

***"My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern,  
is very simple: loving others." -Bob Hope***

I want to offer you a Happy New Year greeting as you will have received this month's Church Mouse just as the new church year has begun, but as I am awaiting the Thanksgiving holiday this week, I am going to put off the New Year's greeting until next month. This is a time to wish you a blessed Advent as we pray together, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Advent and Lent are my favorite seasons of the church year as I embrace a time of waiting for the festival celebrations that follow: the Nativity of our Lord and the Resurrection of our Lord. In the Lutheran tradition, these seasons often are accompanied by mid-week services and while this might seem to create a more hectic schedule for a pastor, there is something calming about those Wednesday evening simple suppers and times of worship.

This year marks my second Advent season with the people of Bethel Presbyterian Church and our December calendar has a number of opportunities to gather with others as we approach the season of Christmas. I hope you will be able to join us for some of these events that I am looking forward offering or attending. The festivities will begin on December 3rd as the ladies are invited to the United Methodist Church for a holiday gathering. On the 14th we are invited to the presentation of the Messiah, a beautiful tradition for our community. On Sunday evening, December 21, we will host The Longest Night, a time of contemplative worship for all of God's people and especially those who are feeling less than festive perhaps due to grief, illness, loneliness or despair. I hope you will join us as we come together at 5:30 p.m., in our sanctuary, for this time of worship on the longest night of the year. On Christmas Eve, we will offer our Christmas Eve in the Barn service at the Rustic Chic Event Center. Please invite others to this service as it provides a comfortable and beautifully festive setting for families and individuals who are less familiar with the Christmas miracle to learn of God's Good News come to us in baby Jesus. As it's been said, that little one is the reason for the season!

In addition to these seasonally scheduled events, we will have our regular routine of Sunday morning worship. The sanctuary, entry way and fellowship hall have all been prepared to set this time apart with a focus different from what you will find in a Wal-mart, Target, Kohls and the like.

This is a holy time and we will mark the weeks in a special way as we light the candles on the Advent Wreath and hear words reflective of the Sundays of Advent: hope, peace, joy, and love. During morning worship on the 14th we will have a special service prepared around our Christmas memories. I have a few questions that I would like you to answer as the this service is being developed and I am looking forward to hearing your memories of Christmases past. On the last Sunday of the year, we will worship using a Lessons and Carols liturgy. I hope you'll be able to participate with us at that service.

As I bring this to a close, I invite you to practice good self-care in this season that is filled with emotions of both joy and sorrow. Meditative prayer may be helpful if you are feeling overwhelmed or sad. Listening to sacred music as you sit quietly in a comfy chair recommended. Christmas is a season when less is truly more. Read the Christmas story or even a silly story like 'Skipping Christmas,' as it is sure to bring a smile to your face.

I feel blessed to be your pastor in this place where God's love is made known.

I wish you all an Advent of peaceful waiting and a Christmas of joy.

In Christ, Lori

563.380.8187

[lori.kleppe@gmail.com](mailto:lori.kleppe@gmail.com)

Happy New Year!

With the arrival of Advent, we turn to Matthew for most of our Gospel readings in what is called Year A in the lectionary. Here's some intel to get you prepared for Advent and the Gospel of Matthew as the new Church year begins.

Matthew was written around 80—90 C.E. One ancient writer, Clement of Alexandria, in Egypt, wrote that Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote about the outward facts of Jesus' life, while John wrote a "spiritual gospel." This was recorded between 180—200 C.E.

Matthew's author is unknown but used the Gospel of Mark and other oral and written sources.

Matthew often rearranges the sequence of stories and shortens them. Comparing Matthew and Mark is helpful in understanding Matthew.

The Gospel of Matthew can be outlined in this way:

Jesus, the promised Son (1:1—4:11)

Light dawns in the darkness (4:12-9:34)

The kingdom's power in the midst of opposition and questions (9:35-16:12)

God's Son will suffer death and be raised (16:13-20:34)

Jesus in Jerusalem (21:1-25:46)

Jesus' death and resurrection (26:1-28:20)

Matthew stresses forgiveness and the need to forgive. Jesus forbids judging and seeking a visible righteousness of one's own. Throughout Matthew, Jesus rejects teaching what could be used to condemn others or exalt oneself, even if based on his teaching.

