



Bethel Blaze

March 2025

Sharing Christ's love with a big heart

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

In Person
Sunday Mornings:
8:30 and 10:45 am

Online
The 8:30 service is
livestreamed
on our YouTube channel.
Check our website
for the link!
You can also view the service
at your convenience.

Past services are also available
on Northfield's public
television station channels
180 & 187.

No cable is required.
There are four opportunities
to watch:

Monday 2:00 pm
Tuesday 1:30 pm
Wednesday 7:00 pm
Saturday 7:00 am



REMEMBERING THOSE WHO HUNGER

Bethel has a strong and faithful history of supporting local and global efforts to eliminate poverty and hunger. Primary recipients have been both our local Community Action Center (CAC) and the ELCA World Hunger program. March is Minnesota Food Share Month when we make a concerted effort to raise funds for the CAC's food shelf as a portion of every food item or dollar is matched between March 1 and April 6.



**Join Bethel Youth in fighting hunger this March!
Donate all month long!**

All money and food collected go to the CAC food shelf



Throughout the month,
Bethel Youth will share
brief skits to raise our

awareness and inspire our food or financial donations to the CAC's food shelf. Last March they helped us raise \$13,900! Bethel's total gift in 2024 was over \$25,000.

As this year's drive kicks off, join Kristi Larson, our Director of Youth Ministry, on **March 2 for A Snapshot of Hunger**. Test your knowledge on hunger in our community through fun activities, and ask questions that can be explored the following week.

On **March 9**, we will focus on **The Challenges of Hunger**. Jenn Lantier, the CAC's Food Access Location Coordinator, will be our primary presenter. She will draw our attention to the work and challenge of meeting the needs of local and area residents for food and other necessities. She is very enthusiastic about her work and meeting the needs of others.

Pastor Clark Cary will also update us on the ELCA World Hunger program and the overall response to domestic and global hunger and poverty. ELCA World Hunger is also in charge of Lutheran Disaster Response. This is a very challenging time relating to both hunger and disaster relief. Please join us between worship services at 9:45 am in the sanctuary for these informative presentations!

FIRESIDE REFLECTIONS



Pastor Inger Hanson
(she/her)
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(preferred for non-urgent
communication)

office
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office hours
by appointment Mondays,
Tuesdays, Wednesdays,
and Thursdays

days off
Friday & Saturday

Dear Bethel,

At my first continuing education conference this year, I got to learn from the Rev. Dr. Luke Powery, Dean of the Chapel and Professor of Homiletics at Duke University. The lectures focused on the activity of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation, writing, delivery, and reception: “the homiletical breath.” Powery pointed out how many preaching courses assumed a life of prayer, but neglected to include it on the syllabi! While my formation did and my preaching process does include prayer, I appreciated the emphasis. In the times when the words don’t come easy, on the days when I’m struggling with scripture or the newspaper, Powery urged the preacher to return to prayer—not necessarily another commentary or article. Back in Northfield, as days of struggle seem more frequent, I’ve been reconnecting with the *Minister’s Prayer Book* that a mentor gave me, and lingering in the prayers when I’m worship planning—relying on the Spirit’s breath to fill my lungs and give me strength for the day.

But the homiletical breath isn’t just for preachers. Powery tells his students that the most important sermon they will ever write is the sermon of their lives—the actions they take, the choices big and small. Every Christian is writing that sermon, and each of us needs the Holy Spirit. Lent invites us as a community to return to prayer. That will look different in our individual lives—perhaps you carve out additional time for silence, or rely on the words of a psalm, a poem or a formal prayer. Perhaps your conversation with God just flows. As a community, we add midweek prayer services in this season—pausing midday on Wednesday, or gathering in the evening.

I know lives are busy. I know heads and hearts are full. When it feels like the wind keeps getting knocked out of you, let the disciplines of Lent hold you, and help you take deep breaths with the Holy Spirit.

In Christ, Pastor Inger

BEFRIENDERS

by Marci Groenewold

Despite the fact that the days are getting longer, winter seems to linger on. It’s easy to become lonely and despondent when it’s cold, dark and too icy to step out of the house. An unexpected diagnosis or the loss of a spouse can prevent us from connecting with others and enjoying the things that bring us happiness. However, as Joan Chittister points out in her book *Between the Dark and the Daylight*, the only way for loneliness to take hold of our lives is to feed it. That is, loneliness is a sort of pity party that causes us to withdraw (which then confirms our misery) thus creating an emptiness on the outside and an emptiness of our own creating on the inside.

What if we were to look at loneliness as an opportunity for growth? Loneliness does not need to be the end of anything, but rather a starting point for finding new ways of being alive. Loneliness doesn’t require someone to rescue us from it. We don’t need someone to take care of us. We can learn to be our own best friend.







