

I am writing this article in mid-February but it has caused me to think about March and I am wondering if March has arrived like a lion or a lamb and if you are getting antsy wanting to be outside doing spring clean-up. As our seasonal weather seems to have changed these past few years, my guess is that we will be experiencing some very sunny and warm days this month along with some days that will have us pulling out our winter coats and hats. Whatever the weather, I hope you'll join us for our Wednesday evening gatherings for a simple supper, Bible study and fellowship. We meet at 6:00 pm and head home at 7:30.

During the month of March, we have an opportunity to acknowledge World Compliment Day on the 1st when it is also National Pig Day; grilled pork chops for supper, anyone? I would like to suggest curling up with a good book on the 2nd for Read Across America Day. Daylight Savings Time begins on March 8th so remember to 'spring ahead' and Pi Day is on 3.14 when some will enjoy pie and maybe a few challenging math puzzles. St. Patrick's Day finds us wearing green on the 17th and growing up kids not wearing that color would likely get pinched! Importantly, Eid al-Fitr begins on March 19 for Muslims. This is a one to three day celebration marking the end of Ramadan. In some countries, school and businesses are closed for this religious celebration, like many in the United States do for Christmas. I first learned about Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr while in the military. You might find the practices of Muslims during these times interesting. On the 19th, it is appropriate to offer the words Eid Mubarak which is Arabic for 'Blessed Eid' to a Muslim.

The seasons of the church year with mid-week gatherings (Advent and Lent) are favorites for me. In the Lutheran tradition, it is common for a worship service to be held on Wednesday evening, often accompanied by a simple supper. As congregations are growing smaller and members aging, these services have been moved to mid-day or cancelled. I give thanks for the many ways people of faith are able to continue gathering for worship virtually with congregations who broadcast their services. Googling Presbyterian Church (USA) and the name of a large city will provide you with ample opportunities to participate in worship.

Some of you know I listen to a podcast prepared by Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church in Tampa, Florida each week as two of their pastors and a lay member discuss the upcoming gospel reading for Sunday worship. This broadcast is available on Tuesdays but on Mondays, two pastors do a 'first look' at the gospel reading and without preparation share their initial thoughts. I believe these connections with others are valuable and an innovative way to expand our ministry here in rural Iowa. Please take a listen to some of the podcasts I have listed below. You might want to add them to your spiritual meditations.

May your early spring days be filled with the right amount of time for relaxation, service and prayer. If you are struggling, please reach out for conversation. You will have my undivided attention as we turn to God for God's peace, love and hope.

Podcasts I find interesting:

Sunday Bible- A weekly sermon from the Revised Common Lectionary by Paul Turley. (Services at Bethel are also based on the Revised Common Lectionary.) Pastor Turley is a Presbyterian serving a congregation in Australia. His sermons are posted around 9:00 pm on Saturdays and are 10-12 minutes in length.

Living with the Lectionary/The Lectionary Call-In Podcast- This weekly podcast comes out on Tuesdays and is about 30 minutes long. This is a podcast where two pastors and a lay person answer three questions that have been prepared based on the upcoming Sunday's gospel reading. I found this podcast on Spotify but it is also posted on Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church's homepage, palmaceia.org. Go to their 'watch' tab on their website and you will find their Sunday worship services, but also the two podcasts: A First Look and Living with the Lectionary. I enjoy both.

Lectionary Kick-start- This podcast is produced at Concordia Seminary in St Louis and is a discussion of the upcoming week's lectionary readings. Two homiletics (preaching) professors and a lay person share their thoughts during this 25 minute podcast. Concordia is a seminary of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod so comes from a more conservative perspective, but I have yet to hear comments that leave me uncomfortable. (The Missouri Synod does not ordain women and do not welcome others to the table for communion.) It is always good to consider the background of folks when they are talking about God, scripture and who we are as God's people.

I look forward to travelling through March with you. May you feel God close as you wake in the morning and go to bed in the evening.

Peace,

Lori

Lori.kleppea@gmail.com

563.380.8187



Save the Date—Community Easter Egg Hunt! 10:00 a.m.

Mark your calendars to save the date for the 4th Annual Community Easter Egg Hunt hosted by Bethel Presbyterian Church on Saturday, April 4th 2026 at 10 am. The Christian Education committee will take the lead on the planning and our friends from the West Union United Methodist Church are joining us again this year. Volunteers will be needed to help fill all those plastic eggs in preparation for the fun event. Anyone interested in helping fill eggs or helping on the day of the event should contact Robin Bostrom at 563-422-1083.

