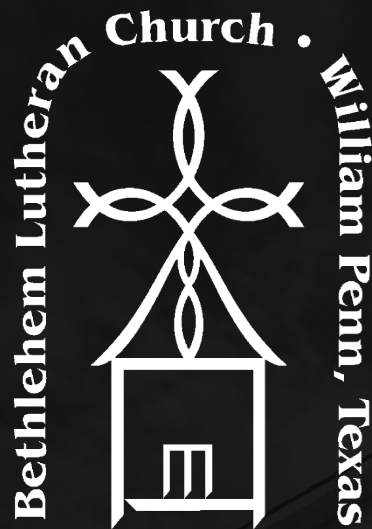
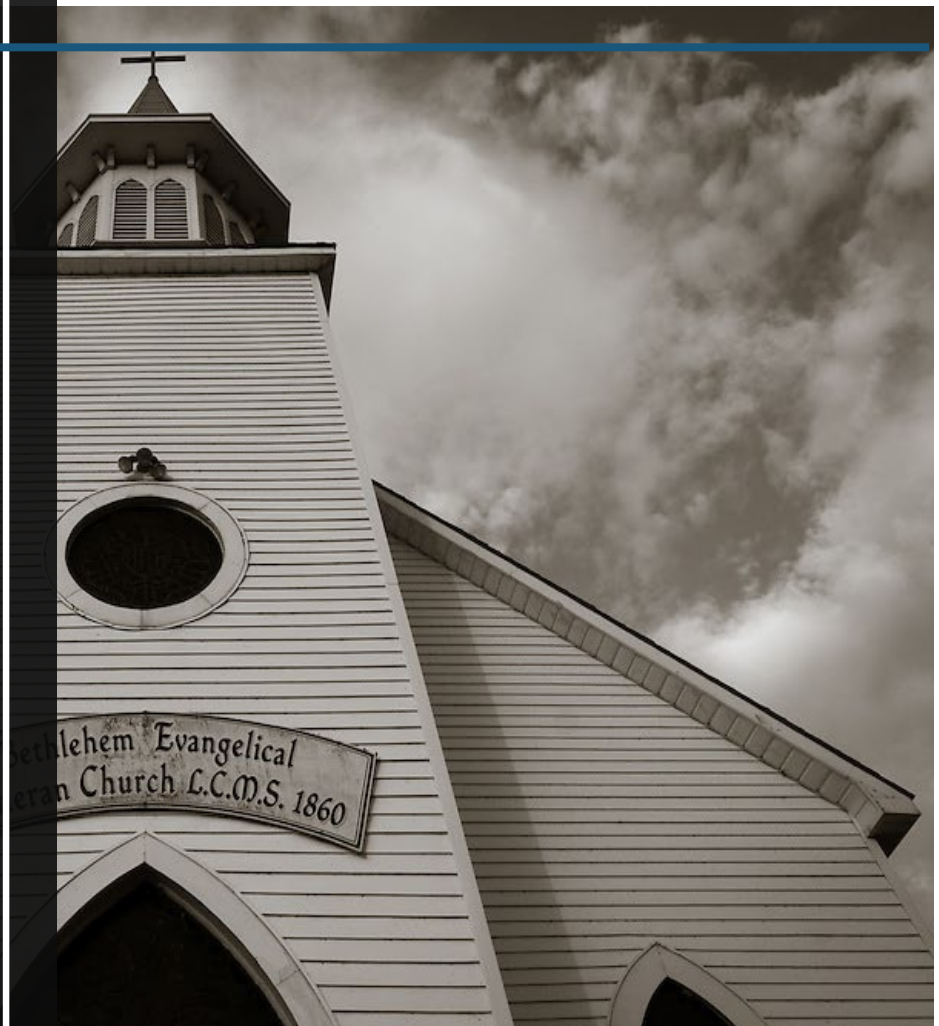




Ghost Town Gazette

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
William Penn, Texas

Vol. 4, No. 10, October 2026



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“Forgiveness is
God's
command.”

- Martin Luther

THE BLESSING OF MATTHEW 18: WINNING BACK YOUR BROTHER

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Jesus gives His Church a precious gift in Matthew 18. We often refer to this passage when speaking about how Christians should deal with sin and conflict among one another. Yet Matthew 18 is sometimes misunderstood. It can become a formula for confronting someone: "I am right, you are wrong, and now you need to repent." But that is not the purpose of Jesus' words. The goal of Matthew 18 is not winning an argument. It is gaining a brother.

