January, 2026 Volume 66, Issue 1

The Chimes

Bethany Lutheran Church

Mission Statement

Reaching out in Worship, Fellowship, Learning, and Love - We Are God's People.

2025 Annual Meeting

The 2025 Annual Congregational Meeting will be on

Sunday, January 25, 2026

Immediately following worship!

Annual reports will be out on Sunday, January 18, so be sure to stop and pick one up. Take some time to review the document and come prepared with any questions you may have.

Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church
2515 Madison Ave.
Burlington, Iowa
Phone: (319) 752-3621
www.bethanyburlington.org

Our Staff

Rev. Misha McFarland-Pollock, Pastor
Cory Byrne, Choir Director/Organist
Wendy Bell, Office Administrator
Michelle Huppenbauer, Temporary Financial Secretary
Pam Crable, Custodian

Church Update
December/2025

LSI proudly serves Iowans in all 99 counties through our services of Mental Health, Early Childhood, Foster Care & Adoption, Global Greens, People with Disabilities, and Immigrant & Refugee Community Services. We serve individuals of all ages, from families with newborns navigating the early stages of parenthood, to Refugee and Immigrant elders, as well as children at every stage of development. Our heart beats for the people we serve. We empower families and communities by recognizing and honoring the strengths and gifts of every individual.

Your SUPPORT makes these stories possible...

Do you know someone who…

- Struggles with mental health and needs support?
- Is a refugee or immigrant starting over in Iowa, building a new life?
- Is a young parent trying to give their child a better future?
- Has been adopted or grown up in foster care?
- Lives with a disability and could thrive with access to the right resources and care?

These are the people your generosity touches. Their lives are transformed through Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) — because of caring donors like you.

Let me introduce you to Heather, one of our long-time foster and adoptive parents.

“Toby and I fostered for nearly 8 years, welcoming many children into our home before adopting three of our own. Through foster care, I’ve formed meaningful relationships with many families — I still get calls weekly to hear updates or just be a listening ear. I would do it all over again for every child we had the chance to help.

Foster care is so much more than being a substitute parent. It’s helping families heal, supporting them through trauma, and being a cheerleader when life has brought them to rock bottom.

Foster care completed our family when reunification wasn’t possible. I love these kids with every fiber of my being, and I am so blessed to be their mom. Foster care will always be in my heart.”

Continued…

Heather's story is just one example of how LSI's programs create lasting impact. Every day, LSI's dedicated staff walk beside neighbors facing life's hardest challenges offering compassion, stability, and hope when it's needed most.

Take Brookie, (*picture top newsletter*) who lives in Harmony House, one of LSI's group homes for individuals with disabilities. Her mom shared:

"LSI supports Brookie emotionally and physically every day. The staff are caring, kind, and compassionate. With their support, Brookie lives as independently as possible in a safe and happy environment. She participates in Special Olympics, Strikers bowling, ice hockey, softball, work, community events, and family gatherings. LSI has enriched Brookie's life and our family's life in ways we cannot measure. It's a huge comfort knowing she is cared for so wonderfully."

Your generosity makes stories like Heather's and Brookie's possible. Because of you:

- A young mom finds her footing and gains hope for the future.
- A child finds a safe, nurturing home where they can thrive.
- A teen struggling with mental health knows they are not alone.
- A refugee begins a new life in Iowa with dignity and support.
- Individuals with disabilities experience full, meaningful lives in the community they call home.

And these are just a few examples. LSI programs touch thousands of lives across Iowa. Families are strengthened, children are supported, and adults facing challenges are empowered to live independently and with dignity.

Will you make a gift today to continue this life-changing work? Every dollar brings comfort, healing, and hope to someone who needs it most, someone right here in our Iowa communities.

Your compassion transforms lives, builds resilience, and spreads hope. Thank you for your faith in others, your generosity, and your partnership. Together, we are creating brighter futures, stronger families, and thriving communities — every single day.