CELEBRATIONS

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

March 1 Nicholas Schmitz
 March 2 Andy Meyer
 March 3 Darwin Schrage
 March 4 Jim & Nancy Grimes (A)
 March 5 Katie Schipfer
 March 7 Kyle Brandt
 March 8 Cathy (Berns) Bemiss
 March 11 LeAnn Popenhagen
 Pat Baumler
 March 12 Cindy Ira-Smith
 Dean Brockway
 March 18 LeAnn Meyer
 March 30 Kate Ewing



Lent is a season of penitence in preparation for absolution on Maundy Thursday. The forty days of Lent (excluding Sundays) recall Jesus' forty-day fast in the wilderness after his Baptism (Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:1-2), as well as Moses' forty-day fast on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28). Historically, for those already baptized, Lent was a period of time to review the meaning of the Bible, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and Baptism. The color purple is used to adorn the pulpit and baptismal font. In some

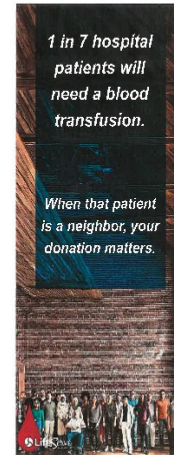


Diaconate will meet at 9:30 on March 9.
 Karen Schmitz is the Host.



Thank you for your wonderful support of Blanket Sunday. We have received \$170.00 to wrap many people in warmth during their time of need. On behalf of all the families you have helped, but may never meet,

ARE YOU KNITTING? A shipment to Knitting4Peace will be made after Easter (April 5th). Please put your items in the Sewing Room before then. Your time and talents are appreciated!



WEST UNION COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE

Holy Name Church Parish Center
Wednesday, March 4
12:30pm - 5:30pm

128 North Walnut Street | West Union, IA

APPOINTMENTS ARE ENCOURAGED

TEXT lifeserve to 515.815.7242
CALL 800.287.4903
VISIT lifeservebloodcenter.org



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, March 1st, 2026, are condiments, puddings, jellios, cake mixes, paper towels, Kleenex, conditioner, and dish soap. 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!



Find us on:
facebook®



We're a
Matthew 25
church
pcusa.org/matthew25

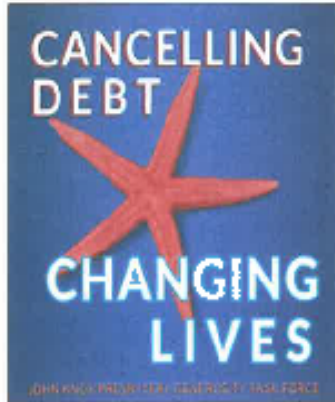
Noisy Bucket offering for February was \$64.88.

It will be collected again March 29th.





Happy Birthday
Dolores!!



"Thank you for the help! I have been suffering from cancer for a few years now. I have no way of paying, and with a family of five, things are very tough."

--Ellie from Minnesota

Dear Stephen,

The Starfish Campaign addresses a desperate need for many families. Bethel's recent contribution will stretch the impact of this ministry even further. The generosity of the Bethel congregation is truly remarkable! Thank you for being an integral part of the Starfish Campaign. The way you have shared God's love will make a difference in the lives of a great many families.

Sincerely,

Leary McCarley

THE BIRTHDAY
OFFERING WILL BE
RECEIVED ON SUNDAY,
MARCH 8, 2026

2026 PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN
Birthday Offering

"May the God of hope fill you
with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may *abound in hope*
by the power of the Holy Spirit."

—Romans 15:13

Learn more about the Birthday Offering of Presbyterian Women
by visiting presbyterianwomen.org/birthday



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!*



We will use Easter Lilies to decorate the sanctuary this Easter season. Bethel will place a bulk order with Boho Blooms and all the flowers will be delivered to the church the Wednesday before Easter. If you would like to honor someone with a lily or give one as a memorial, please fill out the form, return it to the church with your \$25.00 (tax included) payment before Tuesday March

24th. Please make your check payable to Boho Blooms. If you wish to buy flowers on your own, please deliver them to the church by Wednesday April 1st. If you are bringing flowers on your own, please fill out this form indicating that you are purchasing flowers. Please return the form to the church office by Tuesday March 31st so we will have a record of your memorial for the Easter Sunday Bulletin and the Church Mouse. THANK YOU!

