
before others...

Matthew 5:16

*Our preschool is full of life, laughter, and the light of Christ—and we're ready to share it with you! Each month, BLC Preschool Lights will shine a spotlight on the incredible things happening with our little ones, from classroom moments to ministry milestones. With our exciting new building project on the horizon, there's never been a better time to see how God is growing this vital part of our church family. Stay tuned... big things are coming from our smallest members!

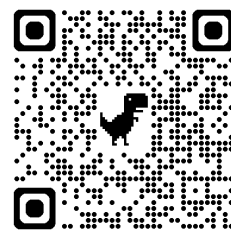
A Bright Start to the New School Year!

The new year is off to a fantastic start at our preschool! We've welcomed many new smiling faces and expanded our team to support our growing classrooms. Our exciting new curriculum, Learning Beyond Paper, is already bringing learning to life through hands-on, interactive activities that the children love. We're also thrilled to share that plans are underway for a new and improved facility—an exciting step forward in our continued growth. The future is looking bright, and we can't wait to see what's ahead!



General Supply
← Wish List

Book
→ Wish List



Did you know...?



The Bethlehem Lutheran Church supports LCMS Missionaries all over the United States and the world.



Our congregation is blessed to support two missionary families serving the Lord abroad. The Wasmund family is serving in South Korea, where they share the Gospel and strengthen the local church through outreach, teaching, and community ministry. The Kaster family is serving in the Czech Republic, working to bring the hope of Christ to a country where many people do not yet know Him.

Please lift up the Wasmund family and Kaster family in prayer. The Wasmund's share: "We are very grateful for the ministry partners who support us in many ways, not the least including faithful prayers lifted up on our behalf for protection, wisdom and continued guidance. We sincerely thank you." Let us give thanks to God that the Wasmunds and Kasters are serving in this part of the world.



FROM PASTOR HORN

Greetings to my Salt Life friends, from the Lakeside, where the cruise ships are ore ships. I was working out a nice devotion, but suddenly Wednesday has leapt into Tuesday, so here is a quick summary of our status. I am singing at 5-6 nursing homes each month, and a bit of Jesus music seems to fit nicely between Sweet Caroline and Country Roads. Within the year I hope to be leading services at some of them. Local breweries are becoming acquainted with me, and along with wholesome folk music, I mix in some new public-facing Jesus music I've been writing. WWJD is not such a simple question as it was 20 years ago, and I am giving them something to ponder. A local Lutheran worship band leader opined that good "contemporary" music was hard to find. Most of my current work is meant for a solo voice, so I've taken on writing some congregational music that shows, hopefully, that eating your vegetables and whole grains can be very tasty. Thank you. Go in the peace of Jesus.

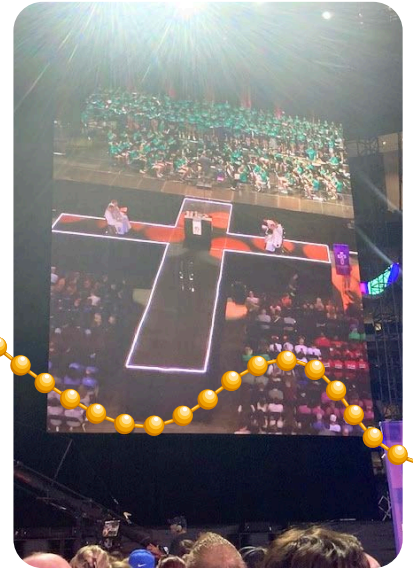
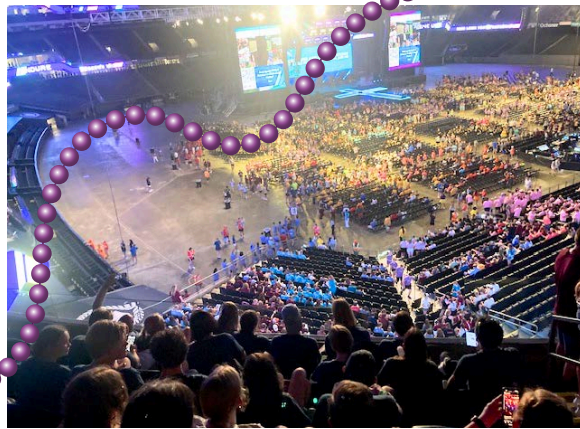
-Dave Horn