LSI

LUTHERAN SERVICES IN IOWA

people focused ▪ results driven

FROM THE PASTOR

When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. --- Titus 3:4-5

Happy New Year! January has arrived! We have made it to 2026! January is my favorite month! It's also my birthday month! January tends to be cold and snowy in most of the places I've lived in, but Burlington wasn't very snowy last January. We will see what this year holds.

December was a busy month. Along with our regular Sunday services, we had midweek Advent services that were preceded by a meal, we had a Blue Christmas service, a St. Nicholas Day Event, and three Christmas Eve Services! I also led weekly services at Klein during the month of December.

Our confirmation students will once again lead a Confession and Forgiveness Service in January. The date is still being determined. It is a wonderful way for them to lead about Lutheran theology while also helping the whole congregation prepare to enter the season of Lent in February.

As part of the BACC, Burlington Area Council of Churches, I have been asked to speak at the annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration. The service is on Monday, January 19th at 5pm at The Loft. More details will be shared as I learn them.

We had a lovely time celebrating Christmas – all twelve days! Christmas doesn't end on the 25th! It's just beginning and goes through Epiphany on January 6th! Have you ever wondered what Epiphany celebrates? Epiphany means appearance or manifestation. It celebrates the revealing of Jesus Christ to the world. Matthew 2:1-12 is typically read that tells of the visit of the Magi. There are a few Epiphany customs or traditions. There is the chalking of the doorway. This year it will be: 20 + C + M + B + 26. C, M, B refer to the traditional names of the Magi: Caspar, Melhior, and Balthasar. The letters also represent the Latin blessing – Christus Mansionem Benedicat – May Christ bless this dwelling. The numbers designate the year.

There is also the Epiphany Star. During our St. Nicholas Day event many of you made Moravian stars that are displayed from Advent through Epiphany to represent the Epiphany Star. Some people celebrate Three Kings Day and/or have King Cake. There are lots of ways to celebrate Epiphany.

Blessings,

Pastor Misha

Meetings

The meetings for Jan., 2026 that have been scheduled as of the publishing of this newsletter are listed below. Watch your bulletins for any date and time changes, or additional meetings that may be scheduled.

Finance Committee
Thursday, Jan. 15 @ 6:30 p.m.

Executive Committee
Thursday, Jan. 15 @ 6:00 p.m.

Church Life Committee
Sunday, Jan. 11 @ 10:15 a.m.

Property Committee
Monday, Jan. 12 @ 6:30 p.m.

Church Council
Thursday, Jan. 21 @ 6:30 p.m.

Church Outreach
Sunday, Jan. 4 @ 10:15 a.m.

Pastor's Book Club @ Bethany
Tuesday, Jan. 13 @ 5:00 p.m.

Lunch Bunch
Wednesday, Jan. 14 @ 12:30 p.m. @ Applebee's

Men's Breakfast
Saturday, Jan. 17 @ 8:00 a.m.

Annual All-Congregational Meeting Sunday, Jan. 25; immediately following Worship service.

PLEASE NOTE

Because of Federal Privacy laws, if you or a member of your family are hospitalized and would like the Pastor to visit, you must contact the church and let us know.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

November 30 ATTENDANCE & GIVING

November 30	29
	$1,445.40

December ATTENDANCE

December 7	43
December 14	29
December 21	58
December 24	125
December 28	27

December GIVING

December 7	$2,367.00
December 14	$1,807.00
December 21	$2,089.00
December 24	$2,931.00
December 28	$879.00
Total:	$10,073.00

**November 30 attendance & giving will be included in the January Newsletter, due to time constraints.*

November VANCO total: $1,530.00

LAY LEADERS

January Usher: Susan Swanson

Communion Assistants
4 – Mike Hopp; Julie Wischmeier
11 – Teresa Morehead; Bill Mundt
18 – Mark Rosenberg; Rachel Lindeen
25 – Steve & Sue Rogers

Lector
4 – Judy Craven
11 – Carlene Woodside
18 – Todd Chelf
25 – Vicki Stoller

Greeters
4 – Carol Dodge
11 – Marlys McClurg; Vanette Wooldridge
18 – Sharon Martindale
25 – Judy Craven

Flowers
4 – Open
11 – Robin Milton
18 – Bill Mundt
25 – Open
New Flower Chart for 2026 is up and ready!
Please stop on Sunday and choose your special date!