Loneliness can be a call to make other people’s needs our own. We can use our loneliness to do something to alleviate the loneliness and needs of others. When we realize that everyone needs something, then we can ask ourselves, Who needs something I can do for them?

So, when you are faced with adversity of any kind, the trick is to mentally adjust. Sometimes having a non-anxious listening partner willing to simply listen can be helpful. Their listening presence allows you to discover what’s best for you on your own without judgment. BeFriends are trained listeners willing to listen with compassion to anyone navigating the “Contradictions of Life”.




A fundamental BeFrienders principle: “Non-judgmental presence”. For more information regarding the BeFrienders Ministry at Bethel, please contact Marci Groenewold (507-649-3160), Knight Stanley (612-877-0893), Karen Mader (507-301-4368) or the Bethel Office (507-786-6674).

EVERY WEEK

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS 9 AM - 3 PM

SUNDAY		8:30 am	Worship (also available via livestream)
		9:45 am	Coffee Fellowship & Education Opportunities
		10:45 am	Worship
MONDAY		6:30 pm	Resonance (Adult Bell Choir)
TUESDAY		9:45 am	Staff Meeting
WEDNESDAY		11:30 am	Lenten Midday Worship & Soup Lunch (begins March 12)
		3:30 pm	Limitless
		5:30 pm	Bistro Soup Supper (note time shift for Lent! begins March 12; no Bistro March 5)
		6:15 pm	Ring Forth Bell Choir
		6:30 pm	Lenten Evening Prayer (Joyous Light)
		7:00 pm	Confirmation & Hangtime
		7:00 pm	Church Choir Rehearsal
		8:05 pm	Brio Bell Choir
THURSDAY		8:30 am	MoB (Men of Bethel) will finish our winter/spring season with C.S. Lewis' <i>The Four Loves</i> , a treatise on the four classic Greek words for love: <i>storge</i> —affections, <i>philia</i> —friendship, <i>eros</i> —romantic love, and <i>agape</i> —charity or unconditional love. Beginning with the premise that God is love, Lewis explores these four emotions and how they are related.
		9:30 am	FaB (Faith and Books) will begin reading Parker Palmer's <i>On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity, and Getting Old</i> on March 6. Join us in the Youth Room for rich discussions.
FRIDAY		9:30 am	WoW (Women of the Word) via zoom

THIS MONTH

MAR 2		Spring Blood Drive	MAR 12	5:00 pm	Congregational Life	
MAR 3		Worship & Arts	MAR 13	9:00 am	Women's Retreat @ Mt. Olivet Retreat Center	
MAR 5		11:00 am	Ash Wednesday Worship Services	3:00 pm	Monthly Movie "Amish Grace" Worship & Arts Planning Finance	
		5:15 pm				
		7:00 pm				
MAR 6		10:45 am	MAR 16	noon	Senior Retreat #2 Bethel @ Benedictine Chapel	
		7:00 pm		1:00 pm		
@ Fireside Lounge in Dennison, MN						
Mar 9		DAYLIGHT SAVINGS BEGINS— SPRING FORWARD!	MAR 18	12:00 pm	Lydia Circle Church Council	
		noon		6:30 pm		
		7th Grade Lord's Prayer Retreat	MAR 19	4:30 pm	Homes for God's Children Confirmation Finale	
				7:00 pm		
Mar 10		7:00 pm	Creation Care	MAR 20	6:30 pm	Mission and Justice
Mar 11		9:00 am	Quilting Group Grief Support Group Library Personnel	MAR 25		9:00 am
		2:00 pm				2:00 pm
		5:15 pm				

FAITH FORMATION AT BETHEL

**A staffed nursery for little ones is available
8:15 am—noon on Sunday mornings
and Wednesdays 3:15—8:00 pm**

Children’s Ministry

The Power of Words

In February we focused on the power of our words and actions, the power they have to fill each other’s internal bucket, or to empty those buckets. An object lesson was done during a mini kindness retreat with 2nd and 3rd graders during Limitless that could easily be recreated at home. Fill a clear glass with water. Share examples of mean or hurtful things people say and for each example, put a drop of yellow food coloring in the water. Notice the water changing. Now, it’s time to make amends and apologize. With every apology or kind thing that is said, add a drop of blue food coloring. Notice the color changing again, but to a brand-new color: green. Our words have power. Kind words or apologies don’t undo the hurtful words. Things often don’t go back to the way they were, but kind words and apologies can help us move forward into something new. Let’s guard our words, for the power of life and death are in the tongue. (Proverbs 18:21)



What’s New in the Children’s Ministry?

Upcoming Dates:

- March 5 Ash Wednesday Family Service 5:15 pm
- March 23 & 30 No Sunday School- Spring Break!
- March 26 No Limitless- Spring Break!

