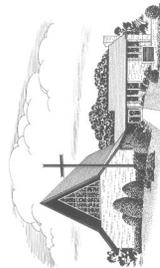


Bethesda Lutheran Church  
301 West South Street  
Morrison, IL 61270

\*Return Service Requested

**Sunday Worship Service -**  
9:00AM Holy Communion celebrated weekly  
Fellowship Hour immediately following the  
worship service

**Sunday School — 10:15AM**  
\*NO SUNDAY SCHOOL ON FEB. 19



YOU ARE  
LOVED

# Bethesda Bits

February 2026

## Bethesda Lutheran Church

301 W. South Street, Morrison, IL 61270

Office #: (815) 772-4896

✉ **Church Office E-mail:** [bethesdalc@frontiernet.net](mailto:bethesdalc@frontiernet.net)

★ **Website:** [bethesdalutheranmorrison.org](http://bethesdalutheranmorrison.org)

📍 **Find us on Facebook:** *Bethesda Lutheran Church, Morrison, Il*



## The Upside-Down Blessing

The Beatitudes are more than poetic lines from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. They're a radical redefinition of what it means to be blessed. The Greek word *makarios* doesn't just mean "happy." It describes a deep, untouchable joy that pain, loss or hardship cannot erase. As scholar William Barclay wrote, it is "the joy which shines through tears."

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Jesus flips the world's idea of success upside down. The "blessed" aren't the powerful or prosperous, but the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek and the merciful. Imagine reading them as "Congratulations, you who feel broken, God's kingdom belongs to you!" His words assure us that, even in suffering, we stand in God's favor.

Real blessing isn't about shiny possessions or smooth sailing. It's the steady, saving presence of God — a life preserver tossed to us when we're struggling to stay afloat. And it's not just an individual promise. Jesus spoke these blessings to a community, a we more than a me. Together, as the body of Christ, we find comfort, strength and the courage to live with joy that nothing in life or death can take away.

— *Adapted from HomileticsOnline.com*



**NI SYNOD CONGREGATIONAL  
RESOURCING EVENT  
SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2026  
SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
(DIXON, IL)**

The theme for 2026 is “*Going Deeper*”. We will be focusing on asking the hard questions that will help us grow in faith and service. The keynote speaker is Pastor Skow-Anderson, a retired ELCA pastor who served in parish ministry across Minnesota before becoming the Bishop of the NW Synod of Wisconsin (2018-2024). With a passion for congregational vitality, innovation, and mentoring, she has also worked in Spanish language ministries and Fresh Expressions of the Church. The Congregational Life Committee has also gathered workshop leaders from across our synod to share about worship, education, leadership, and outreach. These workshops will be experiential and a time for sharing resources. The full list of workshops are available on the website (*see below*). The college building that is handicap accessible. On the first floor, we will gather for registration in Dillon Mall. Lunch will be in the cafeteria on the second floor. Workshops will be held in classrooms on the first and second floors. There are stairs and elevators to access all floors. The cafeteria has small tables of 4 seats each for close conversations.

The registration fee of \$40 covers breakfast treats, coffee & lunch. Registrations is OPEN and must be made online with a credit card.

- **Go to:** <https://nisynod.org/programs/cre>
- **If you need help, please contact Deb at the Bethesda church office. If you pay your fee with your own card when you register, please keep your receipt and turn it in to the church office for reimbursement.**
- **FYI: Registration closes two weeks prior to the event, so be sure to register ASAP!**



**LENT BEGINS ON ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

Information about the Wednesday evening worship & soup suppers here at Bethesda is on page 9. In addition, be on the lookout for information about this year’s MMC noon Lenten Luncheon! They will once again gather at Noon for a brief Lenten message and a free simple meal. Schedule is “TBA.”



Below is the listing of our current Church Council members, including those elected at the annual meeting on Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026. They have not yet elected officers nor assigned Council liaisons for the various committees. We will share that info in the next issue of the Bethesda Bits. Installation of all Council members for the coming year will take place on Sunday, February 15, 2026, at the 9:00 a.m. worship service. The first Church Council meeting with the newly seated members will take place on Monday, February 9, 2026 at 6:00PM. Your Council members are:

- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Diane Engelkins (2027)      | Angie Hanson (2028)     |
| @Sunny Porter (2027)        | Nancy Woehl (2028)      |
| Tracy O’Shea (2027)         | @Monica Anderson (2029) |
| MaryEllen Brackemyer (2027) | Kate Rambo (2029)       |
| Eric Benson (2028)          | Dawn Bush (2029)        |

⇒ \* indicates serving a 1 yr. term    ⇒ # indicates newly elected for 3 yr. term  
 ⇒ + indicates serving a 2 yr. term    ⇒ @ indicates serving a 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive 3 yr. term

The new officers and Church Council committee liaisons will be shared in the March issue of the “Bits.” Members are encouraged to be present at worship on the date of the installation service so that we may recognize them for their willingness to serve and offer our prayers for them in the coming year.

