



Bethel Blaze

FEBRUARY 2026

Sharing Christ's love with a big heart

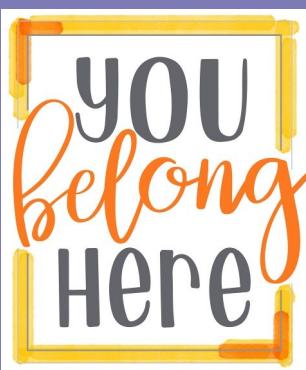
JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

In Person
Sunday Morning:
8:30 am and 10:30 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



IMMIGRATION & BETHEL

"Let us not tire of preaching love; it is the force that will overcome the world... Love must win out; it is the only thing which can." --Bishop Oscar Romero

The residents of Northfield and of Minnesota have been showing up for their immigrant neighbors during this difficult time--thanks be to God. If you are looking for ways to help, here are some options:

1. Visit the **Northfield Supporting Neighbors** website to learn about ways to donate money or get involved. <https://www.northfieldsupportingneighbors.org/home>
2. Sign up to be on the **CAC's food shelf emergency response team**. You can help on short notice packing boxes for families stuck at home when extra help is needed.
3. Come to **gift bag packing** event for sheltering families at Mercado Local on Friday February 6 from 5-7 pm. Bring items like chocolates, snacks, gloves, scarves, fun socks, soap, shampoo, stickers, candy... All bags will be different! Then write a card with your own message of encouragement. It can be in English, don't worry about having to be in Spanish.
4. Come to **worship at the Sunday noon Misa Spanish mass at St. Dominic** to support our Latino brothers and sisters. We are working on a schedule where different churches will attend on certain Sundays to show support.
5. Add yourself to the **Isaiah Faith in Minnesota** email list to watch for rally, education and advocacy opportunities. Isaiah@isaiahmn.org.
6. Pray for peace and love and understanding for all!!

While focus on immigration is intense right now, it is not new to Bethel. Parishioners went on a Border Immersion trip with the Synod in January 2022, and we sponsored a family seeking asylum 2023 - 2025. Farther back, Bethel sponsored Vietnamese refugees, and individual Bethel members like Judy Dirks particularly made an impact. Our long-time ministry partner, Lutheran Social Service, has also been very involved with refugee resettlement. Bethel takes seriously God's call to care for the foreigner (e.g. Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 10:19, Matthew 25:34-40)

The laws of immigration are complex. This helpful resource from Global Refuge (formally Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) helps correct common misconceptions about immigrants & refugees in the US. <https://www.globalrefuge.org/get-involved/advocate-with-us/disinformation/>. We are looking forward to having Global Refuge's Karla Leitzman with us on March 8. She will preach at both services and offering education on the work of Global Refuge during education hour between services.



FIRESIDE REFLECTIONS

from Pastor Inger

The peaceable kingdom has become a verb in my house, as in, “we’re going to PEACEABLE kingdom, Paolo, Simi. PEACEABLE.” Although early introductions were promising (and prompted the cat’s adoption), my dog is still learning to share his home with a feline. He is still leashed for interactions, and I’m on alert to break the hunting stare or stop a lunge. I still have each creature spend significant time in their own spaces. Sometimes we only peaceably kingdom for a half-hour or so. Sometimes, however, it extends naturally into the evening... or I check in on them midday and enter into a blessed, sleepy silence – the cat curled in the cat tree and the dog in his crate.

**Pastor Inger Hanson
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communication)**

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

days off
Friday & Saturday

While mostly a jest, having a cat and dog - creatures often described in opposition to each other - has made me reflect on Isaiah’s vision (Isaiah 11:6-9) and how it is embodied. It changes how I think of abiding – a theme of John, the gospel we are currently focused on. Often I’m aware of how I (and my creatures) fall short. But I am also so aware of how much I love the dog, even when I am frustrated by how slow he is to accept a new friend. How much I love the cat, even though he is so new to my life. And I am growing more attuned to what fosters the peaceable kingdom – my attitude, the needs of each animal, the environment.

Isaiah (and sometimes John) makes abiding sound easy, but Paolo and Simi remind me that abiding takes work. They ensure I don’t sentimentalize the peaceable kingdom into a namby-pamby “both sides” approach, or take lightly how Jesus entreats us to “abide in me as I abide in you.” But they also help me hold on to the vision and ground me in the love that is necessary in working toward it. Responding to all that is happening in our state right now, ELCA Bishop Curry joined Minnesota bishops in a message based of encouragement that reminded me of Galatians 6:9 – “so let us not grow weary in doing what is right.” Dear ones, hold onto the vision and remain steadfast in love and service.



