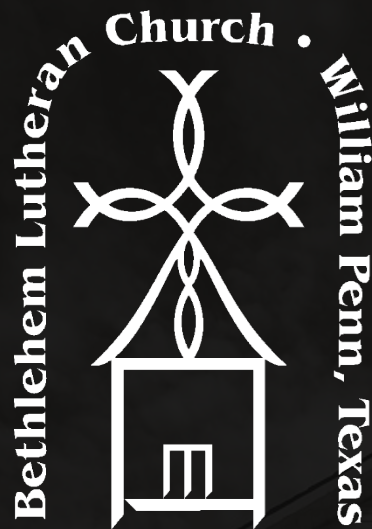
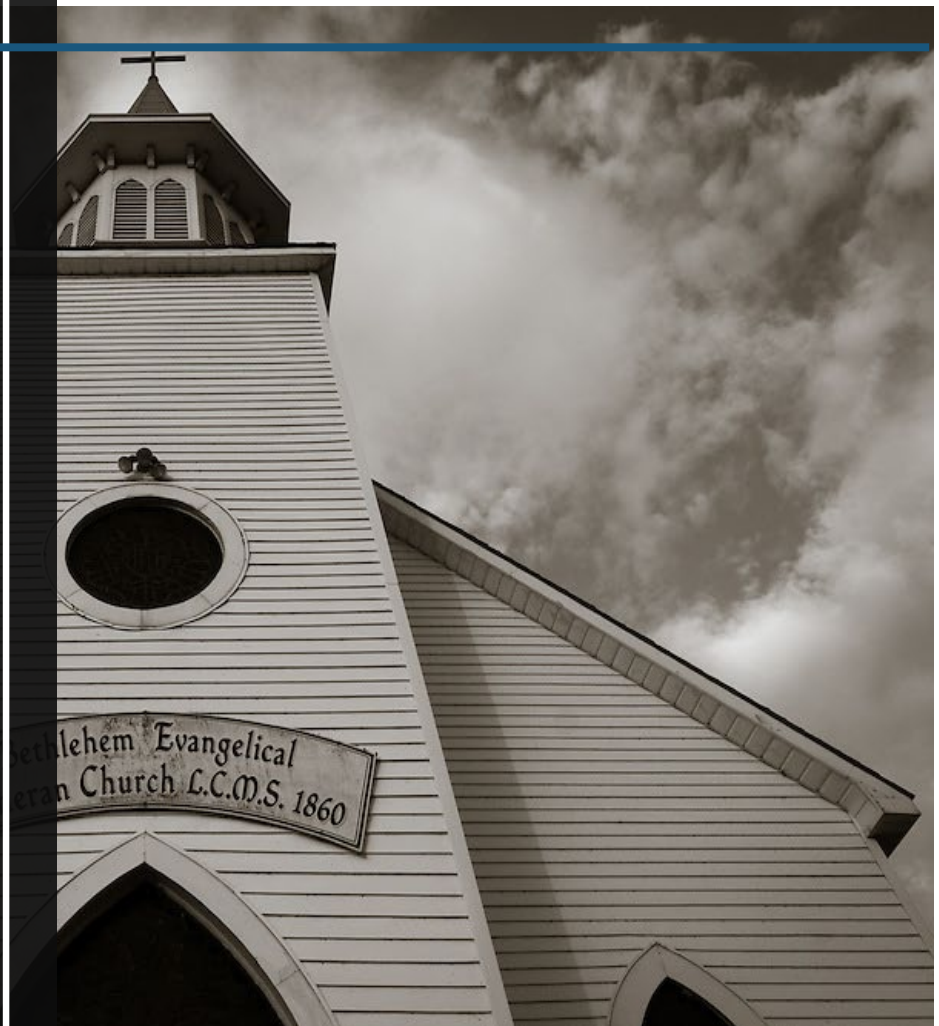




# Ghost Town Gazette

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
William Penn, Texas

Vol. 4, No. 7, July 2026



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### PG. 2

Beyond 250 Years

### PG. 3

Through the Church Year: Stewardship

### PG. 4

Heroes of Faith: St. James the Elder, Apostle

### PG. 5

Youth League Update

### PG. 6-7

The Lutheran Confessions – Article XXIV –  
Concerning the Mass (Part 1)

### PG. 8-12

Updates & Information

“Let us then consider it  
certain and firmly  
established that the  
soul needs only one  
thing: the word of God.”

