



Bethel Blaze

JANUARY 2026

Sharing Christ's love with a big heart

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

In Person

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

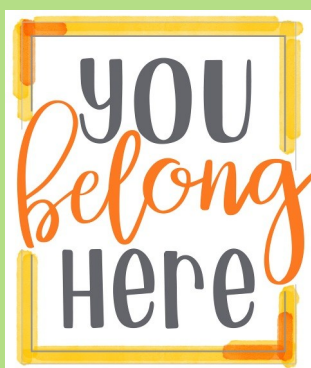
Online

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



UPDATED WELCOME STATEMENT

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) embraces reformation not just as something in the past, but part of how God guides and shapes God's people; we are "always being made new," to use a favorite ELCA tagline grounded in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

One way we do this as a congregation is to incorporate new wisdom into our guiding documents, whether our welcome statement or our constitution.

ReconcilingWorks, a Lutheran organization that helps ELCA faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions, created the Reconciling In Christ (RIC) program in 1983. Bethel received RIC recognition in February 2021. ReconcilingWorks updated their partner commitments to include working for racial equity and committing to anti-racism work. Sharing those values, Bethel's RIC team initiated work updating our welcome statement. The updated welcome statement was unanimously approved at the December 2025 council meeting.

Bethel Lutheran Church Shares Christ's Love with a Big Heart

Called by the gospel of Jesus Christ, Bethel celebrates all people as children of God.

We welcome you: your age, ability, and education;

your race, ethnicity, and citizenship;

your sexual orientation, gender identity and expression;

your relationship status and family structure.

Your uniqueness is valued.

Your questions and doubts have a home here.

Our work of welcome includes loving, forgiving, and serving one another;

advocating for those who are marginalized and oppressed;

striving for racial equity and economic justice;

and caring for the earth and all of God's creation.

We invite you to fully participate in the life of Bethel.





Pastor Ben Schori
(he/him)

pastor.ben@
bethelnorthfield.org
(preferred for non-urgent
communication)

office
507-786-8953

office hours
by appointment Monday,
Tuesday, Wednesday,
and Thursday

days off
Friday & Saturday

FIRESIDE REFLECTIONS

Happy New Year, Bethel!

I've mentioned before, I'm typically not one for New Year's resolutions. Perhaps I should be, as my friends and family could attest, I am most definitely a flawed person in constant need of reformation. So, this year, I'm going to look to Jesus for resolution inspiration.

This year, the Narrative Lectionary will lead us through the gospel of John over the next few months. And, on the first Sunday of this new year, the text will be John's version of Jesus calling his first disciples. In the story, John the Baptist sees Jesus and tells two of his disciples "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" And the two disciples leave John and begin following Jesus. They ask him where he is staying, and he answers, "Come and see." A simple statement with a much deeper meaning than its face value.

Jesus' invitation to "come and see" is feeling, this year, like an invitation to curiosity and openness. Today, it feels like our world and context is conditioning us to be absolute and rigid; at least, that's been my experience and observation. Perhaps Jesus' invitation to "come and see" what God is up to in our lives and in this world in 2026, could be an opportunity to aspire to be a bit more curious rather than judgmental and open to new ideas and perspectives rather than closed off to anything other than what we already know.

So, this New Year, I resolve to be more curious and open, to "come and see" the new things Jesus is calling me toward in this time and place. Will you join me in this resolution?

Peace & Blessings,
Pastor Ben

BeFRIENDERS

by Marci Groenewold

Do the losses you experienced last year make it difficult to move forward in the new year? Last year, I lost my last living uncle in January, and my last living aunt in November. My aunt was over 101 years old and my uncle was 91. As Christians, both lived long wonderful lives. Or were they? My uncle's barn burned. My aunt milked cows by hand while caring for her three small children when her husband was away working. Both moved to places where they didn't know anyone. My uncle bought a farm in another community while my aunt got married and moved to another state. Each lost a child. No, things were not always easy.

Both of them needed the support of **Healing** people-caring individuals who were **Here** for them, **Empathetic** toward them, **Accepting** of them, and who provided **Listening** ears especially during the times when the waves of grief seemed overwhelming. They relied on the **Healing** people in their lives to support them through their losses. When my uncle's barn burned, several neighboring farmers sold some of their grain and gave the proceeds to my uncle so he could rebuild his barn. For years my aunt, who was now blind, had a friend who stopped by each Friday to share a lunch and the news of the week. Like BeFriendsers, these **Healing** people came and helped dissipate the pain of their losses.