Be blessed. We’re in this together.
Brenda

Brenda Rabbe (she/her)
Director of Children’s Ministries
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childrensministry
@bethelnorthfield.org

Youth Ministry

No Confirmation, 6 Grade Connections or Hangtime on Ash Wednesday. Please worship at 7:00 pm on Wednesday March 5 with your family.

6th Grade Families! Our 6th Grade Lord’s Prayer Retreat is on March 9 from noon—2:30 pm. Please sign up at the following link by March 5: <https://bethelnorthfield.breezechms.com/form/e637a821>

Flathead and Christikon payments are due March 15. If you have questions regarding how much you owe, please reach out to Kristi. Please bring or mail a check/cash to church.

Senior Retreat #2 for parents and 12th grade students will be held on March 16 from noon—2:30 pm. Registration link: <https://bethelnorthfield.breezechms.com/form/dc647211>

The last day of Confirmation will be on March 19! The last 20 minutes of class will be our annual ice cream sundae party.

The **Plant Sale Fundraiser** closes on March 31! Please complete all online sales. Youth, be on the lookout to sign up for delivery times.



Kristi Larson (she/her)
Director of Youth Ministries
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youth@bethelnorthfield.org

Adult Education

March 16—Lutheran Social Service Spotlight



Lutheran Social Service (LSS) is a deeply trusted ministry partner, touching many parishioners' lives. Financial support of LSS has been part of Bethel's operating budget for many years. Rev. Amanda Simons is LSS in Minnesota's Director of Church Partnerships and Engagement. She worshipped with us (and preached!) in the summer of 2023. You may also remember that out of 165 congregations in the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, Bethel was the recipient of LSS in MN's 2023 Servant of Christ Award for our synod! We are thrilled to welcome Rev. Amanda back to the pulpit, and to have the education hour between services to learn about the opportunities and challenges LSS faces today.



AN UPDATE FROM BETHEL'S IMMIGRATION TEAM



Global Refuge

formerly known as
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

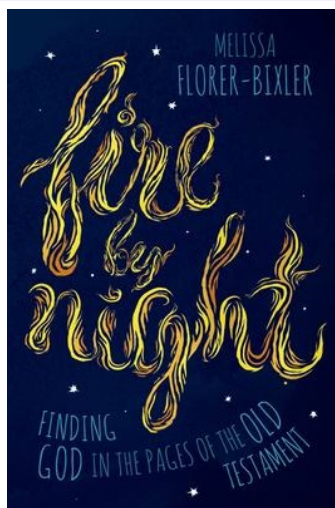
We have heard from many concerned voices in our congregation regarding the status of immigrants in our church, in our community and in our nation. There is a lot of fear among those in our community who are worried about interactions with ICE (Immigrations and Customs Enforcement). Currently, members of our committee have

been participating in the "Know Your Rights" sessions in Northfield at Emmaus and St. Dominic, to support our neighbors, and there is a phone tree getting started to alert those who are concerned about the presence of ICE in our community. Our Easter special offering will go to support Global Refuge this year, as much of their government funding has been cut by the new administration and they are the largest faith-based refugee resettlement organization in the United States.

The good news is that our sponsored family – Lizbeth, Keyshia and Ander – are continuing to thrive despite the added stress and uncertainty. They are here legally seeking asylum and have their next check-in with ICE on March 25. Please pray for a continued safe and just legal process for this family. Lizbeth has gotten her driver's license and a donated car from friends of Bethel Phil and Alice Strom, so you may see her driving to Bistro on Wednesdays! Thanks to many who continue to support a few driving needs for the family as Lizbeth now works 12 hour days at Greenvale. Please reach out if you have any questions.

—Jane Runzheimer and the Bethel Immigration Team

IN THE LIBRARY...



How do we read words written in a world so different from ours? In *Fire by Night*, pastor Melissa Florer-Bixler invites readers to marvel at the Old Testament. Page after page, in stories and poems and prophecies, the Hebrew Scripture introduces us to a God who is unwieldy and uncontrollable, common and extraordinary, and who brings both life and death. Using stories from Scripture and her ministry, Florer-Bixler braids together the text with the sometimes ordinary, sometimes radical grace of God. The same passages that confuse, horrify, and baffle us can, if we are paying attention, lure us closer toward God. This God has traveled with people through cloud and fire, by day and by night, since the beginning of time. The Old Testament is a perplexing book of profound grace, hope, and beauty. It is a book of fire. To read the Old Testament is to draw close to God's love, which continues to burn away our expectations and set us ablaze. This God has traveled with people through pillars of cloud and fire, by day and night, since the days of the exodus.

