Evangelisch Lutherische Bethel Kirche
Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church

Winter, 2026

THE GREAT LESSON

Dear Bethel family,

In recent days, sadly, many funerals have taken place in our congregation. Some of our brothers and sisters in the faith have left us and departed from this world. For us, this is a time of sorrow, because we feel the absence of those who have gone. Yet for our brothers and sisters who have departed, this is a moment of great joy, for they are now in eternal life, living with God, in paradise, which we also call heaven.

Have you ever wondered what heaven is like? This is a question I hear quite often in Confirmation classes. Children try to imagine what heaven is like. And I am sure that adults also try to imagine what heaven is like.

Once, a little girl was sitting with her father, talking. As they talked, seated on the porch of their house, they watched the stars. The father was teaching his daughter about the constellations, planets, and meteors, the moon and its phases. It was a beautiful moment of family fellowship on a lovely summer night.

Suddenly the girl exclaimed, “Dad, if we’re looking at heaven from the wrong side and it’s already so beautiful, just imagine what it’s like from the right side.” The father didn’t understand and asked, “What do you mean, the wrong side of heaven?” She replied, “Yes, Dad. We’re looking at the outside wall. But one day we’ll go to the other side, and we’ll see the inside, where Grandpa and Grandma are, where Jesus is. If heaven is already beautiful from here, just think how it must be on the inside!” That father was deeply moved by his daughter’s words. He was the one teaching, but he received the greatest lesson.

Of course, heaven is not exactly a physical place in the way many people imagine. It goes beyond what we can describe. We say that heaven is above us and hell is below us to illustrate the complete opposite between heaven and hell, and also to help us understand that God is above us. This idea became much stronger during the medieval period, when people could not read and did not know the Bible very well. To simplify teaching, it was said that eternal paradise was in heaven and hell was beneath the earth, so people could clearly understand the difference between good and evil.

The Bible actually speaks of a place called “Sheol,” or the realm of the dead. It is a spiritual and supernatural place, where there is a separation between the condemned in hell and the saved in paradise, with a great chasm between them. No one can cross from one side to the other. It is the realm where both the saved and the condemned await the final judgment: those in hell and those in paradise. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus illustrates this teaching well (you can read it in Luke 16:19–31).

But that little girl showed a remarkable depth of faith. She did not have complex theological explanations or deep knowledge. She spoke from what she believed, from how she imagined it would be to be with Jesus. Beyond the certainty of eternal life, she also had certainty about the splendour of what is to come. If here on earth, where there are problems, difficulties, illness, sorrow, and death, we can already see such beautiful things in God’s creation that take our breath away, how much more splendid will be the life that Jesus has prepared for each one who believes in him. Therefore, no matter how much we try to understand or explain heaven, it will be far better than we can imagine. Perhaps that is why there are not so many details about heaven in the Bible: because maybe there are not enough words in our language to describe what we have never experienced in this world: full and eternal perfection.

Jesus says in John 14:1–4: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, so that you also may be where I am. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

We may not know exactly where heaven is or what it is like. But we know where we are going. We know that we are going to where Jesus is, where he has gone to prepare a place for us. And we do not even need a map or GPS to get there. The Bible teaches that it is through faith in Christ that, at the end of life in this world, we are carried by the angels to God the Father. Therefore, we can have the same certainty as that little girl talking with her father, even without fully understanding. It is so good and so beautiful that, even when we imagine the best thing in the world, God prepares something far better for us. May we be comforted by this. And may the Lord keep us firm in the faith until the end, always with the certainty of eternal life.

Amen

Church Council

Blessings to everyone.

It has been a long and challenging winter season, and I trust that each of you is managing well. Although more cold and snow are still ahead, the Lenten season — and the joy of Easter — are already on the horizon.

One of the key pillars of Lent is almsgiving: offering our time, talents, and treasures. With this in mind, I encourage all members of the congregation to prayerfully consider how you might share your gifts with Bethel.

On March 8, 2026, we will hold a Voters' Meeting, during which the election of the Church Council will take place. Several members have already graciously agreed to stand for election, and we are deeply grateful for their willingness. Additional candidates are always welcome whether for this year or in the future.

We also welcome volunteers who may wish to serve on committees or offer occasional assistance to support the work of our council members. As we enter this season of reflection, I invite you to consider how you might contribute to the life of our church community. If you feel called to help, please reach out to me, Pastor Davi, or any of our council members.