Jesus says, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone" (Matthew 18:15). Notice where He begins: privately, personally, and directly. We do not begin by gathering allies, spreading the story, or making a public accusation. We go to our neighbor because we desire his good and want the relationship restored. Jesus describes the blessing this way: "If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."



Of course, not every disagreement is a matter of sin. Christians will have different opinions, preferences, and expectations. Just because we are upset or believe we are right does not mean our neighbor has sinned. Before approaching someone, we should examine our own hearts. Am I seeking my brother's good, or am I simply seeking vindication? Am I trying to restore a relationship, or prove that I am right? The Eighth Commandment remains in force even in the midst of conflict. We are to put the best construction on our neighbor's actions and speak to him directly rather than speak about him to others.

When sin has truly been committed, however, Christian love does not ignore it. Sin damages our relationships with God and with one another. Sometimes difficult words must be spoken so that our neighbor may be brought to repentance. And where there is repentance, there must also be forgiveness. We do not get to demand that someone demonstrate a particular level of sorrow or prove that he is sufficiently sorry before we forgive him. We cannot see perfectly into another person's heart, but we do know Christ's command and promise. We forgive because Christ has forgiven us.

This is why Jesus follows His teaching with the parable of the unforgiving servant. A servant whose enormous debt has been forgiven refuses to forgive the much smaller debt of his fellow servant. Jesus directs our eyes to the immeasurable mercy we have received. We are forgiven sinners forgiving sinners. Our confidence rests not in the perfection of another person's repentance but in the perfect sufficiency of Christ's atoning sacrifice.

Jesus also gives us an important order to follow. First, speak privately. If your brother does not listen, take one or two others along. Only after these efforts does the matter come before the Church. This progression protects our neighbor's reputation and prevents sin from becoming public ammunition. Even when the Church must become involved, the goal remains repentance and restoration, not revenge or punishment for its own sake. Church discipline is an act of love because the Church takes sin seriously and desires the sinner's salvation.

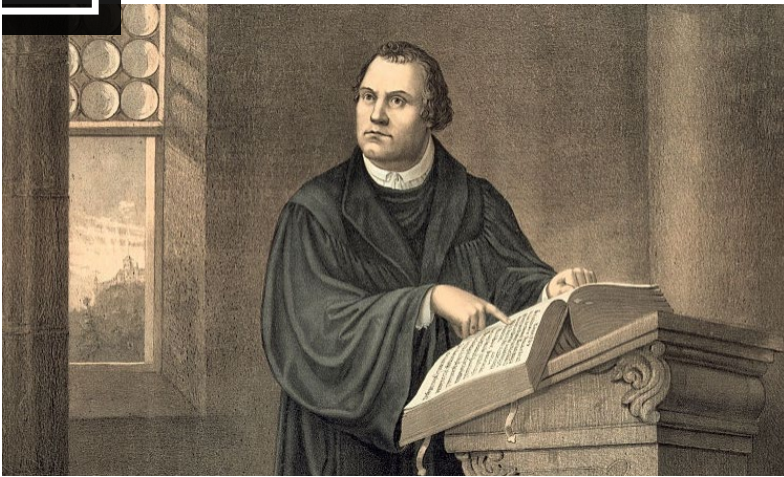
Peter's question immediately afterward makes the connection clear: "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" Jesus answers, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:21–22). The Christian life is not about keeping track of our neighbor's failures. It is about living together as sinners who have received God's mercy.

That is what happens when we gather for the Divine Service. We confess our sins because we need mercy. We hear the Gospel because Christ died for sinners. We receive Holy Absolution because God does not want us to remain burdened by guilt. Having received His forgiveness, we extend that same mercy to one another.

Jesus concludes with the promise, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matthew 18:20). Even in the difficult work of confronting sin, seeking repentance, and extending forgiveness, Christ is with His people. He is present when a brother confesses, when another speaks the words "I forgive you," and when His Church lovingly calls a sinner to repentance.