SUMMER RECAP

Campfirmation 2025



Welcome to
NEW ORLEANS
LCMS National Youth Gathering 2025



S

U

BLC

M

M

E

R

FUN in Photos



BLC Mission Trip to Africa was a great time to share resources and Christ!



We had a great time at SCUBA VBS this year!



At BLC- we love even the littlest of our staff members. 🤗



We welcomed many new members ❤️ to our BLC family this summer,



BLC Women's Retreat 2025 was a weekend of fun, fellowship and study of the Word with our sisters in Christ!

BACK IN SESSION AT BLC!

MON
SEPT
1

**PRESCHOOL AND CHURCH OFFICE
CLOSED**



WEDS
SEPT
3

BLC PRESCHOOL CHAPEL

9:30 AM

First Chapel for our BLC Preschool students!



WEDS
SEPT
3

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

9:30 AM

Join us as we resume Women's Bible Study in the Cottage. All ages welcome!



THURS
SEPT
4

YOUNG ADULT BIBLE STUDY

5:30 PM

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



MON
SEPT
8

CARDS, CARDS, CARDS!

9:30 AM

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



WEDS
SEPT
10

CONFIRMATION INFORMATIONAL MEETING

7th and 8th grade parents and Confirmation students will meet with Pas. Nate and Vicar Caleb at 5:30 PM to go over the expectations and plans for this year.



WEDS
SEPT
17

CONFIRMATION CLASS AND YOUTH GROUP KICK OFF!

530 PM- Confirmation and 630 PM- Youth Group

Confirmation and Youth Group Kick-off for the 2025-2026 year!



THURS
SEPT
18

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

600 PM- Bible Study and Dinner

Join us for food and study as we delve into Veith's "Postmodern Times."



FRI
SEPT
26

FAMILY GAME NIGHT AND POTLUCK

School is back in session and it is time to take a break with your BLC family and friends! Bring your friends and family to a night of games, cards and food! Starts at 530 PM.

SAT
OCT
25

BLC'S TRUNK OR TREAT

Mark your calendars for this year's Trunk or Treat. Please join us with your decorated trunks and enjoy fellowship, hotdogs, sno cones and games for the children.



*If you would like any information about the events listed above, please contact the church office at officeadmin@bethlehemlutheranjaxbeach.org.

BLC VOLUNTEERS!

COUNTING

SEPT 7

Paul/Allan

SEPT 14

Bob/Barbara

SEPT 21

Barbie/Paul

SEPT 28

Greg/Bob

ALTAR GUILD

SAT. SEPT 6

Set Up - Dee R

SUN. SEPT 7

8 - Valerie

9:30 - Tami

11 - Carol

SAT. SEPT 13

Set Up - Carol

SUN. SEPT 14

8 - Nancy

9:30 - Brenda

11 - Beth

SAT. SEPT 20

Set Up - Tami

SUN. SEPT 21

8 - Susan

9:30 - Barbara

11 - Diana

SAT. SEPT 27

Set Up - Dee R.

SUN. SEPT 28

8 - Valerie

9:30 - Nina

11 - Kathy

SCREENS

Sept 7th

8 - Patrick

9:30 - Chris

11 - Gina

Sept 14th

8 - Victoria

9:30 - Kristine

11 - Lloyd

Sept 21st

8 - Nancy

9:30 - Romaine

11 - Toni

Sept 28th

8 - Susan

9:30 - Brenda

11 - Roy

STREAMING

Sept 7th

Bob

Sept 14th

Jerry

Sept 21st

Jeanie

Sept 28th

Brandon

BLC APPRECIATES YOU!



