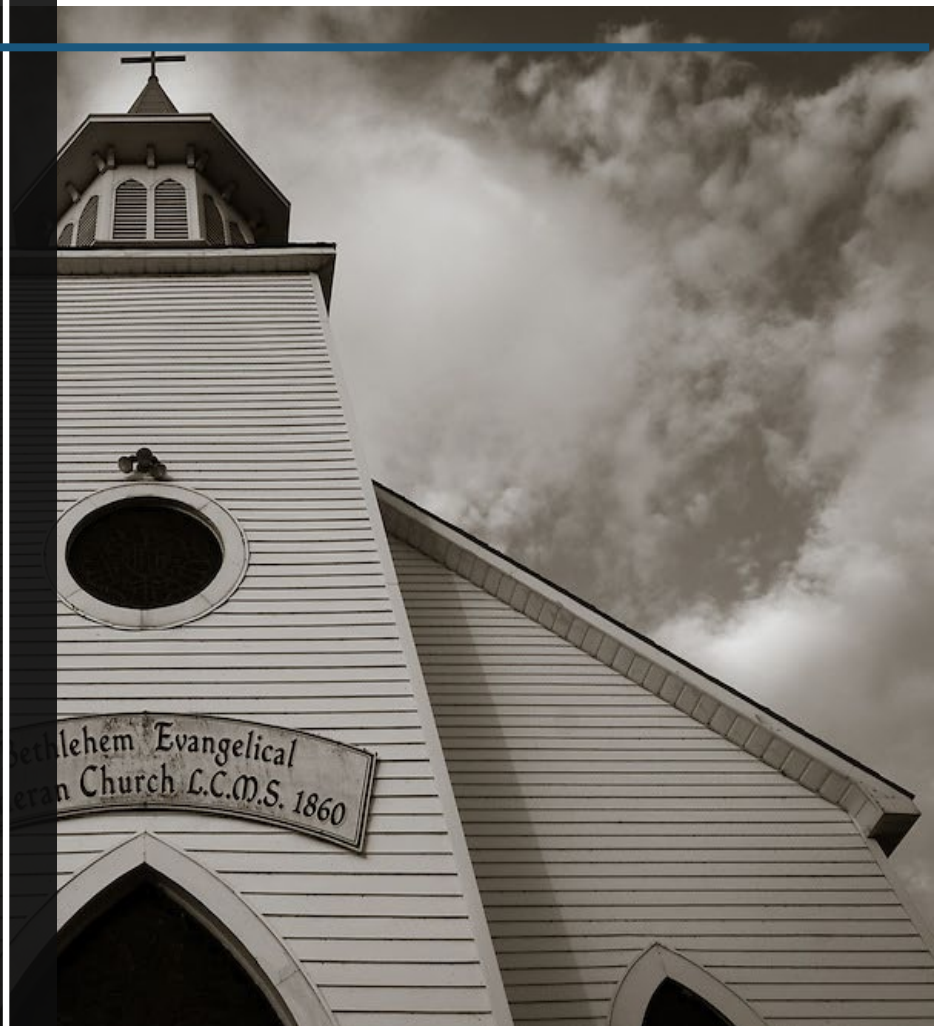




Ghost Town Gazette

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
William Penn, Texas

Vol. 4, No. 8, August 2026



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PG. 2

Returning to What Endures

PG. 3-4

Through the Church Liturgy: Amens

PG. 5

Heroes of Faith: Samuel, Prophet and Judge

PG. 6

Youth League Update

PG. 7-8

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

PG. 9-12

Updates & Information

**“You are not only
responsible for what
you say, but also for
what you do not say.”**

- Martin Luther

RETURNING TO WHAT ENDURES

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

August has a way of reminding us that life moves quickly. Summer vacations come to an end. Children return to school. Fall activities begin to fill the calendar. Schedules become crowded once again. Before long, the weeks seem to fly by.

Yet while our calendars change, Christ does not.

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). In a world that constantly changes, our Lord remains steadfast. His promises do not expire. His mercy does not diminish. His Gospel does not lose its power.