So let us be careful when we say, "We need to follow Matthew 18." It is not a license to win an argument, demand repentance over every disagreement, or publicize another person's faults. It is Christ's gracious gift to His Church: a way for sinners to speak the truth in love, call one another to repentance, and restore broken relationships through forgiveness. The question is not simply, "Who is right?" Rather, it is this: "How might I, by the grace of Christ, gain my brother?"

In Christ's Service and Yours,
Pastor Krieg



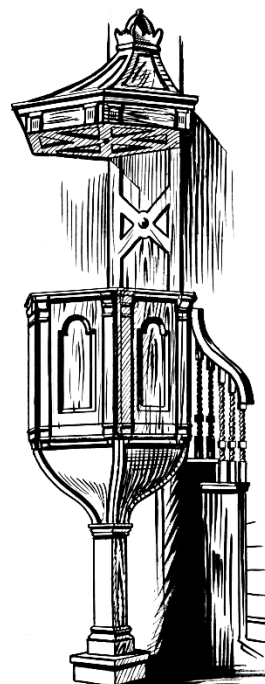
THROUGH THE LITURGY: SERMON

Every Sunday morning, God gathers His people together in His sanctuary to receive the gifts of salvation that He freely gives through His Word and Sacraments. The Divine Service is not primarily something we do for God; it is where our Lord comes to serve us with His grace. He gives His gifts to sinners who need His forgiveness, life, and salvation.

One of the chief ways Christ delivers these gifts is through the preaching of His Word.

It is easy to underestimate the importance of the sermon. Perhaps we have sat through sermons that seemed too long, too difficult, or even boring. Perhaps our minds wander during the sermon, and we find ourselves thinking about work, family, lunch, or everything else that awaits us after church. At times, we may even wonder whether the Divine Service would be better if the sermon were shorter, or omitted altogether.

When such thoughts arise, we need to remember what actually takes place when God's Word is preached.



The sermon is not merely the pastor's opportunity to give advice, share his opinions, or offer a few helpful thoughts for the week. The sermon is the proclamation of Jesus Christ and His saving work for sinners. Through the preaching of the Gospel, Christ's death on the cross for our sins and His resurrection for our justification are proclaimed to us personally.

Why Is the Sermon So Important?

The pastor has been called and ordained to serve as Christ's spokesman. He does not preach himself; he is to preach Christ and His Word. When the pastor faithfully proclaims God's Word, Christ Himself is addressing His people through that Word.

That means the sermon is not simply information about Jesus. It is Christ's Word being delivered to you.

You come to church carrying your sins, your doubts, your fears, your disappointments, and your burdens. The sermon brings Christ's promises directly to you. It tells you again that your sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. It points you away from yourself and your own works and directs you to Christ and His cross. It reminds you that your salvation does not depend upon how well you have lived this past week, but upon what Christ has already accomplished for you.

So when we listen to the sermon, we should listen with the expectation that our Lord is giving us something we desperately need.

The sermon is important because Christ is important. His Word gives life. His Gospel forgives sinners. His promises sustain His people.

What a remarkable gift, then, that our Lord continues to speak to His Church, and that through the preaching of His Word, He speaks His gracious promises to you.

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

James 1:19-20



HEROES OF FAITH: ST. JAMES OF JERUSALEM

Each month, we will highlight one of the many heroes of the Christian faith who have stood firm in the truth of Holy Scripture. We will look at the apostles who knew our Lord Jesus Christ personally, his friends who were witnesses to His miracles, the faithful ancestors of the Old Testament who patiently awaited His first Advent, as well as the many other Godly men and women who have been bold witnesses throughout the years to the one true faith. We look to them not as people to be worshiped or prayed to but as ordinary sinners, like us, to whom the Holy Spirit gave faith to be extraordinary. They are holy because the blood of Christ forgave their sins. They are holy because the Holy Spirit gave them a living faith in which the love of Christ shone through.

On October 25th, the Church celebrates the Feast of St. James of Jerusalem, Brother of Jesus and Martyr.