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

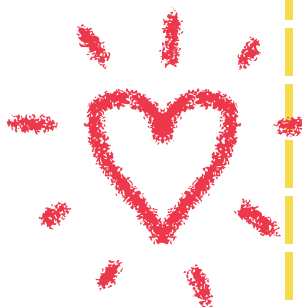
Birthdays

Elizabeth Jackson	9/1	Greg Adams	9/21
Sydney Heisler	9/2	Danielle Lagerman	9/21
Kevin Perryman	9/2	Janine Thiemann	9/21
Bryce Sullivan	9/2	Erik Wilhelm	9/21
Logan Dellinger	9/3	Susan Beaty	9/22
Genevieve Putnam	9/3	Robert DeGroat	9/22
Tony Torgerud	9/3	Toni Skorusa	9/22
Whitney Wagner	9/3	Otto Gruhn	9/23
Scott Harrison	9/4	Jillian Hays	9/23
Ryker Baskin	9/5	Jamie Heimbach	9/23
Anna Bookholt	9/6	Jennifer Huber	9/23
Dave Duensing	9/6	Eleanora Putnam	9/23
John Porter	9/7	Josh Romer	9/23
Salvatore Zingales	9/7	Barbara Raddant	9/24
Colton Sweeney	9/8	Johnny Corbitt	9/25
James Wriedt	9/9	Joshua Gajdos	9/25
Lindsey Hansen	9/10	Deborah Brewer	9/26
Lindsey Treat	9/10	Kadence Perryman	9/26
Vicki Green	9/12	Gretchen Bugbee	9/27
Joy McCarty	9/12	Michelle Fluegge	9/27
Kathy Poe	9/12	Trevor Freeborn	9/27
Cathy Rangel	9/12	Michael Headley	9/27
Lisa Cameron	9/13	Debbie Corbitt	9/28
Alexander Staudinger	9/13	Avery Williams	9/28
Lori Pyle	9/14	Landon Williams	9/28
Eric Young	9/14	Nathan McCarty	9/29
Anna Adams	9/16	Diane Zellmer	9/30
Poppy Obermann	9/16		
Nori Tostovarsnik	9/16		
Mark Bolyard	9/18		
Kinzlee McAvoy	9/19		
Elizabeth Swatkowski	9/19		



Anniversaries



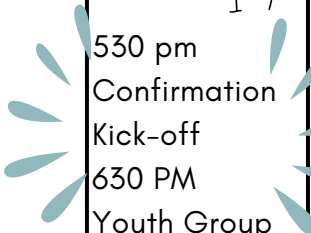
Brad and Tami Moe	09/02
Reese and Erika Williams	09/02
Joe and Nina Gregor	09/05
Chad and Kristen Lee	09/06
Mark and Nancy Dzamko	09/07
Neil and Pat Robar	09/09
Kyle and Catherine Hanratty	09/11
Paul and Lisa Cameron	09/16
Dennis and Dianne Reed	09/20
Dan and Emily Will	09/24
James and Theresa Emery	09/29





SEPTEMBER 2025



	1	2	3  First Preschool Chapel at 930 AM	4 630 PM Young Adult Bible Study	5	6 930 AM AA
7 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	8 930 AM Senior Cards	9 7 PM Elders	10  530 PM Confirmation Informational Meeting	11	12	13 930 AM AA
14 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	15	16	17  530 pm Confirmation Kick-off 630 PM Youth Group Kick-off	18 6 PM Men's Bible Study	19 430 PM Mission House	20 930 AM AA
21 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	22	23 7 PM Executive Council	24	25	26 530 PM Family Game Night & Potuck	27 930 AM AA
28 8/ 930/ 11 AM Service 930 Sunday School	29	30	<div data-bbox="708 1608 1265 1913"> <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>			