This is why the Church gathers week after week. We do not come because each Sunday offers something novel or entertaining. We gather because sinners continually need what Christ continually gives. Every Divine Service is Christ's gracious service to His people. Through His preached Word, He forgives sins. Through Holy Baptism, He has claimed us as His own. Through Holy Absolution, He speaks His forgiveness into our ears. Through His true Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar, He strengthens our faith and grants the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Our sinful flesh often tells us that there are more pressing matters. There is work to finish, games to attend, projects to complete, and countless distractions competing for our attention. Martha was busy with many things, but Jesus gently reminded her, "One thing is necessary" (Luke 10:42). Mary had chosen the better portion because she sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to His Word.

That remains true today.

The Christian life is not sustained by trying harder or becoming more disciplined. Faith is created and sustained by the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace. As Luther explains in the Small Catechism, the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth." He does this not through our efforts but through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

As another school year begins, let us be intentional about ordering our lives around the gifts Christ gives. Worship is not merely one activity among many. It is where heaven meets earth. It is where the crucified and risen Lord serves His people with His forgiveness. Likewise, make time for Bible study, family devotions, and prayer, not as works to earn God's favor, but as joyful opportunities to receive His gifts and grow in His Word.

No one knows what this month will bring. There will be joys and disappointments, celebrations and sorrows. But through them all, Christ remains faithful. The same Savior who bore your sins upon the cross continues to shepherd His flock. He still speaks peace to troubled consciences. He still welcomes weary sinners. He still feeds His people with the Bread of Life.

As the busyness of August begins, may we not lose sight of the one thing that is truly necessary. The world offers endless distractions, but only Christ gives what lasts forever.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

In Christ's Service and Yours,
Pastor Krieg





Why Did the Amens Disappear?

When later Lutheran hymnals were introduced, the practice of singing the Amens gradually became less common. This was not because the Church rejected the meaning of the Amen, nor because the practice was considered theologically incorrect. Rather, several practical and musical changes influenced the decision.

New hymnals sought to simplify the presentation of hymns, remove extra printed material, and adapt to changing musical practices. Many hymns that had traditionally included an Amen had it removed from the text or relegated to less frequent use. As congregations became accustomed to singing hymns without the final Amen, the practice slowly faded from many Lutheran churches.

The disappearance of the Amen was therefore more of a liturgical shift than a theological one. It was a change in practice, not a correction of an error.



THROUGH THE LITURGY:

AMENS

Why We Are Bringing Back the Singing of the Amens

Beginning this month, you may notice a small but meaningful change in our Divine Service: we will once again be singing the “Amens” at the conclusion of our hymns. For some, this may sound like a return to something familiar. For others, it may be a new practice. Either way, this change is not simply a matter of tradition or nostalgia. It is a recovery of a practice that has deep roots in the worship life of the Church and beautifully expresses what we are doing when we sing together.

The Amen at the End of Hymns in the Church's Tradition

For centuries, Christians have concluded their prayers, hymns, and doxologies with the word “Amen.” The word itself comes from Hebrew and means “truly,” “certainly,” or “so be it.” When we say “Amen,” we are not merely ending a prayer or song. We are confessing that what has been said is true and that we believe and trust in the promises of God.

In the Lutheran tradition, this was reflected in the use of sung Amens at the conclusion of hymns. The older Lutheran hymnal, *The Lutheran Hymnal* (TLH, 1941), included an Amen at the end of many hymns. The final phrase of the hymn would be followed by the congregation singing an Amen, often set to a simple musical cadence. This allowed the congregation to respond to the words they had just sung with their own confession of faith: “Yes, this is true. We believe these words. Let it be so.”

The Amen was not an additional verse of the hymn. It was the congregation's response to the hymn itself.

Why Bring the Amens Back?

There are several reasons why restoring the sung Amens is a fitting and beneficial practice for our congregation.

First, it reinforces that worship is not a performance but a confession. When we sing a hymn, we are not simply singing about God; we are speaking back to Him with the words He has given us. The Amen allows the entire congregation to affirm what has just been sung.

Second, the Amen teaches the faith. Our children and visitors hear that Christians do not merely sing words; they believe them. The Amen reminds us that the truths contained in our hymns are not poetry alone but the confession of the Church concerning Christ, His saving work, and His promises.

Third, the Amen connects us with generations of faithful Christians who sang these same words before us. Worship is not something we invent from week to week. We stand within the communion of saints, joining our voices with Christians who have confessed the faith before us and with those who will confess it after us.