Now only memories of their resilience remain. C.S. Lewis has been credited with the following quote: "You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending." Surrounded with **Healing** people to help us, we can take responsibility for our future regardless of our circumstances or past mistakes, and create a better outcome filled with hope, new starts and personal transformations.

A fundamental BeFriender principle: "Caring not Curing."

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
MONDAY		6:30 pm	Resonance (Adult Bell Choir)
		12:00 pm	Bible Text Study @ The Vault
TUESDAY		9:45 am	Staff Meeting
WEDNESDAY		3:30 pm	Limitless
		5:45 pm	Bistro! Join us for a fresh cooked meal and fellowship. Suggested donation is \$5/person. Kid-friendly chicken strips and fries are available as alternatives. \$20/family cap.
		6:15 pm	Ring Forth Bell Choir
		6:30 pm	Confirmation J-Term (January 8, 15, and 29)
			Sitcom & Spirit
		7:00 pm	Hangtime <i>No Wednesday night choir in January—see Pop Up Choir announcement on page 5!</i>
THURSDAY		8:05 pm	Brio Bell Choir
		8:30 am	MoB (Men of Bethel) Rev. Keith Homstad is leading our study of <i>The Gospel of James</i> .
		9:30 am	FaB (Faith and Books) We are reading Sarah Bessey's <i>Out of Sorts</i> . 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

JAN 5	5:00 pm	Worship & Arts Action Team	JAN 14	5:30 pm	Congregational Life	
JAN 8	10:45 am	OWLs (Older Wiser Lutherans)	JAN 18	9:40 am	Budget Meeting	
	2:00 pm	Monthly Movie: <i>Life is Beautiful</i>		1:00 pm	Bethel @ Benedictine Chapel	
	5:45 pm	Active BeFriender Support	JAN 19	MLK, Jr Day— <i>Church Office Closed</i>		
	7:00 pm	Finance	JAN 20	12:00 pm	Lydia Circle	
JAN 10	9:00 am	Senior Quilting Day	JAN 21	5:30 pm	RIC (Reconciling in Christ)	
	11:00 am	Clara Halls Service <i>(Visitation at 10:00 am)</i>	JAN 22	10:30 am	Projects with a Purpose	
JAN 11	1:00 pm	Mentor Bowling	JAN 25	9:40 am	Annual Meeting	
JAN 13	 9:00 am	Quilting Group	JAN 27		9:00 am	Quilting Group
	 6:30 pm	Church Council				

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

Join us on Sunday from 9:40—10:25 am for Kids' Fellowship! Kids K-5 enjoy games with older youth in the center pod before one of the pastors leads a devotion. Scott and Elga Broughton close the fellowship time leading praise songs.

Bravo to all the Bethel kids who made the December 14 Christmas program so wonderful! Thank you so much to the volunteers who helped make the rehearsals and performances happen, and especially to Brenda Rabbe, who wrote and directed as a volunteer! Limitless resumes on Wednesday, January 7, with Kids' Fellowship and Sunday School resuming on Sunday, January 11. We will continue following the Narrative Lectionary with the stories of Jesus in the gospel of John.

Youth Ministry

Highlights for January...

1. **6th—8th Graders** are once again partnering with other local churches for **JTerm!** All four Wednesdays this month students will be knitting, doing art, discussing a movie, learning about other religions and more!
2. **9th Grade and Mentor Bowling** is **Sunday, January 11 from 1:00—3:00 pm at Flaherty Lanes.**
9th graders, don't forget to register here: <https://bethelnorthfield.breezechms.com/form/f3cb62331240>
3. **Seniors! Quilt packets are due January 15!** Please turn them in to the front office or give them to Kristi.
4. **Quilting Days** are January 10 and April 11 from 9:00 am—4:00 pm in the CLC. Graduating seniors, family members, experienced quilters and newbies are invited to join us as we prepare quilts to celebrate these young people.

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, January 4 @ 9:40 am



Tim Mahr's *Gabriel*, oil on canvas, 2025.