God bless. Jim Gardiner, Council Chairperson

Lenten Calendar

- **Ash Wednesday: February 18, 2026**
- **First Sunday in Lent: February 22, 2026**
- **Second Sunday in Lent: March 1, 2026**
- **Third Sunday in Lent: March 8, 2026**
- **Fourth Sunday in Lent: March 15, 2026**
- **Fifth Sunday in Lent: March 22, 2026**
- **Palm Sunday: March 29, 2026**
- **Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday): April 2, 2026**
- **Good Friday: April 3, 2026**
- **Holy Saturday: April 4, 2026**
- **Easter Sunday: April 5, 2026**

Palm Sunday Service - 10 a.m.
Seder Meal: Will be held during Holy Week. Stay tuned for exact date and details
Good Friday Service - !0 a.m. with Communion
Easter Sunday Service - 10 a.m.

Easter Brunch will begin at 8:30 a.m. before the Service and will continue afterward in the Auditorium. Please join us!

Elders Message February 2026

Stay warm. Walk carefully outside. Come to church if you are able to do so. Look forward to the spring days that will arrive either sooner or later. Pray for your fellow members and your Pastor.

I want to repeat a message from our Chairman, Jim, about the importance of the March 8 th Voters Meeting. Five, or possibly more, Bethel members will be voted or acclaimed to positions on church council. This is extremely important as the council has been running short the last couple of years. A big thank you to those voting members that have agreed to serve,

Council decided last fall to follow our constitution as closely as possible by accepting new council members after the annual meeting (first meeting in the New Year) on March 8, 2026. Everyone, please attend the meeting after church service.

Final thoughts:
- Please keep the office informed of any and all membership changes, address changes, phone numbers, illness, shut in status. **We can not help if we do not know.**
- *Please pick up your donation envelopes* from the mailboxes (adjacent to the Narthax)
- ***Tax Receipts are now ready*** and can be picked up at Sunday Service on Feb. 8 & 15. The remainder will be mailed out. Feb 16.

Seniors

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe we are nearing the Lenten Season. Only a short while ago did we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On December 17th, 48 Seniors came together for a delicious Hot Turkey Lunch, catered by Chef Katie, grand- daughter of Edith Morell. After lunch, we enjoyed a beautiful program of poems and music under the direction of Nellie Scholtes.

For the New Year, our theme is learning about the Church Calendar Year. In January, we started with Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. On February 18th, we will get together again and focus on Lent. In March, the focus will be The Holy Week and Easter.

All those aged 65+ are welcomed to join us for an afternoon of fellowship followed by Kaffee und Kuchen each third Wednesday of the month.
(with the exception of some date changes at various times throughout the year).

Harry & Ingrid

Choirs at Bethel Nellie Scholtes

Our Frauenchor is back in full swing after a much deserved winter break the month of January. That said, they did sing for the Epiphany Circuit Service Bethel hosted on Jan. 6. The Praise Choir and Brass also graced that service with meaningful musical selections.

Our Frauenchor ladies always sing both the English and German Services the first Sunday of every month. On behalf of the congregation I want to thank them for their dedication and fortitude. They also sing one more Sunday each month.

Our Praise Choir is a rock solid group of ladies who even arrived at rehearsal on a very snowy Thursday evening in January. Our group had no desire to cancel and they were then able and ready to grace our Sun. Jan. 18th Service with confident and beautiful singing. The Praise Choir continues to sing on the 3rd Sunday of each month. The Band aims to play and sing on the 4th Sunday of each month.

We all look forward to Easter when all music groups including Brass will be participating in our very joyful and festive Easter Service.

"Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song." Psalm 95 v. 1-2

Gathering Youth 2026

We had a youth gathering in our congregation on January 10. Thirteen young people were able to join us on that day. We sang many songs, studied God's Word, played games, made pizza, and strengthened our bonds of fellowship.

We are grateful to all the volunteers who helped make this day possible. We hope to hold more events like this in the near future. God bless you all. Stay tuned for dates.

God Bless you all, Pastor Davi Schmidt

Sunday School at Bethel Bettina Cook

A new year has begun! We are enjoying the one-room approach in Room A, with plenty of sunshine beaming through our window.

Presently we have 5 students who are regulars, with a few dropping in when at church. Thanks to our fill-in teachers, Isabella and Bruna, for helping out when needed.

We are using the "Sparks" Bible for our story read altogether, then we break off into two groups where the older kids read out loud from the Bible. We complete a leaflet then a craft which gives much enjoyment to all.

We reunite with parents during the last song, or when communion begins. It is important that the kids start and end church together with their families for they too, are part of the body of Christ!

We would love to have more children visit our small but mighty Sunday school. Please reach our to your friends with kids and extend an invitation to join us for worship, and Sunday School.

Bethel Ladies Missionary League

A group of ladies met in October to discuss the reinstatement of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

A Spring meeting date will be in the bulletin. All are welcome to attend.