Finally, the Amen directs our attention back to Christ. Every faithful hymn ultimately proclaims the Gospel: that Jesus Christ has come into the flesh, suffered and died for our sins, risen from the grave, and now gives us life through His Word and Sacraments. Our final "Amen" is our joyful confession that these things are true because Christ Himself is true.

As we restore this practice, we do so not because older practices are automatically better, but because this particular practice serves the purpose of Christian worship: proclaiming God's Word and strengthening the faith of His people. May our sung Amens be a simple but powerful confession:

Amen! Amen!
Yes, yes, it shall be so!



“Speak, Lord, for
your servant
hears.”

1 Samuel 3:9



HEROES OF FAITH: SAMUEL, PROPHET AND JUDGE

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 August 20th, the Church remembers Samuel, prophet and judge.

Samuel was a gift of God to His people during a time when Israel had grown distant from the Lord and “the word of the LORD was rare” (1 Samuel 3:1). Born in answer to his mother Hannah’s prayer, Samuel was dedicated to the Lord and served faithfully under Eli the priest at the tabernacle in Shiloh. As a young man, Samuel heard the voice of the Lord calling his name, and he was given the difficult task of proclaiming God’s Word faithfully. Throughout his life, Samuel served as a prophet, priestly servant, and judge over Israel. He called the people to repentance, reminding them that the Lord alone was their true King. Though he grieved over Israel’s rejection of God’s rule, Samuel trusted in the Lord’s promises and continued to proclaim His Word. We remember Samuel not because he was a perfect man, but because God worked through him to accomplish His purposes. Samuel’s life points us to the faithfulness of God, who continues to speak through His Word and lead His people to repentance and faith.



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, August 2nd, the Youth League will meet during Sunday school. We will discuss the next outing and prepare for our next fundraiser.

NEXT
MEETING

YOUTH LEAGUE UPDATE

The church is not just a place we come to on Sunday morning, it is a family where we grow together in Christ, encourage one another, and serve our neighbor. One of the great blessings of our congregation is our Youth League, where our young people have the opportunity to build friendships, study God's Word, serve the church, and enjoy fellowship with one another.

Youth League is more than just another activity on the calendar. It is a place where our youth can be strengthened in their faith, ask questions, learn from God's Word, and be reminded that they are part of Christ's Church. Through Bible studies, service projects, activities, and fellowship events, our youth have opportunities to grow together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

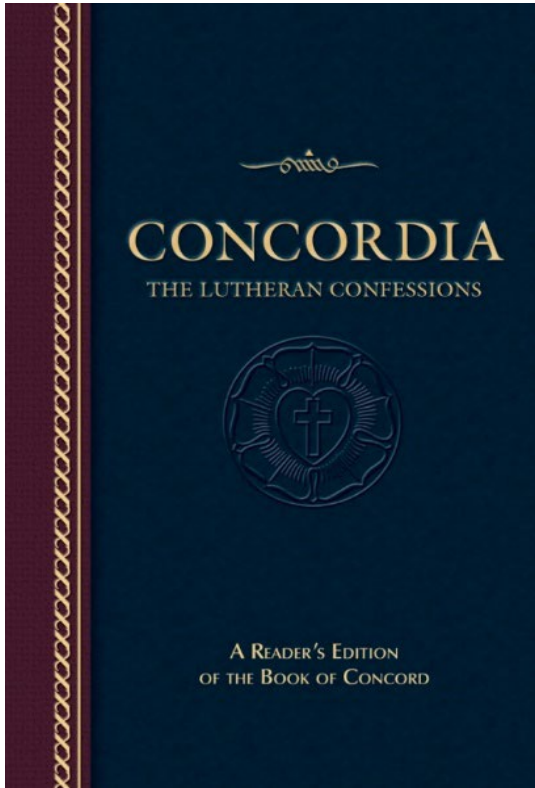
We encourage all of our youth to participate! Whether you have been involved for years or are joining us for the first time, there is a place for you. Come meet new friends, reconnect with old ones, and be part of a group that seeks to keep Christ at the center of our lives.

Parents, we encourage you to support and encourage your youth to be involved. The friendships and faith that are strengthened through Youth League can be a blessing that lasts far beyond their teenage years.

Watch the church calendar and announcements for upcoming Youth League events. We look forward to seeing you there as we grow together in Christ and serve Him with joy!