Bethel Presents is now 9:40 am—10:25 am on Sunday

In retirement, Tim Mahr, renowned composer and conductor, has begun exploring painting. On January 4, come learn about his creative process and the art that will be featured in our Narthex gallery during the Time After Epiphany.



Sunday, January 11 @ 9:40 am

Faith in Democracy

ISAIAH

Rev. Todd Lippert served as senior pastor of First United Church of Christ in Northfield and as a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives

from 2019 to 2022. Today, he helps others moved by faith to act for justice as the lead for ISAIAH's Rural Organizing Project. Join us on January 11 to learn about the Path to Palm Sunday—an effort to unite Christians to confront the threat of authoritarianism and to embody gospel values of love and service by advocating for social justice, democracy, and shared values.



NEW: SITCOM & SPIRIT**New Wednesday Night Offering: Sitcom & Spirit**

Want to linger after Bistro? Never know what to do while your child is in confirmation? Have a partner who wants to stay for choir, but you're not a singer? This January, we are piloting a new post-Bistro program: Sitcom & Spirit. We will watch a half-hour episode of the television series *One Day at a Time* (2017-2021 reboot), and then have a half-hour talk about connections to our lives and faith. Join us in the East Pod on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm (paralleling the confirmation J-term schedule; if we continue the program in February, it will move to the regular 7:00 pm time.)

Following three generations of the same Cuban-American family (a newly divorced former military mother, her teenage daughter and tween son, and her old-school mother), *One Day at a Time* uses humor to explore serious, real-life family and social issues, blending laughs and heart. It is rated TV-PG. While sometimes handling mature subject matters, it is praised for its educational value, great messages, and positive role models.

starts Wednesday, January 7 @ 6:30 pm

NEW: SUNDAY ADULT BIBLE STUDY

The Bible Project (bibleproject.com) seeks to present complex biblical themes in an approachable way, and has created a series of short, visual overviews of the books of the Bible and how they are connected.



This new class between worship services will use these as a jumping off point for discussion!

starts Sunday, January 4 @ 9:40 am

BUDGET & ANNUAL MEETING

Tending to our organization helps ensure we act as a coordinated body of Christ. Each January, as a congregation, we formally meet to consider everything from finances to the insights from committees and program staff.

January 18 — Budget Meeting

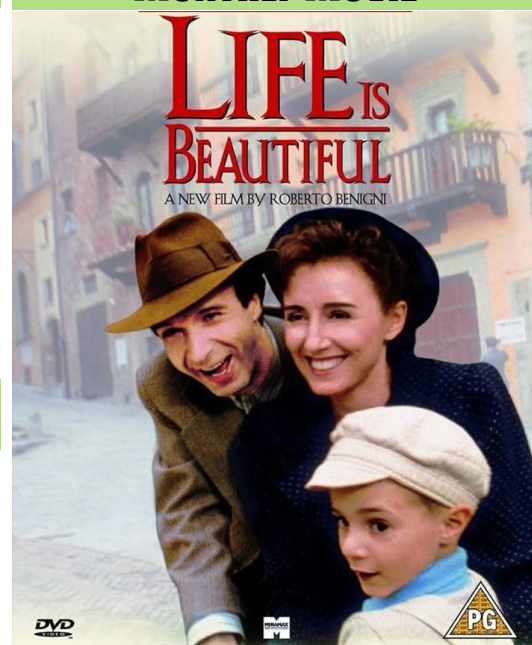
9:40 am in the Sanctuary

To allow for a careful review of our finances, we offer a Budget Meeting the week before the Annual Meeting. Our wonderful treasurer, Barb Fowler, will present the 2025 numbers and the proposed budget for 2026.

January 25 — Annual Meeting

9:40 am in the Sanctuary

As a congregation, we will receive 2025 reports and look together at the year ahead. Be physically present to vote on the 2026 budget, new council members, and to update the constitution!

MONTHLY MOVIE

Thursday, January 8 @ 2:00 pm

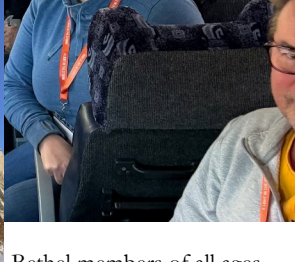
Join us for one of Pope Leo's favorite movies!