- Martin Luther

## BEYOND 250 YEARS



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This July, our nation marks a significant milestone: the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. For two and a half centuries, the United States has stood as a nation blessed with remarkable freedoms and opportunities. As Christians, we rightly give thanks to God for these gifts.

The Scriptures teach that all earthly authorities are established by God (Romans 13:1). The freedoms we enjoy, the freedom to worship, to gather, to speak, to raise our families, and to proclaim the Gospel publicly, are not accidents of history. They are gifts from the Lord's gracious hand. We should be grateful for those who have served, sacrificed, and labored to preserve these blessings through the generations.

Yet as Christians, we must also be careful. Patriotism can be a virtue. Idolatry is not. There is always a temptation to place our trust in earthly kingdoms rather than in the Kingdom of God. We may begin to speak as though our nation's future is the source of our hope. We may become more passionate about political victories than about Christ's victory over sin and death. We may celebrate our earthly freedoms while neglecting the greater freedom won for us by the blood of Jesus.

The Church has seen this temptation in every age. Ancient Israel trusted in military alliances. The Roman Empire promised peace and security. Countless nations throughout history have claimed greatness and permanence. Yet every earthly kingdom rises and falls. Every flag eventually fades. Every constitution and government belongs to this passing world. But Christ remains.

When our Lord stood before Pontius Pilate, He declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). The freedom He came to bring was not merely political freedom, but freedom from the tyranny of sin, death, and the devil. Through His holy life, innocent suffering, bloody death upon the cross, and glorious resurrection from the grave, Jesus purchased and won us to be His own.

The Declaration of Independence speaks of liberty. The Gospel proclaims something even greater. Because of Christ's shed blood, your sins are forgiven. Because Christ died and rose again, death itself has lost its sting. Because you were baptized into Christ, your citizenship is now in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Long before there was a United States of America, and long after every earthly nation has passed away, the Kingdom of Christ will endure forever.

This does not make us less thankful for our country. Rather, it helps us love our country rightly. We give thanks for America, but we do not worship America. We honor our nation, but we do not trust in our nation. We cherish our freedoms, but we do not place our hope in our freedoms. Instead, we confess with the saints of every age that we are "strangers and exiles on the earth" who seek "a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

As we celebrate our nation's 250th birthday this month, let us do so with grateful hearts. Thank God for the blessings He has poured out upon our land. Pray for our leaders. Serve your neighbors. Be good citizens. But above all, cling to Christ.

For while nations come and go, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. While earthly freedoms can be lost, the freedom He has won can never be taken away. While earthly kingdoms perish, His Kingdom has no end. Our greatest treasure is not found beneath the stars and stripes, but beneath the cross. And our truest home is not an earthly nation, but the eternal Kingdom purchased for us by the blood of Christ.

In Christ's Service and Yours,  
Pastor Krieg

# TIME TALENT & TREASURE



## THROUGH THE CHURCH YEAR: STEWARDSHIP

### What Is a Steward?

A steward is someone entrusted with the care and management of something that belongs to another. Throughout Scripture, Christians are described as stewards of the gifts God has placed into their hands. Everything we have ultimately belongs to Him: our homes, families, vocations, abilities, time, finances, and possessions.

God, the Creator of all things, has graciously entrusted these gifts to us for a time. As His stewards, we are called to use them faithfully according to His will. Christian stewardship is not merely about money; it encompasses our entire lives. In gratitude for God's abundant blessings and, above all, for the salvation won for us through Christ's death and resurrection, we seek to use what He has given us in ways that serve Him and benefit our neighbors.

### Why Do Christians Give?

All people belong to God because He created and sustains them. Yet through Holy Baptism, Christians have been brought into God's family and made heirs of His kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ. This new life in Christ shapes the way we view our possessions and resources.

Christian giving is not motivated by guilt, obligation, or an attempt to repay God for His grace. Such a repayment would be impossible. Instead, our generosity flows from the Gospel itself. Having received God's undeserved mercy in Christ, we respond with thankful hearts. The Holy Spirit works through the Gospel to create faith, and that faith naturally bears fruit in acts of love and generosity.