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS: ARTICLE XXIV

CONCERNING THE MASS (PART II)



We continue this month with our discussion of AC XXIV. Last month we looked at the Lord's Supper, the sacrifice of the Mass, and other areas of disagreement between the Lutherans and other churches. This time, we will take up the issue of changes to the order of the Mass, private Masses, and closed communion.

A point made in AC XXIV was the change in the Lutheran service, which incorporated German hymns for the congregation to sing. *"Nearly all the usual ceremonies are also preserved, except that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns. These have been added to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed for this reason alone, that the uneducated be taught what they need to know about Christ."* The reason for the change in the service was to help teach the people. For them to learn about the

Sacrament and the work of Christ, they had to understand what was being spoken. This is also a good reminder for us as we consider our own liturgy and worship practices. A return to a German- or Latin-language service might be nostalgic for some, but would not be helpful to the vast majority of those in this country who neither speak nor understand either language.

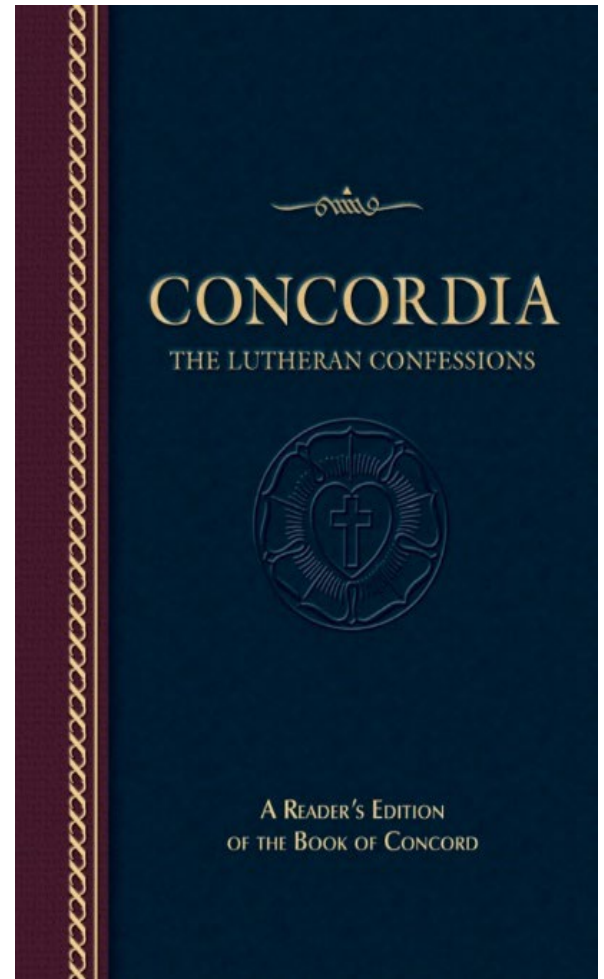
Another concern the Lutherans had was corruption and greed within the Church. They address this in connection with the practice of offering special Masses for a price: *"It is clear that for a long time the most public and serious complaint among all good people is that the Mass has been made base and profane by using it to gain filthy wealth [1 Timothy 3:3]. Everyone knows how great this abuse is in all the churches. They know what sort of men say Masses for a fee or an income, and how many celebrate these Masses contrary to canon law."* This practice was condemned and rightly abandoned in Lutheran churches.

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

They also speak of the importance of withholding communion from some people: *“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 is seen as judgmental by many in our society, but the practice of closed communion is for the benefit of, and out of love for, that person. For that reason, we commune only those who have publicly confessed their shared faith with us and show themselves to be worthy communicants.

Finally, AC XXIV discusses the topic of how often Communion should be offered and/or received. *“Because the Mass is for the purpose of giving the Sacrament, we have Communion every holy day, and if anyone desires the Sacrament, we also offer it on other days, when it is given to all who ask for it. This custom is not new in the Church.”* How often should the Lord's Supper be offered in our worship services? How often should it be received? Some have the practice of celebrating Communion once a year; some once a quarter; others once a month or twice a month; some every week; and still others every day. Christ did not give us a specific command; He simply said: *“This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me”* (1 Corinthians 11:25). While we do not want to take the blessings offered in this sacrament for granted, we should want to receive it frequently so that we may, through worthy reception, obtain those God-given blessings.