MARCH BRIGHT LIGHTS



*Fun is reaching new heights!
Ruby Dahl and Hannab Broughton
after confirmation class.*



*So much love goes into senior quilts tradition!
Here's a glimpse behind the scenes with students,
friends, parents, and some of Bethel's finest quilters
coming together to create each unique work.
The quilts will be displayed in the weeks before
high school graduation, and are part of a special
blessing of our graduates on Sunday, June 1.*

PLANT Youth Fundraiser

Spring is here and so is the Bethel Spring Youth Plant and Flower Fundraiser so our 8th - 12th grade youth can raise money for summer trips. You can designate which youth to support or select "General Youth Fund." Plants will be delivered to your home Mother's Day Weekend.

To order: www.gertensfundraising.com

Store ID: 165

Orders will open February 21 and MUST be placed by March 31.

*Krista Middlebrooks,
Allie Matthews,
and Cameron Gray
lent their talents to a
special anthem with
the Resonance Bell Choir.*



Youth enjoyed supporting the Northfield boys' hockey team and Bethel's own Max Frank and coach Scott Cloud.



Cynthia Carau presented the Creation Care Team's work unpacking the complexity of recycling, giving participants helpful tools to be better stewards of the earth in our daily lives.



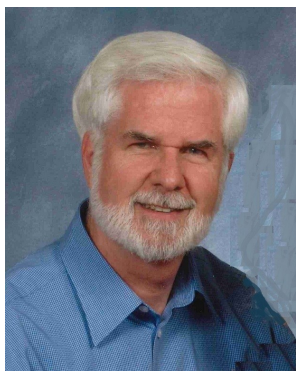
CHUCK SANDSTROM GIFT



I still remember how in one of my first weeks at Bethel, as I hustled past the sanctuary, angelic harmonies interrupted my hurry. I slipped in and sat in the back as the voices of the Bethel Quartet (somehow five singers and a musician... Lutheran math?) lifted and centered me. As I said hello after their rehearsal, Chuck pulled me aside to make sure that I was aware of a homebound parishioner who needed a visit.

Later I would learn about his years of leadership (especially on the finance committee), his woodworking, his tireless care of his first wife as she lived with MS, his interest in the Civil War, the variety of musicals that he participated in, and the joy he found in his years with Dianne.

Chuck Sandstrom died in late July 2024. His voice has joined *that sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation* that encourages us to keep singing. Chuck wanted to further encourage us and remembered Bethel in his will, entrusting us with a gift of \$191,488.



Barb Fowler, Ryan Blumhoeffler, and others remember Chuck's passion for and work on establishing an Endowment Fund for Bethel, and the Finance and Endowment Committees will make recommendations to the Council as how best to use these funds to meet needs and honor Chuck.

—Pastor Inger



HOMES FOR GOD'S CHILDREN: CRISIS HOUSING 2025

The depth of the Bethel congregation's concern for the those in need was demonstrated by rapid and complete fulfillment of the request for supplies for the Crisis Housing Program. It was amazing. The CAC staff has repeatedly expressed their appreciation to Bethel for taking on the task of organizing supplies and restocking the units.

We have received notification that residents of two of the units may be able to move out in the next couple of weeks. There is a long waiting list of people needing the housing, so we anticipate that we will use some of the donated supplies to restock the vacant units soon. We want to alert those on the contact list for donations that a new request list might be sent out in March—we'll decide after we know how much of our stock was used and what items are needed. Thank you again for your generosity in supporting the Crisis Housing Program!

FINANCIAL NOTES from Barb Fowler, Treasurer

Thank you to all who attended the Budget meeting in January. Understanding how our budget dollars are being used creates confidence and commitment. The monthly revenue budget is \$84,230. In January, both the income, at \$63,400, and expenses, at \$77,500, were under budget but resulted in a deficit of \$14,000. If you ever have a question about our operating budget, please contact me.

To those of you who are Thrivent members, remember to go on-line to designate your Choice Dollars by March 31.

Thank you for all you give.



Bethel Lutheran Church
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Phone: 507-786-6674

Web: www.bethelnorthfield.org

www.facebook.com/bethellutheran

Email: bethel@bethelnorthfield.org



Return Service Requested



YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

We celebrate all people as children of God.

We unconditionally welcome diversity of age, race, citizenship, ethnicity, cultural identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, education, relationship status, family structure, and life challenges.

Your diversity and uniqueness are valued.

Your questions and your doubts have a home here.

You, your spouse, partner, children, family, and friends are welcome to be full participants in the life of our church.



Join us on Thursday, March 13 from 3—5 pm for *Amish Grace*

MONTHLY MOVIE



A grieving Amish mother struggles to forgive the woman whose husband killed her daughter and four other schoolchildren in the movie inspired by the true-life events that unfolded in a Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania schoolhouse shooting on 2 October 2006.