Missionary Support
4 – Open
11 – Open
18 – Open
25 – Open
New sign-up sheet is available!
Please stop on Sunday and choose your special date!

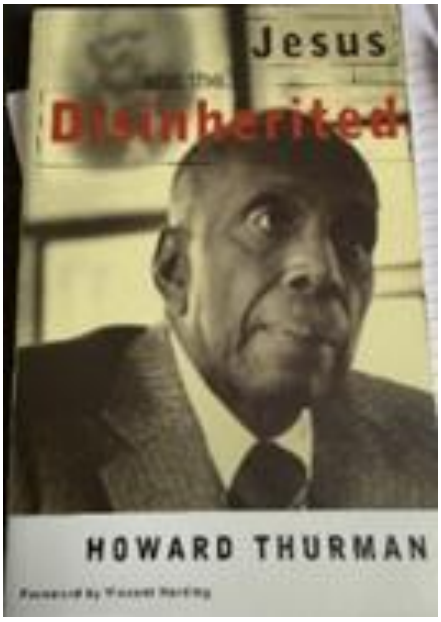
Altar Guild
Sarah Loots
Debbie Hoxie

Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch is a group get-together that meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month for lunch! This month's Lunch Bunch will be on Wednesday, January 14 @ 12:30pm @ Applebee's in Burlington. Any and all are welcome! To sign up, if you have questions, or need transportation arrangements, please contact Dave Nuebel at 319-237-6933.

Pastor's Book Club

Pastor's Book Club will be meeting next on Tuesday, January 13 at 5:00pm at Bethany! All are welcome to join us! This month we are reading "Jesus and the Disinherited" By Howard Thurman!



Community Vespers

The Feast of the Epiphany

Tuesday, January 6 at 7 pm

First Presbyterian Church
321 North Fifth Street, Burlington, Iowa

The Rev'd DaMisha McFarland-Pollock, Preacher
Pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church and Bethany Lutheran Church

Light supper at 5:30 pm.
Free to everyone—free-will offering welcomed.

Those wishing to sing in the community choir
Are invited to rehearse at 6 pm in the sanctuary.

Bethany Lutheran Church

Minutes of the Church Council Regular Meeting

November 19, 2025

Present: Pastor Misha, Mike Hopp - President, Vicki Stoller, Pam Taylor-Secretary, Dirk Zaiser-Treasurer, Dan Wischmeier, Tiffany Huppenbauer, Bill Mundt, Dave Neubel, Bev Sherbondy- Vice President, and Julie Chubb. **Absent:** Mitchell Huston, Tom Bonar

The meeting was called to order by the President at 6:32. Mike read a devotion.

Minutes Dan W motioned, Bev S seconded to approve 10.15.25 minutes. **Motion carried.**

Pastor's Report Pastor was away at a Continuing Ed event. Her written report was reviewed.

Financials - Mike H reviewed certain line items within the Income and Expense statement and highlighted Checking Account Balances as of 10/31/25.

- Pastors' salary expenses for October are not included yet.
- Mike provided an explanation of how it was determined we receive money from Messiah to offset parsonage expenses. Utilities are running a bit higher than projected but at this time Mike indicated there is no plan to change it. A review of this can be made at the time of budget preparation for 2026.
- Mike and pastor have plans to speak with the congregation regarding stewardship early December including pledges, income levels, and general fund. Charts are to be included.
- There was lengthy discussion about managing/reviewing the membership list. Wendy is to print off a list of members, records showing contribution and attendance activity. Facebook participation was also brought up to consider as active membership. Pam will work with Vicki and Dan to cross reference the list with the reports.
- Dan motioned and Dirk Z seconded to purchase the Shepherd's Staff (membership software) program for $1,000 using the Endowment Fund. **Motion carried.**

Committee Reports

Church Life - Written and verbal report provided by Bill M.