Source: Lutheran Study Bible, 2009. Pages 1604-1606

Session took the following action at their 09 November meeting:

- Opened with devotion and prayer led by Pastor Lori;
- Shared with each other our Joys and Concerns;
- Approved minutes from Session meetings on 12 and 26 October 2025;
- Approved minutes from Congregational meeting on 26 October 2025;
- Received Treasurer's Report for October 2025;
- Pastor Lori reported the use of new technology went well during the presentation on Christian Nationalism held 05 November;
- Pastor Lori felt the class on Christian Nationalism was well received and produced some meaningful dialogue by the 25 people attending;
- Session examined and approved the membership of Gregg Kleppe, who will join the church during worship on 16 November;
- Session approved the December Church Mouse being sent out on 02 December;
- Pastor Lori shared plans for Reign of Christ Sunday on 23 November and a Christmas Memories service on 14 December;
- Appointed Lee Johansen to serve as Commissioner to John Knox Presbytery's meeting on 18 November 2025;
- Heard from Worship team regarding Advent activities and plans for Christmas in the Barn, which will be posted on Facebook;
- Heard an update on remodeling of women's bathroom and other maintenance items including boilers reviews, new light switches, and new outlet for a refrigerator in the storage room;
- Pastor Lori inquired about holding worship services in the dining room during colder months. Our new technology will allow us to provide live-stream services;
- Session approved holding worship services in the dining room for the months of, at least, January and February;
- Heard Nominating team continues to seek a candidate for the three-year term on Session for the Class of 2028;
- The meeting was closed with prayer led by Rev. Kleppe.



### Starfish Campaign

The annual ministry to alleviate undue medical debt received offerings totaling over \$33,500.00 this will cover more than \$3 million in medical expenses for families in Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Welcome to our newest member  
Gregg Kleppe!

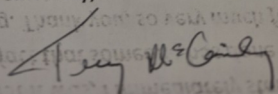


*"In 2015, my daughter was diagnosed with a rare liver condition called biliary atresia. In 2016, she had a lifesaving liver transplant. During that time we spent more time in the hospital than I can count. Our lives were turned upside down and we experienced extreme financial hardship. Our daughter is now six years old and thriving and we are slowly getting our bearings again. When I got this letter out of the mail and realized what it was, I immediately started crying. This is an incredibly gracious gift and the fact that someone has done this out of the kindness of their heart is just amazing. Thank you, so very much for your kindness."*

Dear Stephen,

Many thank-you letters received by our mission partner, Undue Medical Debt, describe the tears of joy people have upon learning their medical debt has been cancelled. It means the world to them! The Starfish Campaign is a ministry of hope. Once again, the Bethel congregation has stepped up big time. The generosity of your people will likely impact at least 350 families in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Thank you for such a great outpouring of God's love!

Sincerely,



## EXTENDED TABLE OFFERING

The gifts you bring to the Extended Table offering that are received on Communion Sunday are now supporting the Open Hands Food Pantry in West Union.

The extended table offering items requested for Communion Sunday, December 7, 2025, are personal hygiene items and cleaning products: They would always welcome gluten free items.

Thanks so much for your offerings to support Bethel's mission to reach out in our community!

This is one simple way we can share with those in need. We are called to be generous as God has been overwhelmingly generous to us!



Sewing Circle will meet on Thursday, December 4, at 9:30 until approximately 3:00.



Committed to  
nurturing faith,  
supporting mission,  
working for justice,  
and building community.

## CELEBRATIONS

Congratulations to our Bethel family members as they celebrate birthdays and anniversaries this month!

DEC 15 - Victor Schmitz

DEC 18 - Kirk & Ann Bruso (A)

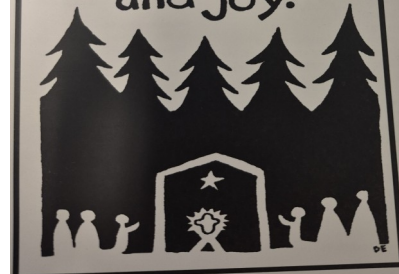
DEC 20 - Jim & Sue Updegraff (A)

DEC 24- Marilyn Jorgenson

DEC 30- Bruce & Lois Franzen (A)



O children of  
the forest free,  
The angels' song  
is true.  
The holy child  
of earth and heaven  
is born today  
for you.  
Come kneel before  
the radiant boy,  
who brings you  
beauty, peace  
and joy.



Members and friends of Bethel who seek healing and wholeness in their lives are kept in prayer.

Together we are remembering: Cathy Bemiss, Teri Brockway, Don Durscher, Sarah Updegraff Murray, Kirk Bruso, baby McCoy, Rose Marie Knight (Julie Larson's mom) and Mike Schroyer.

Good Samaritan Center - Peggi Pape  
Stoney Brook - Kate Ewing, Kathy Meyer  
Eastern Star Decorah - Doyle Gorden  
Ossian Care Center - Cindy Barness  
Maple Crest - Tex Heyer  
Copper Creek - Sandy Schnor



## LAYLEADERS

07 ROBIN BOSTROM

14 STEPEHEN  
BARTENHAGEN

21 LEANN POPENHAGEN  
28

## POWER POINT

07 MARTHA BARTENHAGEN

14 ROBIN BOSTROM

21 DAVE AANES

28 CARRIE LEE

## FELLOWSHIP TREATS

07 ROBIN BOSTROM

14 LEE JOHANSEN

21 LEANN POPENHAGEN

28 GREGG & LORI KLEPPE

## COMMUNION

Communion will be served on Sunday, December 7. Karen Schmitz and Mike Schroyer will be servers.