**“About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword.”**

**Acts 12:1-2**



## **HEROES OF FAITH: ST. JAMES THE ELDER, APOSTLE**

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 July 25th, the Church remembers St. James the Elder, Apostle.**

James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John, was among the first disciples called by Jesus to leave his nets and follow Him. Along with Peter and John, James belonged to the inner circle of the Twelve, witnessing such pivotal events as the raising of Jairus's daughter, the Transfiguration of our Lord, and Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Though at times James displayed the zeal and ambition of a sinner, once seeking a place of honor in Christ's kingdom, our Lord patiently taught him that true greatness is found not in power or glory, but in humble service and suffering for the sake of the Gospel. After Christ's resurrection and ascension, James boldly proclaimed the saving work of Jesus until he became the first of the apostles to be martyred, put to death by King Herod as recorded in Acts 12. We remember James not because of his earthly accomplishments, but because Christ called, forgave, and strengthened him to be a faithful witness. His life reminds us that the Lord continues to use weak and sinful people to proclaim the forgiveness of sins won through His cross and resurrection, granting eternal life to all who believe in Him.



On Sunday, July 5th, the Youth League will meet during Sunday school. We will discuss the next outing and prepare for our next fundraiser.



## YOUTH LEAGUE UPDATE

### Youth League Attends Texas Confessional Lutherans Youth Conference

From June 29–July 2, our Youth League joined approximately 60 other Lutheran youth from across Texas for the Texas Confessional Lutherans Youth Conference in Galveston. The group stayed in beach houses and enjoyed several memorable outings, including visits to the historic Strand district, time on the beach, and a day at Schlitterbahn.

While there was plenty of fun and fellowship, the conference was centered on God's Word. Through worship services and breakout study sessions, the youth explored the Christian doctrine of vocation and how God calls His people to serve within the three estates: the Church, the family, and civil society. These studies encouraged our young people to see their daily lives as opportunities to serve their neighbors in the various callings God has given them.

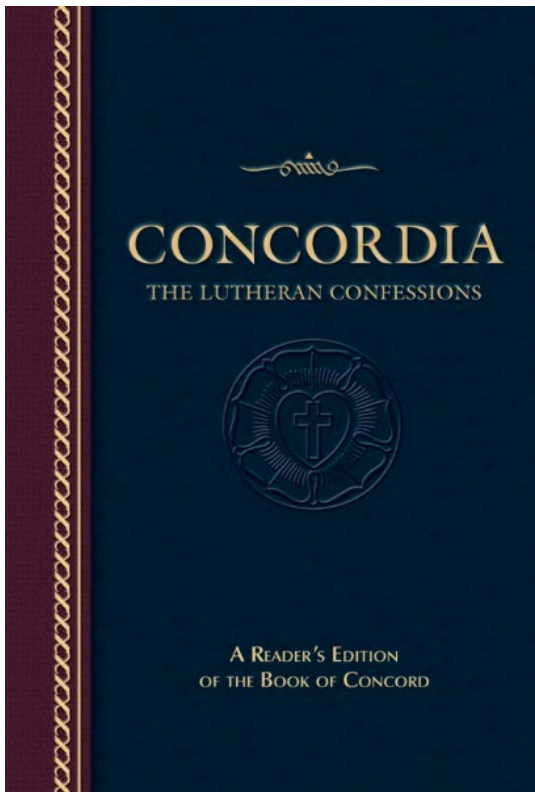
We give thanks to God for a safe trip, for the opportunity to gather with fellow Lutheran youth from around the state, and for the continued growth in faith and fellowship experienced throughout the conference.





# THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS: ARTICLE XXIV

## CONCERNING THE MASS (PART 1)



Once again, the Augsburg Confession speaks to the Lord's Supper, having previously done so in AC X and XXII. Now in AC XXIV, the Lutherans come to the heart of the issue surrounding the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Romans spoke of the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice, which made Luther uneasy, given the clear witness of Hebrews 9:28: "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many." This is why the Roman church calls the sacrifice of the Mass an "unbloody sacrifice," since Christ is present but offered in an unbloody manner. While the Romans clearly stated that "the mass does not abolish sins," they also stated that it "abolishes the punishment due sin, supplies satisfactions, and confers

increase of grace and salutary protection of the living" (Roman Confutation to Article 24).

This sacrifice was beneficial not only for those who were alive, but also for those who were dead, by making satisfaction for sin. The problem with this is that it turns this sacrament into a work of man, instead of a work of God, as AC XXIV points out, "trust in Christ and true worship were forgotten."

There were a number of important issues that divided Lutherans and Catholics over the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, then and now. Mainly the doctrines of Transubstantiation, Concomitance, and withholding the cup, and the sacrifice of the Mass as a satisfaction for sin. AC XXIV also discusses a few other areas of disagreement, such as: preparation for the Lord's Supper, the language used in the service, private masses for money, close communion, and how often communion should be received.