St. James of Jerusalem was one of the leaders of the early Christian Church and is identified in Scripture as a brother of Jesus. During our Lord's earthly ministry, James did not initially believe that Jesus was the Christ (John 7:5). Yet after Christ's resurrection, the risen Lord appeared to James (1 Corinthians 15:7), and James became a faithful witness to the Gospel. He later served the Church in Jerusalem and spoke at the Council of Jerusalem, faithfully confessing that salvation comes by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:13–21). James is also traditionally identified as the author of the Epistle of James, which calls Christians to live out their faith in love and good works. James's life reminds us that even those closest to Jesus needed the gift of faith that comes through the Holy Spirit. His transformation from unbelief to faithful confession was not the result of his own strength or righteousness, but of God's gracious work through the risen Christ. James eventually suffered martyrdom for his confession of Christ. His life points us to the same Savior whom he confessed: Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, rose from the dead, and gives eternal life to all who trust in Him.



HIGHER THINGS



The theme and venue for next year's Higher Things conference have been announced! The

conference will be based on Matthew 5:17 - "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Youth League is excited to attend next year's conference June 29-July 2 at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO! As more information becomes available, we will let you know.

NEXT MEETING

On Sunday, October 4th, the Youth League will meet during Sunday school. We will discuss the next outing and prepare for our next fundraiser.



YOUTH LEAGUE UPDATE

Christmas Ornament Fundraiser

The Youth League will be selling Christmas tree ornaments as a fundraiser this year! The ornaments you purchase will help replace the Church's Christmas tree ornaments that are in need of replacement.

Samples of the different ornaments will be available for purchase in the parish hall soon. In addition, a special ornament for this year will be available for you to purchase and take home as a keepsake.

Support the Youth League while helping beautify our Christmas tree for years to come!



THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS: ARTICLE XXVI CONCERNING THE DISTINCTION OF MEATS

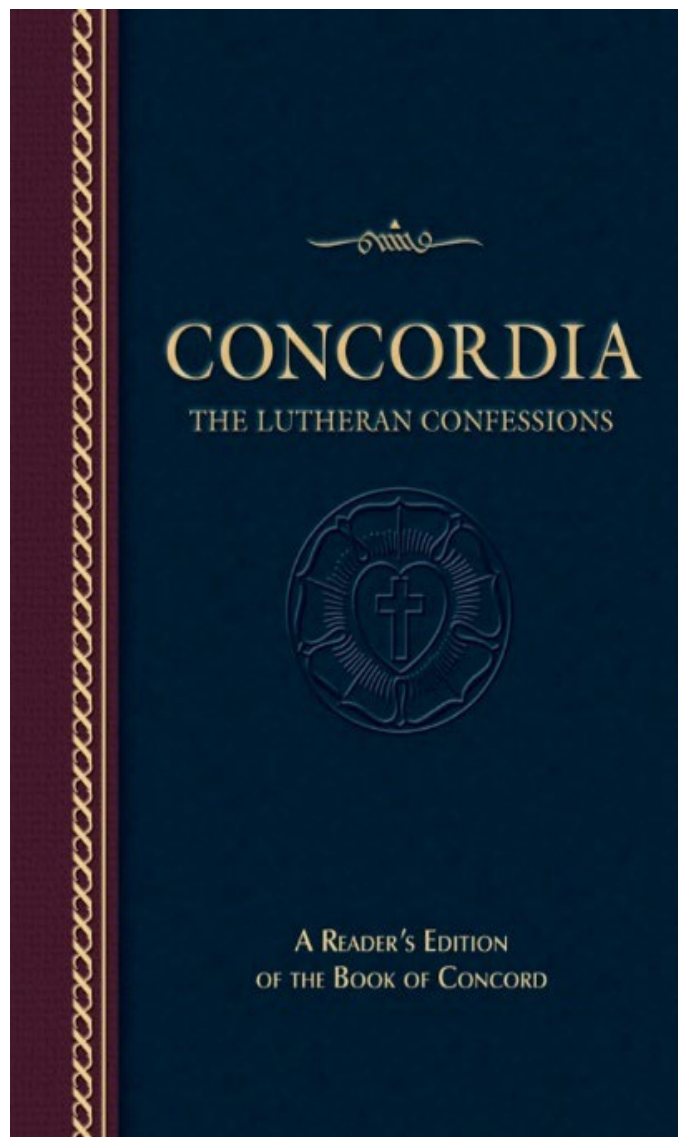
This month we look at AC XXVI, *Concerning the Distinction of Meats*. This article goes into more detail on the Church customs and traditions spoken of generally in AC XV. Specifically mentioned in AC XXVI are the distinction of foods, prescribed fasts, prayers, vestments or dress, and mortification.