BEFRIENDERS

by Marci Groenewold

For Kate Bowler in her book “Good Enough”, the idea of fasting was expected by Jesus. He took it for granted that his disciples would fast, telling them “*When* you fast...”; Not “If you fast...” or “*Consider trying a fast...*” or *Maybe, someday, you might wonder about fasting on a strictly intellectual level...*” When we fast, we imitate Jesus, who fasted 40 days in the desert before he began his public ministry. He chose to pursue God by setting aside comfort.

Fasting is giving up something-anything- to make more room for God. It is not punishment. It's not really meant to have any concrete benefit except the experience itself. There is a strange liberation in letting things go. We loosen our attachment to what weighs us down, and it frees us from behaviors and habits that we would rather not admit out loud. For example, sometimes it's easy to focus on the “hard thing” in our lives to the point that it consumes us. By fasting on the “hard thing” and not allowing it to be the “only thing” it frees us to be grateful. In an era of more, there is wisdom in learning the value and freedom of less.

For Pope Francis, fasting is about spiritual transformation, not just physical sacrifice. It's a way to empty ourselves of sin and self-interest to make room for God and a deeper love for neighbor. Following are some fasting ideas: Fast from hurting words and say kind words. Fast from anger and be filled with patience. Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope. Fast from worries and trust in God. Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others. Fast from bitterness and fill your heart with joy. Fast from grudges and be reconciled. Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

A fundamental BeFriender principle: “God is present.”

For more information regarding the BeFriender Ministry at Bethel, please contact the Bethel Office (507-786-6674).

EVERY WEEK**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS 9 AM - 3 PM**

| | | | |
|-----------|---|----------|---|
| SUNDAY |  | 8:30 am | Worship/Livestream |
| |  | 9:40 am | Coffee Fellowship & Education |
| | | 10:30 am | Worship & Sunday School |
| MONDAY |  | 12:00 pm | Bible Text Study @ The Vault |
| |  | 6:30 pm | Resonance (Adult Bell Choir) |
| TUESDAY | | 9:45 am | Staff Meeting |
| WEDNESDAY |  | 3:30 pm | Limitless |
| | | 5:45 pm | Bistro |
| |  | 6:15 pm | Ring Forth Bell Choir |
| | | 7:00 pm | Church Choir Rehearsal |
| |  | 8:05 pm | Confirmation & Hangtime |
| | | | Brio Bell Choir |
| THURSDAY | | 8:30 am | MoB (Men of Bethel) We will begin a new study using the book, <i>The Year of Biblical Living</i> . The study will be led by Phil Peterson. |
| | | 9:30 am | FaB (Faith and Books) We will finish Sarah Bessey's <i>Out of Sorts</i> February 5 and begin <i>How We Learn to be Brave</i> by Mariann Budde on February 12. Join us for rich discussions in the Youth Room. Contact lanareich@yahoo.com to be added to the email list. |
| FRIDAY |  | 9:30 am | WoW (Women of the Word) Bible study via Zoom |

THIS MONTH

| | | | | | |
|--------|---|--|---|---|------------------------------|
| FEB 4 | 6:45 pm | 10th—12th Grade Summer Trip North Carolina Meeting | FEB 15 | 1:00 pm | Bethel @ Benedictine Chapel |
| | 7:00 pm | Endowment Committee | FEB 16 | 5:45 pm | Worship & Arts Action Team |
| FEB 5 | 10:45 am | OWLs (Older Wiser Lutherans) | FEB 17 | 12:00 pm | Lydia Circle |
| | 2:00 pm | Monthly Movie: <i>Ordinary People</i> | | 3:30 pm | ARLA event |
| | 7:00 pm | Vision Seekers @ Ettlin's Ranchero Supper Club, 4452 40th St W, Webster, MN 55088 | | 5:00 pm | Personnel Committee |
| FEB 10 | 9:00 am | Quilting Group | | 5:45 pm | BeFriender Ministry Support |
| |  | 3:00 pm |  | 6:30 pm | Church Council |
| FEB 11 | 6:30 pm | 9th Grade Summer Trip Christikon Backpacking Meeting | FEB 18 | ASH WEDNESDAY 11 am, 5:15 pm & 7 pm | |
| | 8:00 pm | 8th Grade Summer Trip Christikon Onsite Meeting | FEB 19 | 10:00 am | Parkview Fellowship @ NRC |
| FEB 12 | 10:30 am | Projects with a Purpose | FEB 24 |  | 9:00 am |
| | 5:45 pm | BeFriender Ministry Support | FEB 25 | noon | Quilting Group |
| | 7:00 pm | Finance Committee | | 6:30 pm | Lenten Midday Prayer & Soup |
| | | | FEB 26 | 10:30 am | Lenten Evening Prayer & Soup |
| | | | | | Projects with a Purpose |