Find us on:  
**facebook®**

## ANNUAL REPORTS WILL BE DUE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE IN JANUARY

We need a written, itemized Treasurer's Report from any Circle, Group, or Ministry Team that has a treasury. THANK YOU!!



## CHRISTMAS GIVING PROJECT

Last year, the Mission Team adopted a family through Parent Share and Support and provided Christmas gifts for their family. We will again be supporting a local family through PSAS. A Christmas tree will have been placed in the narthex with gifts tags of items requested for each family member. You may select a gift tag and shop for the gift, or if you would like to participate but do not want to shop, you may donate money and the Mission Team will purchase gifts. Thank you for your support of our Christmas mission project! You are sharing the love of Jesus Christ in our community! Gifts should be brought to the church no later than December 7th.



A shipment to Knitting4Peace will take place in December. If you are knitting for this mission, please have your items in the Sewing Room by Sunday, December 14th. We thank you for your time and talent for this mission of Presbyterian Women.

**Bethel Presbyterian Church**  
invites you to join us for...

## ~ Christmas Eve in a Barn ~



**December 24, 2025 @ 5:30pm**

**Rustic Chic Events Center**  
(renovated Gibbs barn)

**Join us for hearing the story of Jesus's birth,  
animals, singing carols, special music,  
and sharing the Light of Christ together.**

ON OCTOBER 28<sup>TH</sup>, OPEN  
HANDS SERVED THE  
MOST HOUSEHOLDS  
EVER IN ONE DAY!

67 HOUSEHOLDS SERVED

142 INDIVIDUALS SERVED

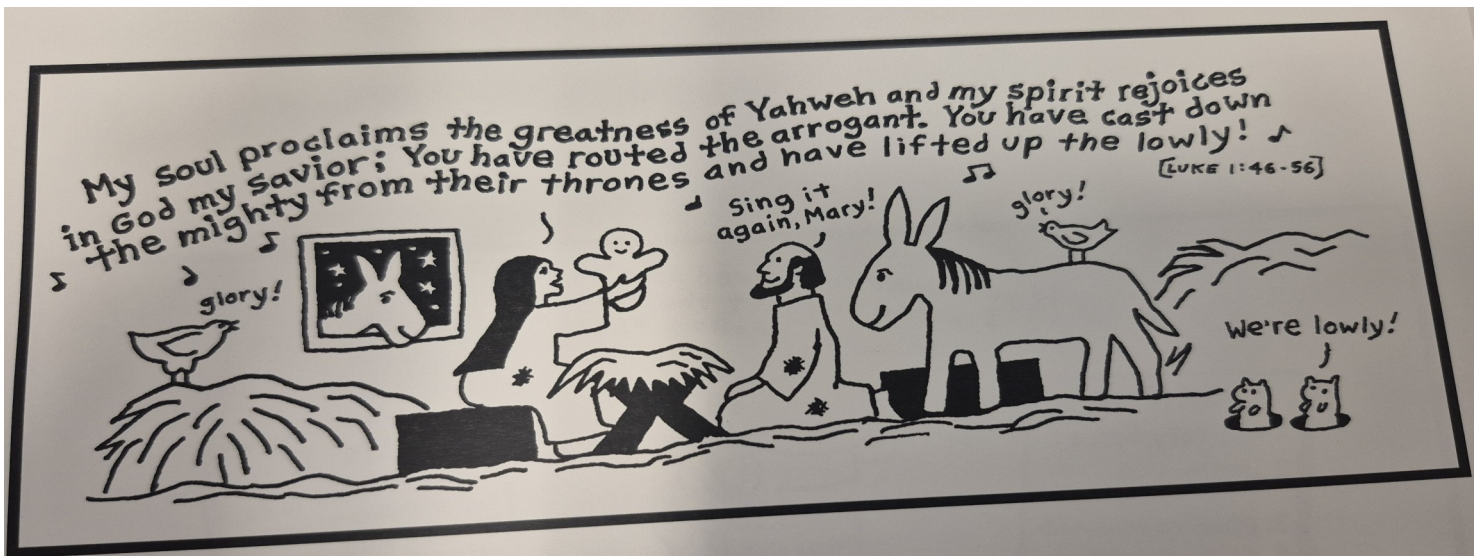
35 HOUSEHOLDS  
INCLUDED CHILDREN

3,907 POUNDS OF FOOD  
DISTRIBUTED



THE NEED CONTINUES NOW MORE THAN EVER.  
PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING TO OPEN HANDS  
FOOD PANTRY.