POP UP CHOIR!

This is your chance to find out how great it is to sing in the Bethel Church Choir!

In January, the choir rehearses their anthem during the 30 min prior to the service they are singing at. Come join in the fun!

BETHEL BRIGHT LIGHTS



Bethel members of all ages share their light in the wider community—whether traveling up to the Minneapolis Convention Center for anti-authoritarianism training and to organize around shared values at the “A Light in the Storm” event, lending their talents to community choirs, or bringing the wisdom of *Winnie the Pooh* to life.



Each worship service had its own cast for the Children’s Christmas Program, which imagined God directing the angel Gabriel to help Mary say “let it be with me according to your word,” by showing her visions of how God had worked with God’s people in the past and would help her in her calling.



Vignettes included Moses and the burning bush, the parting of the Red Sea ...



... (more scenes from the Children's Christmas Program) the surprise of the prophet Samuel anointing Jesse's youngest son, and David going on to bravely face Goliath. Mary was also shown how an angel would reassure Joseph, and even how the magi would come visit. Below: the 2025 Hangtime Christmas Party!



IMMIGRATION TEAM SPOTLIGHT: CAC'S NEIGHBORS SUPPORTING NEIGHBORS FUND

As many of you are aware, ICE has been active in Northfield, causing significant distress. What can we do to help? Give to the Neighbors Supporting Neighbors Fund at the CAC. This specific fund helps immigrants in our community with costs, from legal fees to the 25-cent-a-minute phone calls to detained relatives. This fund will be honored by the Northfield Human Rights Commission at the MLK, Jr day celebration at NHS on January 19 at 6 PM. Donations to the fund can be made online via CAC at: <https://communityactioncenter.org/donate/> and specify NSN in the comments, OR send a check to the CAC with NSN noted on it. Also, please continue to pray, show up at rallies in support of neighbors and look for GoFundMe accounts to support specific Northfield families.



FINANCIAL NOTES from Barb Fowler, Financial Officer

Financial information:

Thank you for all you give to Bethel and beyond!

YTD as of Nov 30, 2025

Revenue: \$815,887

Expenses -894,684

Total \$ (78,797)

Preliminary numbers show that our total giving to Benevolences in 2025 has exceeded the total in 2024, proving again that Bethel is a very generous community.

The 2025 financials and the 2026 budget request will be presented at the **Budget Meeting on January 18**. Please plan to attend.

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*.



Bethel Lutheran Church
1321 North Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057

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Phone: 507-786-6674

Web: www.bethelnorthfield.org

www.facebook.com/bethellutheran

Email: bethel@bethelnorthfield.org

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Return Service Requested

Congratulations to our Endowment Grant Recipients!

RIC (Reconciling in Christ) Committee, Rosemarie Lewis Supports the start-up of PRISM, a multi-racial, multi-faith statewide community organizing for LGBTQ+ equality in every part of Minnesota. Learn more on our RIC Sunday, February 9, 2026.

Bethel Grief Support Group, Karen Mader Provides *Journeying through Grief* booklets and more for participants.

Bethel Emerging Adults, Sebastian Jenkinson Supports two Summer 2026 events to reengage and support emerging adults connected to Bethel.

Bethel Trustee, Blair Fowler Purchases a lift to help the Worship & Arts Action team safely place the sanctuary banners and paraments.

Projects with a Purpose, Lois Cary & Linda Zolnosky Purchases comfortable chairs (coordinated with those in the welcome area) for the new adult project room (Room 41A & B, just off the East Pod). A sewing machine, ironing equipment, and crafting supplies have already been donated. Project examples: knitting prayer shawls, quilting for Lutheran World Relief, creating essential supply bags for persons who are unhoused, etc.

Education Department Minnesota Correctional Facility—Faribault (MCF-FRB), Justine Hill

Justine teaches Adult Basic Education and is creating new elective courses for inmates at MCF-FRB to teach men about children's literature and parenting. These funds will help her build a culturally diverse classroom library.

This Is Me, Holly Schoenbauer Supports a fledgling non-profit in its mission to promote confidence, dignity and a positive self-worth in youth in foster care.

Bethel Members Having Fun, Lu Lindstrom Funds will subsidize four fellowship outings with transportation.

ENDOWMENT GRANTS!