FAITH FORMATION AT BETHEL

The Nursery is open 8:15 am—11:45 am on Sunday
and 5:45 pm—7:00 pm on Wednesday

providing a safe and caring environment
for our youngest ones (birth to pre-K)

Children's Ministry

Tired of the cold? Warm up with the excitement of registering your kids for some summer fun and faith formation at Good Earth Village (if you haven't already)! GEV offers several different [summer programs](#) for children and youth of different ages and lengths of stay at camp.



This year's Northfield Week at GEV (shared with St. John's & St. Peter's) is June 21-26. Use the sponsorship code **NORTHFIELD26FULL** for an additional \$100 campership for full-week programs and **NORTHFIELD26HALF** for a \$50 campership for half-week and overnight programs. Please contact Pastor Ben with questions!

Youth Ministry

The Bethel Plant Sale is right around the corner! Go to www.gertensfundraising.com and enter code 165. The sale opens February 17 and closer April 1!



Summer Trip Meetings! Join us to hear more about our summer options for youth! Meetings are for parents and youth.

8th Grade – Christikon Onsite | June 20 – 28, 2026

Meeting: Wednesday, February 11, 8:00 pm

9th Grade – Christikon Backpacking | June 20 – 28, 2026

Meeting: Wednesday, February 11, 6:30

10th – 12th Grade – Lutheridge Disaster Response in North Carolina | July 26 – 31, 2026

Meeting Wednesday, February 4, 6:45 pm

6th – 9th Grade Students – There is no Confirmation or 6 Grade Connections on February 4. Hangtime, Bistro and Bells will continue as planned.

Confirmation and 6th Grade Connections start back up with normal classes on February 11.

Ash Wednesday is February 18 and there will be no Hangtime, Confirmation or 6 Grade Connections—please plan to attend worship at 7:00 pm with your family.

6th Grade Students! Mark your calendars for the Lord's Prayer Retreat March 8 from noon—2:30 pm at church!

Youth Sunday will be on February 22.

IN FEBRUARY, BETHEL PRESENTS...

Bethel Presents is one of our educational offerings between services (9:40—10:25 am) on Sunday morning...

Sunday, February 1
in Room 61 A & B



The Bible Project

What is good for confirmation students is good for adults, too! The Bible Project videos present complex biblical themes and stories in approachable ways. While this offering will be available most Sundays, Pastor Inger wanted to feature it as the "Bethel presents" this Sunday so you can see what it is all about!

We will use the Bible Project overviews of the books of the Bible (as well as other resources) as a jumping-off point to delve into God's word. While we hope our discussions build on each other, each session can also stand alone.

Sunday, February 8 in the East Pod—Rev. Oby Ballinger of PRISM

Join us on RIC (Reconciling in Christ) Sunday to hear the dynamic and welcoming words of the Rev. Oby Ballinger. Through his career and personal life, Oby seeks to spread the Gospel of Christ's love for all. Oby is the founder and lead organizer for PRISM, a multi-racial, multi-faith, community organizing network for LGBTQ+ equality in Minnesota.

Oby grew up on a family farm near Rochester and went to Concordia College in Moorhead (where he attended with Kristi Larson, Roll Cobbs!), graduated from Yale Divinity School, and then served for 15 years at several Twin Cities congregations in the United Church of Christ (UCC).

The RIC Committee encourages you join us to hear his timely and engaging message that ALL people are children of God. Oby will be preaching for us as well as we celebrate the 5th anniversary of being an RIC church.

**Sunday, February 15 in the East Pod—Congregational Reflection on Lectionary Options**

Lutherans typically speak of “the Word of God” in a three-fold sense: (1) The Word of God is, first, Jesus Christ (the Incarnate Word); (2) the message of law and gospel (the proclaimed Word); and (3) the Bible (the written Word). The “Word” part of our worship includes how we as the assembly embody Christ to each other (e.g., exchanging the peace), the reading of the Bible, and the sermon. Scripture, it should be noted, is also woven through the rest of the liturgy - check out examples in the back of the red hymnal on pages 1154-1159.