Diaconate will meet at 11:00 on December 8th to prepare cookie plates. Members are asked to bring 3 dozen cookies. A potluck will begin at noon and spouses are invited to join us.



The women of United Methodist Church invite us to a  
Christmas Brunch on Wednesday, Dec. 3rd at 10:00 a.m.  
in their fellowship hall.

Following brunch, Kindred Minds will present a musical  
program of "Christmas Favorites"





## BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

We will again use poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary this Advent Season.

If you would like to share a poinsettia or give one as a memorial please fill out the form and return it to the church **before December 10th**. If you desire, Bethel will order your plant from Old Mill Floral; please attach payment of \$25.00 this year, and the plant will be delivered to the church. You may certainly order your own poinsettia, and if you do, please let Old Mill know that it is for Bethel Church, as they will deliver it for you; if you are bringing a poinsettia to the church, please bring it **before December 21st**.

Please remove your plant after the service after Christmas - THANK YOU

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of

In Memory of

Please order my plant from Old Mill Floral and find attached the \$25.00 payment.

(PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO OLD MILL FLORAL -THANK YOU!)

\*\*\*\* If you would prefer to purchase a poinsettia and bring it to the church yourself, that is just fine. Would you please fill out this form and return it to the church office so you are not left off the list for the bulletin and newsletter.



### ***Our VISION—***

*Our Vision is for this Body of Christ to be a Community of Faith called...  
Bethel—A **people** and a place where God is made known!*

### **The Longest Night**

For many, Advent and Christmas are seasons of joy-family gatherings, celebrations, carols, and feasting. But for those experiencing grief, illness, loneliness, anxiety or major life transitions, this time of year can stir up feelings that don't fit the season's script.

The Longest Night Service creates space for these tender realities in a contemplative service that names sorrow honestly and proclaims the gentle hope of Christ's light shining in darkness. Join us on Sunday, December 21st at 5:30 p.m.

We begin lighting the Advent Wreath on Sunday, November 30 with these members participating.

November 30 - Martha and Stephen Bartenhagen

December 07 -

December 14 - Pat Baumler, Ken and LeAnn Popehagen

December 21 - Kris and Cory Moser, and Diane Cline

Christmas Eve - Lori and Gregg Kleppe



## Missions



Noisy Bucket offering for October was \$36.00.

It will be collected again December 28.

Thank you for your contributions to this ministry.

### Things we are thankful for:

Diversity of humankind  
4-legged family members  
My church family  
Healthy grandkids  
Friends  
Health and Freedom  
In my and others hearts  
Every new day  
Caregivers  
My wonderful family  
That I am a child of God and Jesus loves me  
Love, Health, Family, Hugs, Faith  
Clean closets and all that helped to make it happen  
Hope is a Strategy—Sarah's Message  
Sleep  
Health and Our home  
Family and Cats  
Pastor Lori and Gregg joining our Bethel Family  
Chickens  
Chocolate  
My Health  
Good Food

### Family

A loving soulmate  
Beautiful worship music  
The colors of fall  
For a bountiful harvest  
For the ministry of the PC(USA)  
For the dedication of our members in sharing God's love.



# December 2025

| Sun                                                                                   | Mon                            | Tue | Wed                                        | Thu                                                | Fri | Sat |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
|                                                                                       | 1                              | 2   | 3<br>Christmas<br>brunch 10:00<br>a.m. UMC | 4<br>9:30 Sewing<br>Circle                         | 5   | 6   |
| 7<br>Worship 10:00<br>w/ the Lord's<br>Supper<br>Fellowship                           | 8<br>9:30 Diaconate<br>Potluck | 9   | 10<br>1:30 Movie: Bad<br>Faith             | 11                                                 | 12  | 13  |
| 14<br>Worship 10:00<br>Fellowship<br>Session Meets<br>Handel's<br>Messiah 7 pm<br>UMC | 15                             | 16  | 17                                         | 18<br>10:00 Women's<br>Bible Study<br>Stoney Brook | 19  | 20  |
| 21<br>Worship 10:00<br>Fellowship<br>Longest Night<br>Service 5:30                    | 22                             | 23  | 24<br>Christmas Eve in<br>the Barn<br>5:30 | 25                                                 | 26  | 27  |
| 28<br>Service of<br>Lessons & Carols<br>Worship 10:00<br>w/Noisy Bucket<br>Fellowship | 29                             | 30  | 31                                         |                                                    |     |     |

Bethel Presbyterian Church  
 208 N. Vine Street  
 P.O. Box 473  
 West Union, IA 52175