- ☐ Attached is my check payable to Boho Blooms
- ☐ I will purchase and deliver my own flowers to the church

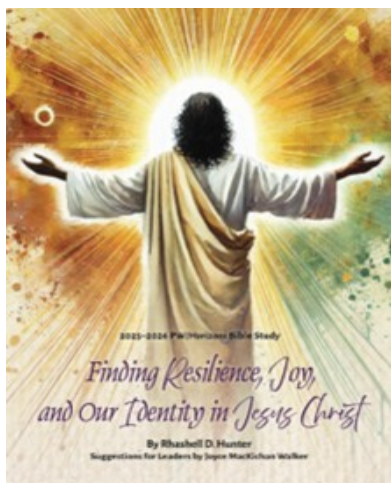
Your Name

In Memory/Honor of

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, Rose Marie Knight (Julie Larson's mom), Mike Schroyer, Darwin Schrage, Gary Franzen Family

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



Third Thursday Bible Study

March 19, 10:00 am at Stoney Brook

We will continue our exploration the PW/Horizons Bible study titled: Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ by Rhashell D. Hunter. Lesson: Mary "of a certain village." Scripture: Luke 10: 38-42 Main Idea: Mary's story teaches us that spending time listening and learning from Jesus is the better part.

LAYLEADERS

01 Robin Bostrom
08 Julie Aanes
15 Stephen Bartenhagen
22 Martha Bartenhagen
29

Power Point

01 Carrie Lee
08 Dave Aanes
15 Mark Bostrom
22 Corey Moser
29 Karen Schmitz

FELLOWSHIP TREATS

01 Robin Bostrom
08 Julie Aanes
15 Karen Schmitz
22 Stephen Bartenhagen
29 Lee Johansen

COMMUNION

Communion will be served
on Sunday MARCH 1. Mark
Bostrom and Ken
Popenhagen will be
servers.



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

Sewing Circle will meet
Thursday March 12th and 26th
from
9:30—3:00

*The
Season
of
Lent*



We invite you to share in the
~Season of Lent~
with our church congregations
Wednesday Bible Study

Meal @ 6pm

Week 2
Week 3
Week 4
Week 5

Study @ 6:30-7:30 pm

March 4 WU UMC
March 11 Bethel
March 18 WU UMC
March 25 Bethel

Holy Week Worship Services @ 7:00 pm

Maundy Thursday April 2 Bethel
Good Friday April 3 WU UMC

The Congregation took the following action at their meeting on 01 February 2026:

Received and reviewed the 2025 Annual Report from Ministry Teams and Treasurers;

- Elected Julie Aanes to serve a three-year term on Session's Class of 2028;
- Elected Robin Bostrom, Dave Aanes and Nancy Dunt to serve on Nominating Committee as Members-At-Large for 2026;
- Elected Lee Johansen and Dave Aanes to serve as President and Vice President, respectively, of the corporation for 2026;
- The meeting closed with prayer led by Moderator Rev. Kleppe

congregational
MEETING



Session took the following action at their 31 January 2026 retreat:

- Opened with devotion and prayer led by Pastor Lori Kleppe. The theme was 'Ubuntu – I am because we are';
 - Approved minutes from regular Session meeting on 14 December 2025;
 - Received Treasurer's Report for December 2025;
 - Removed Cindy Barness from the membership rolls due to her death on 27 January 2026;
 - Approved repair of antique stain-glass window by Steve Kittelson at an estimated cost of \$800 to \$1,000;
 - Appointed Stephen Bartenhagen to serve as Commissioner to John Knox Presbytery's regular meeting on 21 February 2026;
 - Heard from Worship team regarding "Christmas Eve in the Barn" service on 24 December 2025;
 - Heard plans for sharing Lenten worship and fellowship with Methodists;
 - Approved Communion schedule for 2026;
 - Heard from Robin Bostrom on an Iowa Rural Heritage Revitalization grant application through the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED);
 - Approved applying for a grant, up to \$150,000, from IDED;
 - Received brochures from Sugar Creek Bible Camp and discussed opportunities for structured events at their camp or at our building;
 - Approved hosting an Easter Egg Hunt on 04 April 2026 at time TBD at the Rec Center Soccer field with a budget TBD;
 - Discussed hosting a presentation by National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and decided it would benefit Bethel members and the wider community;
 - Heard updates on remodeling of the women's bathroom, installation of a new thermostat in the dining room, and repairs to the elevator;
 - Discussed Celebration Fund Ministry Team's longevity projections for the endowment funds we have on hand;
 - Appointed Dawn Jacobsen and Linda Johansen to serve as Session's representatives on Nominating Team for 2026;
 - Viewed a sermon from Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota regarding recent events; Consolidated the existing ten ministry teams down to six teams;
 - Examined incoming elders Linda Johansen and Carrie Lee and approved installing them, along with current elders Mark Bostrom and Ken Popenhagen during Worship on 01 February 2026;
 - Approved holding regular Session meetings on 15 February, 15 March, 12 April, and 17 May 2026;
- The meeting was closed with prayer led by Rev. Kleppe.