These points were very important in Luther's time, and they are just as important in our time. As we consider these points in the next few articles, we will see their value and emphasis in our teaching still today.

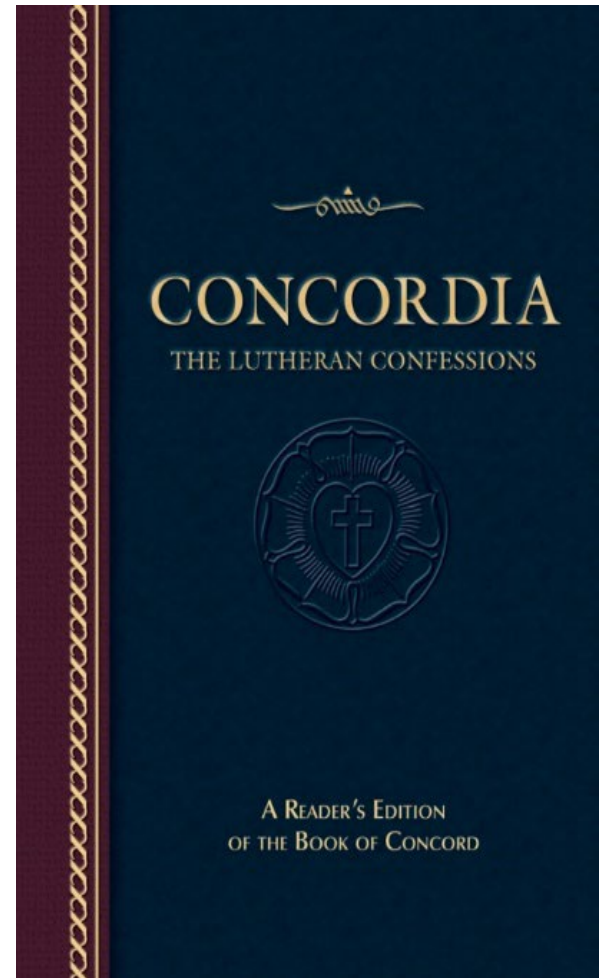
## THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS: ARTICLE XXIV – CONCERNING THE MASS (PART I)

AC XXIV begins: “Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. The Mass is held among us and celebrated with the highest reverence.... For ceremonies are needed for this reason alone, that the uneducated be taught what they need to know about Christ.... No one is admitted to the Sacrament without first being examined. The people are also advised about the dignity and use of the Sacrament, about how it brings great consolation to anxious consciences, so that they too may learn to believe God and to expect and ask from Him all that is good. This worship pleases God. Such use of the Sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God. Therefore, it does not appear that the Mass is more devoutly celebrated among our adversaries than among us.”

Luther and many others had seen the improper use of the Lord's Supper in the Roman Church. They understood the importance of instruction in preparation for receiving this sacrament and began educating the people accordingly.

Unfortunately, many within Lutheranism (and beyond) now neglect to instruct individuals on the meaning, purpose, and misuse of the Lord's Supper. But according to Scripture, we see that preparing individuals for worthy reception of the Lord's Supper has, from the very beginning, been an important characteristic of the Lutheran Church. It continues to be a hallmark of this church, and as long as faithful pastors are called here, it will remain so.

The instruction of our youth and adults can not be underestimated and takes place in many ways, from Confirmation for our youth, adult instruction for new and seasoned members, Bible classes and Sunday school, to the liturgy and architecture, sermons and hymns, it all points to Christ. It is all catechetical, as it teaches young and old alike the truth of God's Word and the gifts He gives us through His means of Grace.





# 67TH ANNUAL KARTOFFEL PFANNENKUCHEN ABENDESSEN

## A GREAT SUCCESS!

On Friday evening, June 5, members, friends, and visitors gathered for our 67th Annual *Kartoffel Pfannenkuchen Abendessen* (Potato Pancake Supper). From 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., guests enjoyed an all-you-can-eat meal featuring our famous homemade potato pancakes, a cherished tradition that has brought our community together for generations.



The evening was filled with fellowship, laughter, and plenty of delicious food. Traditional German music added to the festive atmosphere, while children enjoyed the water slide bounce house and other activities. Families and friends gathered around tables to share a meal and spend time together, making the event a wonderful celebration of our congregation's heritage and hospitality.

This year's supper required a tremendous amount of preparation and volunteer effort. Nearly 500 pounds of potatoes were peeled, grated, and transformed into the potato pancakes that so many have come to love. We are grateful to everyone who donated supplies, prepared food, served meals, worked behind the scenes, and helped with cleanup.