- Hanging of the Greens is Nov. 30th. Storage of Christmas decorations were again discussed. No definite location confirmed. Comments included a preference for all decorations to be placed in one location; that the upstairs rooms are empty and could hold all items; that the sacristy room behind the altar is an option if the bathroom fixtures and counter were removed.
- Vicki S purchased new tree decorations for the altar tree as motioned. However, she donated them. Memorial funds were approved but will not be spent.
- Readers for Advent are lined-up.

Church Outreach - Bev provided a written report.

- Items in progress and current status include: food pantry donations, the hat and mitten tree, the Bike drive (Bill Mundt has an employee who enjoys putting them together), and reaching out with cards to shut-ins and those living alone to determine if they would like visits or calls.
- Mike mentioned that we may be providing a meal at First Methodist church on Tuesdays when the "Bridges Out of Poverty" participants meet.

Finance - Dirk provided a written report. These were covered above in the Financials.

- A date will be set by Mike after he visits with Michelle for the Finance committee and Finance secretary to meet in order to set a budget for 2026.

Property - Bev S. provided a written report. The evergreens were cut down due to sewer lines underneath. The property committee expects an increase in their budget for 2026.

Dirk Z. motioned, Vicki S. seconded to accept the standing committees' reports. **Motion carried.**

Old Business

Personnel Handbook - The handbook has been drafted. It is being reviewed by Todd Chelf. Staff will be asked to review it to be sure it matches current contracts and employment practices. The goal is to have it passed and effective January 1, 2026.

Printer Contract - Michelle and Wendy have almost completed comparison of the printer expenses related to the contract. A decision should be made at the next meeting.

Church Use Policy - Mike asked the council to be prepared to vote on the policy in December. Changes were made to reflect comments in the last council meeting.

Steven's Ministry - Bev S motioned and Vicki S. seconded to move the status of the program to inactive. **Motion carried.**

New Business

Ukrainian Family - Kim E was asked about the status of her sponsored family. They are doing fine financially but she requested we pray for the Ukrainian families whose status in the US is of concern. The pastor will be planning prayers for all refugees in the US.

Parsonage Utilities - Energy Audit - The property committee will look into completing an on-line energy audit for the parsonage to see if there are ways to reduce utility expenses.

Stewardship - noted above

Stewardship - discussed above

Bulletin budget - budget points/status will start showing up in the bulletin this week.

St Nick at Bethany - Messiah is planning this event early December and it will take place at Bethany. Bill will arrange to connect with Laura Carruthers from Messiah to see if there is something Bethany can help with.

Caroling at nursing homes - Dave N. mentioned we consider pulling a group together that may do this. No specific action plan was taken but the idea was supported.

Adjourn

Dirk Z motioned, Bev S seconded to adjourn. **Motion carried**.

Next Meeting: December 18th THURSDAY @ 6:30pm

Respectfully submitted, Pam Taylor, Secretary

Announcements

The office will be closed on Thursday, January 1, in observance of New Year's Day!

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25 at 10:15am, following Worship service.

All Annual Reports need to be into the office no later than Friday, January 9, any reports not turned in by the this date will not be included in this year's report. No exceptions!

Upcoming Joint Services with Messiah! On Sunday, January 25 @ Bethany and on Sunday, February 1 @ Messiah.

The Community Vesper Service – The Feast of the Epiphany – will be held on Tuesday, January 6 at 7pm at First Presbyterian Church. Pastor Misha will be preaching at this service. A light supper will be served at 5:30pm.