Cross Word

Members may take a plain wooden cross called a "**Cross Word**" for the season of Lent.

What is a Cross Word?

The idea is that a guiding word, printed on a small wooden cross, will be used to reflect how God has moved through, around, and in your life in connection to that word. These crosses may be found in a basket in the Narthex.





Session took the following action at their meeting on 15 February 2026:

- Opened with devotion and prayer led by Julie Aanes;
 - Shared with each other our Joys and Concerns;
 - Approved minutes from Session's retreat meeting on 31 January 2026;
 - Approved minutes from the Congregational meeting on 01 February 2026;
 - Approved John Knox Presbytery's recommendation on allocation percentages for our Shared Mission Support – 20% General Assembly, 10% Synod of Lakes and Prairies, and 70% John Knox Presbytery;
 - Received Treasurer's Report for January 2026;
 - Heard from clerk that Linda Johansen, Carrie Lee, Mark Bostrom, and Ken Popenhagen were installed as Ruling Elders during worship on 01 February 2026;
 - Established Session rule for quorum at their meeting as three elders plus a Moderator;
 - Approved Annual Statistical report to General Assembly;
 - Approved use of building on 03 May 2026 from 1 to 4 p.m. for piano recitals;
 - Heard plans from Pastor Lori about offering a class on individuals' end-of-life preparations;
 - Heard plans for sharing Lenten worship and fellowship with Methodists beginning with Ash Wednesday service on 18 February at the Methodist church;
 - Heard an update on an Easter Egg Hunt to be held on 04 April 2026 at 10:00 a.m. at the Rec Center Soccer field;
 - Heard an update on materials for the 2026 Women's Bible Study program;
 - Heard from Buildings and Grounds team that the women's bathroom project is completed;
 - Heard an update on progress toward applying for a grant from Iowa Department of Economic Development. Many things need to fall into place but we should be able to meet the deadline for submission on 06 March 2026;
 - Heard an update on the membership list which includes phone numbers and email addresses;
 - Heard Dave Aanes, Robin Bostrom, and Nancy Dunt were elected to the 2026 Nominating Team at the Congregational meeting;
- The meeting was closed with prayer led by Rev. Kleppe.

The Cross Room

The young man was at the end of his rope. Seeing no way out, he dropped to his knees in prayer. "Lord, I can't go on," he said. "I have too heavy a cross to bear."

The Lord replied, "My son, if you can't bear it's weight, just place your cross inside this room. Then open another door and pick any cross you wish." The man was filled with relief.

"Thank you, Lord," he sighed, and did as he was told. As he looked around the room he saw many different crosses; some so large the tops were not visible. Then he spotted a tiny cross leaning against a far wall. "I'd like that one, Lord," he whispered. And the Lord replied, "My son, that's the cross you brought in."

March 2026

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

1 Worship 10:00 w/the Lord's Supper Fellowship	2	3	4 Lenten Bible Study at UMC 6:00 meal 6:30 study	5	6	7
8 Worship 10:00 w/Birthday offering Fellowship	9 9:30 Diaconate	10	11 Lenten Bible Study at Bethel 6:00 meal 6:30 study	12 9:30 Sewing Circle	13	14
15 Worship 10:00 Fellowship Session Meets	16	17	18 Lenten Bible Study at UMC 6:00 meal 6:30 study	19 Bible Study Stoney Brook 10:00 a.m.	20	21
22 Worship 10:00 Fellowship	23	24	25 Lenten Bible Study at Bethel 6:00 meal 6:30 study	26 9:30 Sewing Circle	27	28
29 Worship 10:00 w/Noisy bucket Fellowship	30	31				

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