The distinction of foods refers to the Roman Church practice of not allowing certain kinds of meat on certain festival days.

Prescribed fasts refer to the practice of making fasts on certain days mandatory for all its members. While fasting is mentioned often in both the Old and New Testaments, it is not as a means of atoning for sin, but as a sign of repentance, often in times of trial or distress to dedicate time to turn to God in prayer.

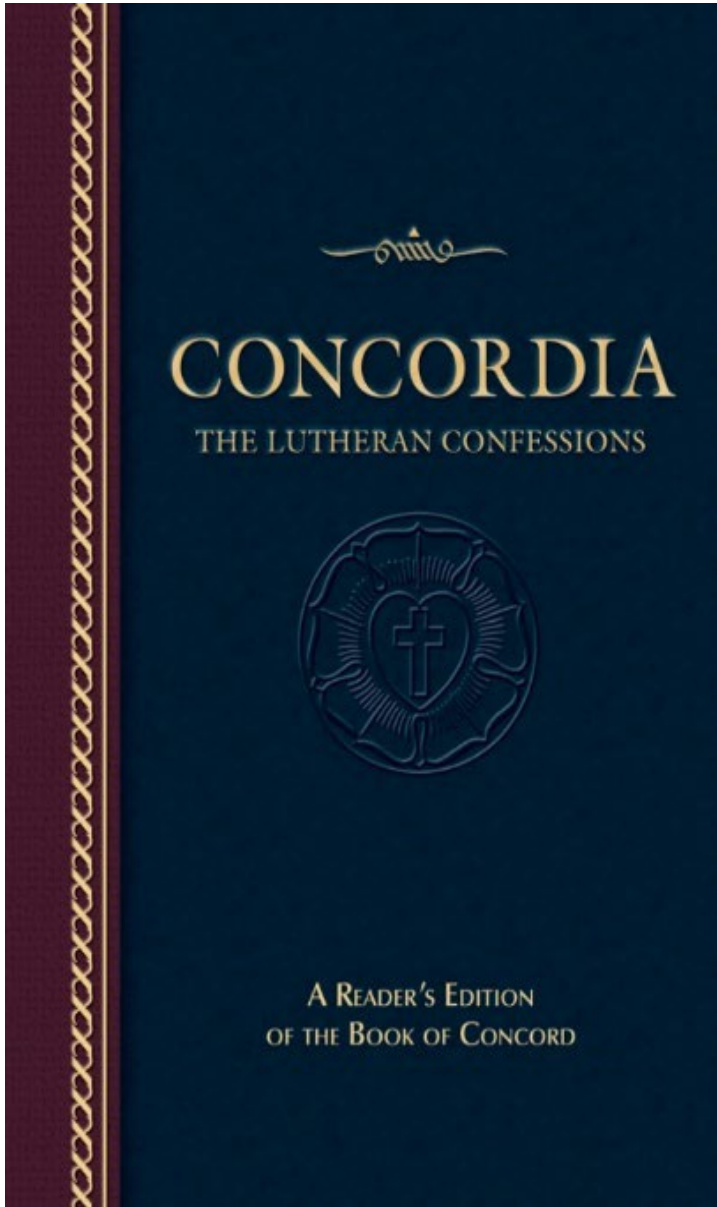
Prayers refer to prayers made in a certain way, which make them more beneficial than other prayers. The Roman Church prescribed prayer as an act of penance which “contributes to the forgiveness of our sins”. While prayer is a wonderful blessing from God, we must recognize that prayer is not a means of grace and does not impart forgiveness of sins.

Vestments refer to the clothing worn by priests, bishops, and others in the Catholic Church. Once again, we are reminded that these customs are man-made and, while beneficial in some ways, should not be considered in any way meritorious of God's grace.



THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS: ARTICLE XXVI

CONCERNING THE DISTINCTION OF MEATS



Mortification, which means “putting to death,” is used to refer to practices common in the Roman church which range from giving up or abstaining from certain pleasures; to living a simple or impoverished life; to even inflicting pain on oneself.