“Scripture readings and other worship texts are chosen to support the church year and a rich unfolding of the word of God. Many Christian churches unite around a three-year set of Bible readings for Sundays and festivals, the Revised Common Lectionary.” In prior years, Bethel followed the RCL but usually dropped one of the readings due to time. In the fall of 2024, Bethel began using the Narrative Lectionary, which organizes scripture readings into a nine-month cycle to tell the broader biblical story by moving through the Old Testament, Gospels, and Acts/Epistles chronologically and focusing on one primary text each Sunday. In the summer months, some congregations delve deeper into the Bible with sermon series. Others return to the RCL. The Narrative Lectionary is being used across more than 30 denominations.

The RCL and the Narrative Lectionary have their own strengths and weaknesses. In this session, the Worship & Arts planning team is seeking your input. What helps us grow in our understanding of God and how we live out our faith? Bring your mobile device to participate in a real-time survey (and see your fellow parishioners’ responses!) If you are unable to attend this session, we hope to make the survey available on paper and online.

Sunday, February 22 in the East Pod—Meet the Author! Bethel’s Kaethe Schwenn, author of *The Gospel of Salome*

Kaethe Schwenn’s novel is a work of Biblical historical fiction set during the Alexandrian Riots of 38CE. Kaethe will discuss some of the research that went into the creation of the novel: ancient medicine, Jewish daily life, and Roman politics. Although the Alexandrian Riots occurred 2,000 years ago, there are many horrifying parallels to the current situation in Minnesota. Does history have anything to teach us about how best to act as people of faith in this moment?

Kaethe Schwenn is a proud Bethelite and the author of *The Gospel of Salome*, *The Rending and the Nest*, and *Tailings: a Memoir*. She teaches creative writing at St. Olaf.



BETHEL BRIGHT LIGHTS

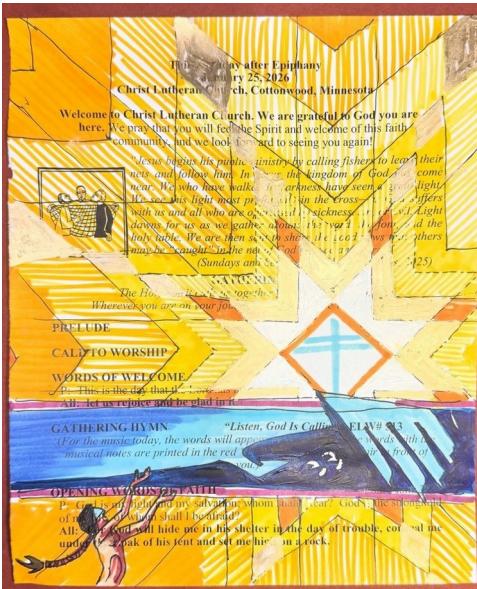


When Pastor Ben was out recovering from his ablation, Wanda Larson and Connie Nelson volunteered with our Limitless program — they were a big hit! Fellowship and senior quilting also bring Bethel members a lot of joy.



On January 15, Northfield High students (with quite a few Bethel youth participating) marched to Bridge Square to protest ICE. The pastors were privileged to witness their conviction (and helped pass out hats to protect against the bitter cold!)

On MLK Day, Nancy Antoine received Northfield's 2026 Human Rights Individual Award. Bravo!



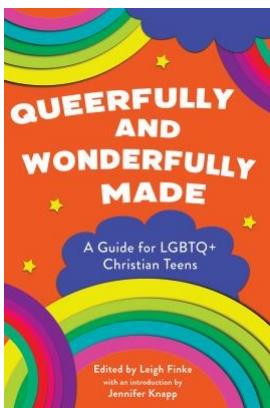
John Sterner (the artist behind the wood relief sculpture *Aikoyaka* in the Bethel sanctuary) posted this piece of ledger art to facebook, praising Pastor Inger and Pastor Ingrid Rasmusson (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, MSP) for strength, courage, and honor, saying that he had been "filled with joy for the work they do," and encouraging us all to "Keep fighting the good fight and more importantly Being the Light! Pilamaye Tunkasila!"

Pastor Inger joined 97 other faith leaders at the airport on the January 23 MN Day of Truth and Freedom to protest ICE activity. Bethel seminarians were part of the local worship service that night.



A vigil was held at All Saints after the killing of Alex Pretti.

IN THE LIBRARY...