Thank you to all who attended and supported this long-standing tradition. The continued success of the *Kartoffel Pfannenkuchen Abendessen* is a testament to the dedication of our congregation and the blessings God continues to provide. We look forward to welcoming everyone back next year for our 68th annual celebration!





# For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Luke 19:10

## TOPICAL TREK VBS, 2026



We thank God for a wonderful week of learning, fellowship, and fun during this year's Vacation Bible School, Tropical Trek: Jesus Comes to Seek and Save. Through Bible lessons, music, crafts, games, and activities, the children learned how Jesus seeks out sinners and brings them into His kingdom

through His grace and mercy.



Each evening began with a shared meal for children, families, volunteers, and guests. While the children participated in VBS activities, adults attended a Bible study led by Pastor Krieg that addressed common questions about the Bible, the Christian faith, and Lutheran doctrine.

The week concluded with the VBS program on Friday evening, where the children shared what they had learned and sang some of their favorite songs. Afterward, everyone enjoyed a hamburger supper and a homemade ice cream social.



We give thanks to God for all the children, families, visitors, volunteers, teachers, musicians, cooks, and helpers who made this year's VBS possible. May the Lord continue to strengthen the faith of all who attended and remind us that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10)



# July 2026

| Sun                                                                                                                                                | Mon                                         | Tue                                                                  | Wed                                                                                    | Thu                                                                           | Fri                   | Sat                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                    |                                             |                                                                      | 1<br>Billy Ashorn,<br>Clinton Kettler                                                  | 2<br>6:00 – 7:00 PM<br>Elders' Meeting                                        | 3                     | 4                                                                          |
| 5<br>9:00 – 10:00 AM<br>Sunday School &<br>Adult Bible Class<br>9:00 – 10:00 AM<br>Youth League Mtg<br>10:15 – 11:15 AM<br>Worship w/<br>Communion | 6<br>Lillian Hayden                         | 7<br>7:00 – 7:30 PM<br>LWML Social<br>7:30 – 8:30 PM<br>LWML Meeting | 8<br>Jessica Kettler<br>8:30 – 9:30 AM<br>Sonshine<br>7:00 – 8:00 PM<br>Church Council | 9<br>David Boenker,<br>Janice Pazdemy<br>6:30 – 8:00 PM<br>Ladies Bible Study | 10<br>Julie Haferkamp | 11<br>7:30 – 8:30 AM<br>Men's Club<br>Breakfast, Bible<br>Study, & Meeting |
| 12<br>9:00 – 10:00 AM<br>Sunday School &<br>Adult Bible Class<br>10:15 – 11:15 AM<br>Worship<br>11:30 AM – 12:30<br>PM Shekel Store                | 13<br>Ruth Anne Kettler,<br>Beckett Molitor | 14                                                                   | 15<br>Hannah Nowicki                                                                   | 16<br>6:30 – 8:00 PM<br>Ladies Bible Study                                    | 17                    | 18<br>8:30 – 10:00 AM<br>Sisters in Christ<br>Bible Study                  |
| 19<br>9:00 – 10:00 AM<br>Sunday School &<br>Adult Bible Class<br>10:15 – 11:15 AM<br>Worship w/<br>Communion                                       | 20                                          | 21                                                                   | 22<br>7:30 – 9:00 PM<br>Voters' Meeting                                                | 23<br>6:30 – 8:00 PM<br>Ladies Bible Study                                    | 24                    | 25                                                                         |
| 26<br>Jason Ashorn,<br>Javier Reyes<br>9:00 – 10:00 AM<br>Sunday School &<br>Adult Bible Class<br>10:15 – 11:15 AM<br>Worship                      | 27<br>Amber Molitor                         | 28<br>Grace Kankel,<br>Tracy Searle                                  | 29<br>Stanley Haferkamp                                                                | 30<br>6:30 – 8:00 PM<br>Ladies Bible Study                                    | 31<br>Dustin Nowicki  |                                                                            |