Regarding all of these customs, the AC XXVI states, *“So our churches have taught that we cannot merit grace or be justified by observing human traditions. We must not think that such observances are necessary acts of worship.”*

This article highlights one of the main points of dispute between Catholics and Lutherans, namely, the exaltation of the will of the Church above the Word of God. Concerning this, Jesus said, *“in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:9).

This article highlights the necessity of holding to the Scriptural doctrine of forgiveness of sin by grace through faith, not by works. Churches that teach that certain actions or customs merit God’s grace lead many away from the all-

sufficient work of Christ as Savior, and instead to have false trust in the Church’s man-made rules and regulations.

Therefore, let us give thanks to God that He has preserved the true doctrine within our church and continues to place pastors and lay-leaders here who uphold the truth of His Word and maintain Biblical doctrine over the traditions of men.

LEARN WITH THE CONFIRMANDS

As you know, Confirmation is kicking off once again here at Bethlehem. This means our kids will be diving headfirst into the Small Catechism and God's holy Word. Memorization is a key component of Confirmation and of being a lifelong learner of Scripture. Please keep our confirmands in your prayers and encourage them in their studies. To that end, I have placed all the memory work they will be learning this month below, and I challenge you to dust off your Small Catechism and relearn the treasures we hold so dear alongside them. The Small Catechism is not just for the young or those going through Confirmation; it is for us all. When you see them, recite the memory with them, encourage them in their studies, and let them know you support them and are praying for them.

Date	Catechism Memorization	Scripture Memorization (recited on Sundays)
7-Oct	6 th & 7 th Commandments	Matthew 19:6
14-Oct	8 th , 9 th , & 10 th Commandments	Luke 6:37
21-Oct	Close of the Commandments	Philippians 4:11
28-Oct	No Class	Genesis 1:1



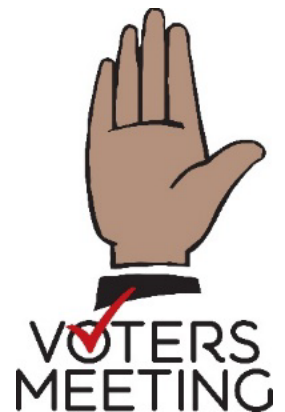
REFORMATION CELEBRATION LUNCHEON

On Sunday, Oct. 25th, we will have a Reformation celebration to commemorate the 509th anniversary of the nailing of the 95 Theses while recognizing all of our new members who have joined Bethlehem since last Reformation Day. You are invited to stay after the service for food, fun, and fellowship. There will be games and a movie for the kids, while the adults have the opportunity to catch up and get to know the new members.

COUNCIL & VOTERS MEETING THIS MONTH!

If you are a church council member, mark your calendar for Wednesday, October 14th, at 7 PM for our quarterly church council meeting.

All eligible voters and those who wish to become voters are invited to mark their calendars for Wednesday, October 28th, at 7:30 PM for our quarterly voter meeting. Watch for the agenda in the bulletin.



LWML SUNDAY



We celebrated LWML Sunday on October 4th here at the church. The first Sunday in October is traditionally set aside to observe Lutheran Women in Mission (LWML) Sunday. Please enjoy this look back at the history of the LWML here at Bethlehem, written by Vickie Ashorn.

On June 24, 1945, the ladies of Bethlehem Church were organized with fourteen ladies present. The group met on the first Tuesday at 3:30 PM in members' homes. Refreshments consisted of coffee cakes, cookies, butter bread with jelly, and coffee. Dues were 10 cents a month and included a penny birthday offering, due in the month of the member's birthday. The first meeting was held on July 3, 1945, at Mrs. C.J. Appel's home. In November 1945, the meeting place changed to the Church School. In December, 1952, the ladies met in the parish hall.

The ladies earned money by presenting one-act plays costing attendees 25 cents for adults and 10 cents for children. They also sold Christmas cards.

In 1954, the ladies became members of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. Bethlehem is still an active member of the organization.

Through the years, the ladies have had many service projects such as serving meals at funerals and Vacation Bible School, visiting our shut-ins, and donating supplies to our local first responders. The ladies also gave gifts to school teachers, confirmands, graduates, and for pastor appreciation. The ladies also ran several food drives for Bread Partners and collected supplies for Disaster Relief in Texas. The ladies also made quilts for Lutheran World Relief. At their regular meeting, they collected money for mites to fund mission grants in Texas. Over the years, the ladies have completed many projects, such as renovating the kitchen and producing a 150th anniversary cookbook. Today, the club has 24 members and 4 honorary members. The ladies meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM with refreshments, devotion, and a business meeting.