This sacrament was instituted *“so that those who use the Sacrament should remember, in faith, the benefits they receive through Christ and how their anxious consciences are cheered and comforted”*



MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

As of the last regularly scheduled voters' meeting on July 22nd.



Transfers In

Jason, Diana, and Maja Stephens transferred from Our Savior Lutheran, Houston, TX

Transfers Out

Claire and Lillian Berglund to St. Paul's Lutheran, Austin, TX



Peaceful Release

Billy Minar

PROMOTION SUNDAY, AUGUST 23RD

On Sunday, August 23, we will celebrate Promotion Sunday to wrap up our 2025-2026 Sunday School year. Awards will be presented to Sunday School students as they promote to the next grade level. A meal with ice cream will be served after the church service. RSVP by returning the insert in the bulletin to the basket located in the church narthex by Sunday, August 16. There will be water slide bounce houses for both younger and older kids following the meal sponsored by the Board of Education.

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN SCHÜTZENVEREIN

Bethlehem Men's Club Skeet Shoot & Breakfast Social

Friday, August 15

The Bethlehem Men's Club invites the men of Bethlehem Lutheran Church to join us for a morning of fellowship, breakfast, and friendly competition at our first-ever Skeet Shoot & Breakfast Social! Young men under the age of 18 are welcome to participate when accompanied by their father. For more details, see the church website or contact David Hodge.

RSVP

Please RSVP to David Hodge by:

Call or Text: 214-597-1646

Email: hodge.david@sbcglobal.net

We look forward to a morning of Christian fellowship, good food, and friendly competition with our Bethlehem family!



August 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Rosemary Thornton 7:30 – 8:30 AM Men's Club Breakfast, Bible Study, & Meeting
2 Emily Searle 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	3 Nolan Schroeder	4 Paul Richter, Ian Schroeder 7:00 – 7:30 PM LWML Social 7:30 – 8:30 PM LWML Meeting	5 Lyla Kettler, Ruth Schroeder	6 6:00 – 7:00 PM Elders' Meeting 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	7	8 Coby Boggan
9 Aliyah Ahasan, Rowdy Borgstedt 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Divine Service	10	11	12 Conner Gresham, Kinsley Haferkamp 8:30 – 9:30 AM Sonshine	13 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	14	15 7 AM – 12 PM Bethlehem Lutheran Schützenverein
16 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Divine Service 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM Confirmation Kickoff Meeting	17 Kelly Flisowski	18	19 Emilie Dieterich, Castiel Marshall	20 Cheri Janner 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	21 Billie Weidemann	22 Thelma Moore
23 Leona Dieterich, Benjamin Hermann, JR Kettler, Lily Kettler 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Divine Service 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM Promotion Sunday Lunch and Activities	24	25 Leslie Crabb	26 Landon Duckett, Amy Klussmann	27 Jeff Schwartz, Cathy Hodge 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	28 Cindy Schomburg	29 8:30 – 10:00 AM Sisters in Christ Bible Study
30 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Divine Service	31 Tessa Medve, Roy Schwartz					