# July 2026

## Birthdays

1 Billy Ashorn  
Clinton Kettler

6 Lillian Hayden

8 Jessica Kettler

9 David Boenker  
Janice Pazderny

10 Julie Haferkamp

13 Ruth Kettler  
Beckett Molitor

15 Hannah Nowicki

25 Billy Minar

26 Jason Ashorn  
Rylee Elliott  
Javier Reyes

27 Amber Molitor

28 Grace Kankel  
Tracy Searle

29 Stanley Haferkamp

31 Dustin Nowicki

## Baptismal Birthdays

1 Julie Hardin

2 Doris Gaskamp

3 Connie Foster  
Madison N. Kettler

6 Shirley Ashorn  
Diane Jaehne  
Winston Krieg  
Brandy Watkins

7 Chuck Boggan

8 Norman Krieg

10 Emmett Molitor  
Renea Molitor  
Emersyn Schroeder

11 Amy Klussmann  
Giuliana Krieg

12 Diane Kettler

13 Lane Borgstedt  
Tanner Haferkamp

15 Ray Wellmann Jr

16 Robert Kettler

17 Landon M. Kohring  
Lori Schramme

18 Lacy Boggan  
Ryan Janner

23 Brenda Gaskamp

24 Billy Ashorn

25 Craig Boggan  
Tyler Hinze

26 Jason Holle

27 Daniel W. Watson Jr

30 Clinton Kettler

## Wedding Anniversaries

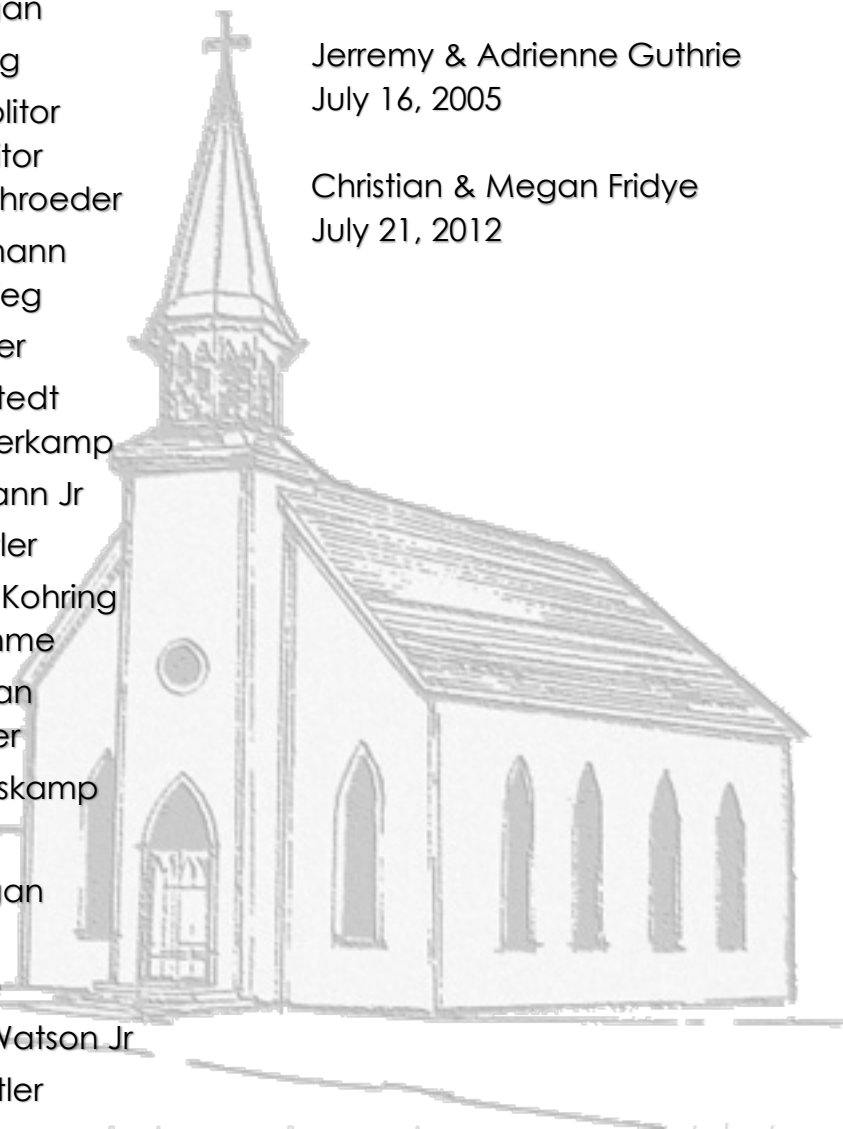
Greg & Brenda Gaskamp  
July 29, 1983

Glenn & Connie Foster  
July 26, 1991

Don & Ann Koester  
July 4, 2001

Jerremy & Adrienne Guthrie  
July 16, 2005

Christian & Megan Fridye  
July 21, 2012



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH-  
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OFFICE HOURS: M-TH; 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