Are you LGBTQ+? Not sure? Whether you're queer or questioning, understanding sexuality and gender identity can be confusing. If you're a Christian, questions of identity can be even scarier.

Queerfully and Wonderfully Made: A Guide for LGBTQ+ Christian Teens answers typical questions that come up and more. You'll get insight and support from an amazing group of LGBTQ+ professionals, as well as testimonies from young adult queer Christians who've recently been exactly where you are. You'll walk away with a lot of answers, prepared with tools to help. But most importantly, you'll hear the good news: God loves you exactly as you are. No matter your identity or where in your journey of self-discovery you find yourself, you got this.

How should I respond when a teen comes out? Do I have to tell their parents? What does it mean to be transgender? And how do I talk to a trans youth? These are the kinds of tough questions facing Christian communities everywhere. Rather than improvising your way through these questions, **Welcoming and Affirming: A Guide to Supporting and Working with LGBTQ+ Christian Youth** gives you concrete tools to navigate this landscape. A handbook for pastors, youth workers, church leaders, educators, and other adults in Christian settings, the book provides answers to the most pressing questions about sexuality, gender, mental health, safe sex, and more. Written by a team of LGBTQ+ adults, Welcoming and Affirming features first-hand, personal testimonials from queer young adults who have experienced the joys and hardships of being queer and Christian. You'll walk away with a lot of insight, prepared to love, affirm, and accept the LGBTQ+ teens in your community the way God does--exactly as they are.

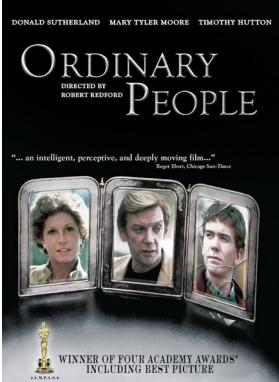
A Companion to Queerfully and Wonderfully Made

WELCOMING AND AFFIRMING

A Guide to Supporting and Working with LGBTQ+ Christian Youth



MONTHLY MOVIE



Thursday, February 5
@ 2:00 pm

Join us for one of Pope Leo's favorite movies! Come, watch, and join the fellowship and conversation.

ARLA

Thursday, February 17 @ 3:30—4:30 pm

Join us in the Youth Room to write letters of advocacy for neighbors in need.

PROJECTS WITH PURPOSE

Thursday February 12 & 26 @ 10:30 am

Calling all knitters and all who would like to learn! We will teach basic knitting skills and work on a community prayer shawl. Yarn is available. We have a limited supply of knitting needles, so we welcome donations or please bring your own. (Size 7 or 9) See you there!

FINANCIAL NOTES

from Barb Fowler, Financial Officer

Financial information:

YTD as of Dec 30, 2025

| | |
|--------------|------------------|
| Revenue: | \$995,803 |
| Expenses | -954,189 |
| Total | \$ 20,613 |

Bethel moved mountains in December! At the Annual Meeting, Bethel voted to give the surplus generated at the end of 2025 to the Community Action Center. Thank you for all you give. Let's start 2026 strong!

Members of the Finance Committee: Barb Fowler, *Financial Officer*; Greg Bussler; Heidi McCormick; Lee Runzheimer; Blair Fowler, *Trustee*; Andrew Jorgenson, *Steward*; Paula Mathison, *President*; and Pastor Inger, *ex-officio*. Barb pictured here taking a break from working hard on the budget with Caroline Smith, Bethel's Finance Associate extraordinaire.





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Return Service Requested

LENT 2026

LENT WITH JOHN

On Sundays in Lent, we follow Jesus' ministry in the gospel of John.

Lent 1: John 8:12-20 (with Psalm 18:25-30)

Lent 2: John 9:1-41 (with Psalm 27:1-4)

Lent 3: John 10:1-18 (with Psalm 23)

Lent 4: John 11:1-44 (with Psalm 104:27-30)

Lent 5: John 12:1-8

On Wednesdays in Lent, we will focus on Listening to Jesus: the Farewell Discourses.

The midday service begins at 11:30 am and is followed by a light soup lunch and fellowship.

In the evening, a soup supper is offered from 5:30 pm—6:15 pm, and is followed by

Ray Makeever's *Joyous Light Evening Prayer*.

Feb 25: John 14:1-7 [8-14]

Mar 4: John 14:15-21 [22-27]

Mar 11: John 15:1-11 [12-17]

Mar 18: John 16:25-33

Mar 25: John 17:1-26