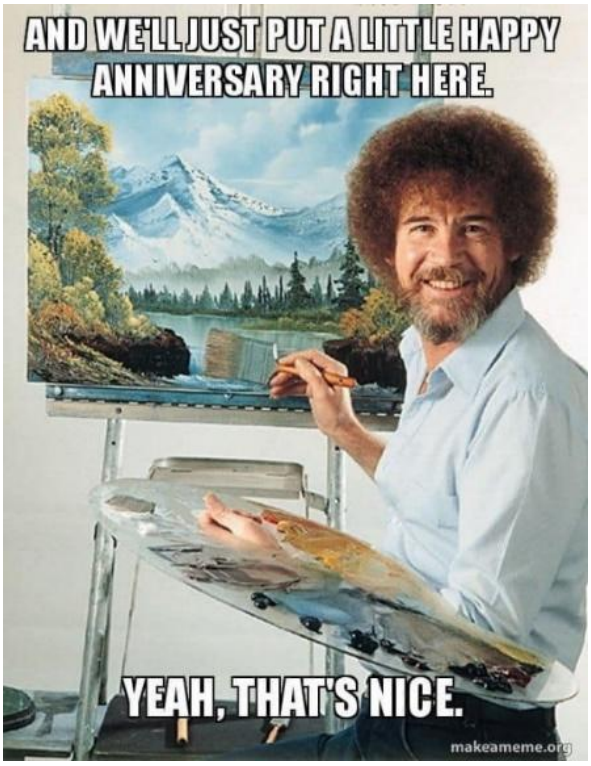
Pastor's Book Club meets on Tuesday, January 13 at 5:00pm. This month's book is "Jesus and the Disinherited" by Howard Thurman.

Lunch Bunch will meet on Wednesday, January 14 @ 12:30pm @ Applebee's. Please contact Dave Nuebel @ 319-237-6933 to sign up, if you have questions, or need transportation arrangements.

New Flower and Missionary Support Charts are up and awaiting sign-ups! Please stop on Sunday morning and choose your special date!

January Anniversaries

16 – Ron & Carlene Woodside



January BIRTHDAYS

1 – Andrew Shepherd

4 – Michelle Cox; J.T. McCarthy; Brian Rosenberg

6 – Pam Luder

9 – Aunika Johnson; Tyler Shofe

11 – Melissa Milton

12 – Kate Sladky

14 – Taylor House

15 – Mary Honsey

21 – Bradley Johnson

23 – Connie Boyer; Joyce Timberlake

24 – Pastor Misha

27 – Pam Taylor

January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Paraments: **White: 4, 11** **Green: 18, 25**	**Office Hours** **Mon.-Wed.-Fri.: 9:00am-1:00pm** **Tues. & Thurs.: 1:30pm-4:30pm**			1 	2	3 ***Pastor Misha returns to the area from vacation!***
4 **2nd Sunday of Christmas** 9:00 a.m. Worship **10:15 a.m. Church Outreach** 10:55 am Hope Service	5 	6 **The Feast of the Epiphany – A Community Vespers @ First Presbyterian Church @ 7pm** **Light Supper @ 5:30pm**	7	8 **Bible Study @ 9:30am @ Messiah**	9 **Annual Reports are Due no later than today!**	10
11 **Baptism of Our Lord** 9:00 am Worship **10:15 am Church Life** 10:55 am Hope Service	12 **Property mtg. @ 6:30pm**	13 **Pastor's Book Club @ 5pm @ Bethany**	14 ***Lunch Bunch @ 12:30pm @ Applebee's***	15 **Bible Study @ 9:30am @ Messiah** **Exec. Comm mtg @ 6:00pm** **Finance Mtg. @ 6:30pm**	16 	17 **8:00am Men's Breakfast**
18 **2nd Sunday of Epiphany** 9:00 am Worship 10:55 am Hope Service ***Annual Reports available.***	19 **Chimes Deadline**	20 	21 **Council Mtg. @ 6:30pm**	22 **Bible Study @ 9:30am @ Messiah**	23	24
25 **3rd Sunday of Epiphany** **Joint Service @ Bethany** 9:00 am Worship 10:55 am Hope Service ***All Congregational Mtg. following Worship***	26	27	28	29 **Bible Study @ 9:30am @ Messiah**	30 	31