August 2026

Birthdays

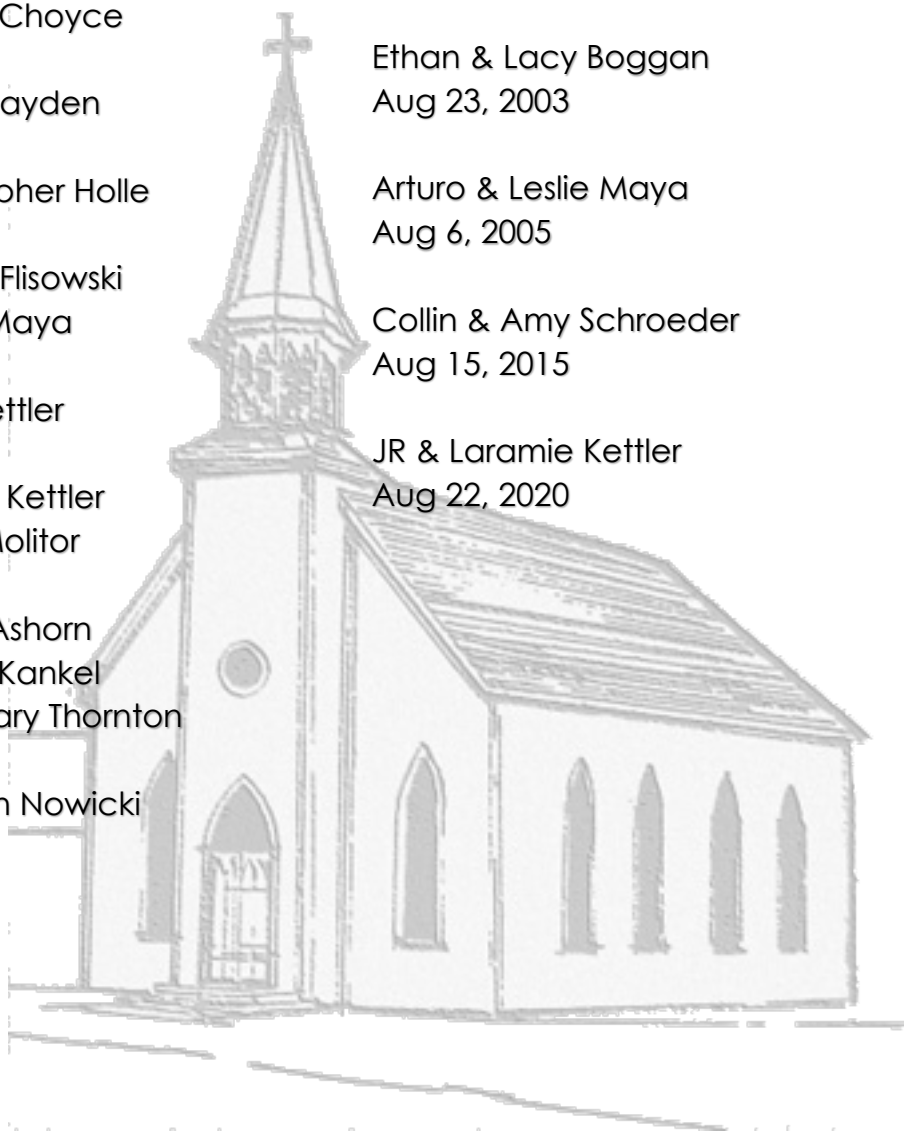
1 Rosemary Thornton
 2 Emily Searle
 3 Nolan Schroeder
 4 Paul Richter
 Ian Schroeder
 5 Lyla Kettler
 Ruth Schroeder
 8 Coby Boggan
 9 Aliyah Ahasan
 Rowdy Borgstedt
 12 Connor Gresham
 Kinsley Haferkamp
 17 Kelly Flisowski
 19 Emilie Dieterich
 20 Cheri Janner
 21 Billie Weidemann
 22 Thelma Moore
 23 Leona Dieterich
 Benjamin Hermann
 JR Kettler
 Lily Kettler
 25 Leslie Crabb
 26 Landon Duckett
 Amy Klussmann
 27 Cathy Hodge
 Jeffery Schwartz
 28 Cindy Schomburg
 31 Tessa Medve
 Roy Schwartz

Baptismal Birthdays

1 Brian Kimmel
 2 Joshua Ahasan
 3 David Boenker
 8 Chaylea Choyce
 Thelma Moore
 12 Hunter Choyce
 14 Lillian Hayden
 16 Christopher Holle
 19 Kaden Flisowski
 Kayla Maya
 20 Ruth Kettler
 21 Jessica Kettler
 Tricia Molitor
 28 Jason Ashorn
 Grace Kankel
 Rosemary Thornton
 29 Hannah Nowicki

Wedding Anniversaries

Melvin & Shirley Ashorn
 Aug 16, 1970
 Paul & Beverly Richter
 Aug 6, 1977
 Jeffery & Sharon Schwartz
 Aug 27, 1994
 Ethan & Lacy Boggan
 Aug 23, 2003
 Arturo & Leslie Maya
 Aug 6, 2005
 Collin & Amy Schroeder
 Aug 15, 2015
 JR & Laramie Kettler
 Aug 22, 2020



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH-
WILLIAM PENN

10202 FM 1935
BRENHAM, TX 77833
(979) 836-7303

WWW.BETHLEHEMWMPENN.ORG
OFFICE@BETHLEHEMWMPENN.ORG

PASTOR KRIEG
PASTORKRIEG@BETHLEHEMWMPENN.ORG

OFFICE HOURS: M-TH; 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