Bethlehem LWML invites the ladies of Bethlehem to our next meeting on October 6, 2026, at 7:00 PM, where we will play our left and right game, with members bringing a small gift with the theme "I Wish Fall Was Here." Please join us.

**"Rejoice in
hope, be patient
in tribulation, be
constant in
prayer."**

Romans 12:12

October 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 6:00 – 7:00 PM Elders' Meeting 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	2 Vickie Ashorn, Rick Molitor	3 7:30 – 8:30 AM Men's Club Breakfast, Bible Study, & Meeting
4 Amanda Hafer 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 9:00 – 10:00 AM Youth League Mtg 10:15 – 11:15 AM Divine Service	5 Deloris Griffin, Theresa Kettler, Lance Searle	6 Ryan Gresham 7:00 – 7:30 PM LWML Social 7:30 – 8:30 PM LWML Meeting	7 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation Class	8 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	9 Ryan Gaskamp	10 Don Jaehne, Sr.
11 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Divine Service	12	13 Doris Kohring	14 Jessica Perez 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sonshine 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation Class 7:00 – 8:00 PM Church Council	15 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	16	17 Lane Janner, Reid Janner, Wyatt Janner, Terry Lueckemeyer 8:30 – 10:00 AM Sisters in Christ Bible Study
18 Kevin Goessler 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Divine Service	19	20	21 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation Class	22 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	23 Kandace Schroeder	24 Karen Gaskamp, Christopher Whittaker
25 Renee Brinkmann, Whitley Crabb 8:00 – 9:00 AM Outdoor Amphitheater Worship 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Divine Service	26 Travis Medve	27 Hadley Fridye, Allison Jaehne, Charles Meyer	28 Pat Boenker 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation Class 7:30 – 9:00 PM Voters' Meeting	29 D.J. Jaehne, Jr. 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	30 Amelia Kettler, Amy Schroeder	31 Delwin Gaskamp, Linda Hinze, Lynn Van Eman, Rallin Wellmann Reformation Day

October 2026

Birthdays

2 Vickie Ashorn
Rick Molitor

4 Amanda Hafer

5 Deloris Griffin
Theresa Kettler
Lance Searle

6 Ryan Gresham

9 Ryan Gaskamp

10 Don Jaehne Sr

13 Doris Kohring

17 Lane Janner
Reid Janner
Wyatt Janner
Terry Lueckemeyer

18 Kevin Goessler

23 Kandace Schroeder

24 Karen Gaskamp
Christopher Whittaker

25 Renee Brinkmann
Whitley Crabb

26 Travis Medve

27 Hadley Fridye
Allison Jaehne
Charles Meyer

28 Pat Boenker

29 D.J. Jaehne Jr

30 Amelia Kettler
Amy L. Schroeder

31 Delwin Gaskamp
Linda Hinze
Lynn Van Eman
Rallin Wellmann

Baptismal Birthdays

2 Dusty Baichtal
Connor Gresham

3 Karlton Klussmann

5 Elijah Kettler

6 Shirley Klussmann

7 Roy Schwartz
Chris Smitherman

9 Heidi Nowicki

11 Chris Landeck

12 Billie Weidemann

14 Stanley Haferkamp
Nolan Schroeder

16 Tricia Boggan
Kelly Krieg

18 Doug Schroeder

24 Tanner Schroeder

26 Craig Kankel

27 Sheryl Schroeder

29 Lance Searle

31 Lorena Schroeder

Wedding Anniversaries

Allen & Linda Hinze
Oct 30, 1971

Chris & Carin Landeck
Oct 1, 1986

Ken & Andrea Holle
Oct 1, 1994

Ryan & Cheri Janner
Oct 9, 1999

Brian & Heather Ashorn
Oct 23, 1999

Craig & Tricia Boggan
Oct 20, 2001

Jason & Wendy Ashorn
Oct 4, 2008

Dustin & Heidi Nowicki
Oct 24, 2009

Travis & Samantha Medve
Oct 7, 2017

Trevor & Hanna R. Glenz
Oct 16, 2021



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