Also elected to serve on other committees were as follows:

- Auditing Committee: LuEllen Lee, Diane Cavosie (2028)
- Nominating Committee: Sunny Porter, Monica Anderson (2028)
- Church Treasurer: Marcia Haag
- Financial Secretary: Al Janicek

**CHURCH DIRECTORY**

**The new 2026 church directory/yearbooks have been updated and are available at the church. Feel free to stop by the church office any time during office hours or pick one up when you attend worship on Sunday morning. If you wish to have one delivered to you, please let us know and we will see one gets dropped off or sent to you in the mail.**



## Scholarship Fund

If you are planning to attend (or continue) a higher education in college next fall, be sure and fill out an application for our Bethesda Scholarship. Copies of the newly revised application and guidelines can be picked up from the table by the front door. A copy of the application along with the rules/guidelines can also be sent out as an email attachment online. If you would like a copy, please send a request by email to the church office.

Any active member of Bethesda Lutheran Church is encouraged to apply, per the simple guidelines stated on the form. Applications are to be filled in fully by the applicant, and returned to the church office by or before April 1, 2025 (\*no exceptions).

The scholarship will then be awarded and presented during the worship service on the last Sunday of April or first Sunday of May, corresponding with Honors night at the high school. Per the guidelines, the amount will be the minimum amount allowance of \$500.00.

—The Scholarship Committee



## Stop, Look and Listen

Why should we observe Lent?

We observe Lent because it causes us to STOP. Lent says, “Stop and rest awhile.” Lent says, “Stop doing wrong.”

We observe Lent because it tells us to LOOK. Look inward for an honest self-examination. Look upward to see the cross of Christ with healing and love. Look forward to the hope of the Resurrection.

We observe Lent because it tells us to LISTEN. Listen to the words of Christ. Listen to the voice of God. Listen to the winds of the Spirit of God.

Stop, look and listen. These three words are important for our safety in travel, but they may also be helpful for our journey through the days of Lent.

## Council Highlights —

January 12, 2026

Meeting called to order by President Eric Benson. Devotions led by Tracy. Agenda accepted after one change and minutes from Dec. meeting accepted. There was one visitor in attendance. Reviewed Budget for 2026.

### Correspondence:

- Letter from NI Synod Assembly – we are allowed two members and youth to vote – June 12 & 13 at Augustana in Rock island

### Old Business –

- Constitution Tracy to reach out to synod again
- Need prioritized list from Property committee — re: mold and other issues. Tracy will reach out for quotes to remove and treat; Window – Eric to call B & D; Door; Insurance feedback repairs – Eric to provide list to council – list was not available at meeting; Tree touching roof, Tracy to reach out for quote
- D-Fib Class – discuss in Feb (set up for ~April)

### Financial Reports

- CSB – 9 month CD maturing – Eric will call bank to get rates and duration and advise Al how to roll (*with highest rate regardless of term*)
- FNB – hold for Feb
- Budget reviewed: Discussion

around increase office supplies: Discussion regarding Church Secretary’s pay

### Treasurer Report

Reviewed – no questions or issues

\*Motion to accept financial reports with Adjustment to budget (MC)

### Other New Business

- Security concern brought up from a congregation member re: doors locked during service. No action at this time.
- Committees and members—some committees are experiencing challenges accomplishing and executing as they desire – too few members, inability to actively participate for various reasons. Discussion re: how time and talent sheets are handled. (*More information will be gathered and discussion continue at next meeting.*)
- Council Meeting night – do we need to change night/time. Tabled until Feb.

### Committee/group reports

- All committee reports received were reviewed – no actions nor concerns. Accepted (MC)

### Announcements

- Next meeting Monday, Feb. 9
  - Eric to lead devotions
- Meeting adjourned with the Lord’s Prayer.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Tracy O’Shea, Secretary



**Those battling cancer:**

- ◆ Kathy Nielsen
- ◆ Jake Nienhouse
- ◆ Jennifer Bramm-Patten
- ◆ Kellie Kohl
- ◆ Ben Logan
- ◆ Arnie Schroeder
- ◆ Deb Szabo
- ◆ TJ Hood
- ◆ Catherine Phelps
- ◆ Craig Stralow
- ◆ Vern Schroeder

**Others in need of healing:**

- ◆ Alan Geerts
- ◆ Natalie Buck
- ◆ Jeg Weets
- ◆ Larry Geerts
- ◆ Ellie Nienhouse
- ◆ Mark Schuler
- ◆ Janice Mussmann
- ◆ Sandy Crouse
- ◆ Ron Wiersema
- ◆ Jamie O'Shea
- ◆ Tonya Leatherman
- ◆ Gavin Green
- ◆ Alexandria Shields
- ◆ Dylan Wescott
- ◆ Jentry Smith
- ◆ Jim Anderson
- ◆ Judy Werner
- ◆ Hope McClennan
- ◆ Connie Swanson-DeSpain
- ◆ Everett Pannier
- ◆ Lori Madden
- ◆ Staci Isley
- ◆ For all military personnel, stateside or abroad

*\*If you or a loved one is in need of prayer support, please call the church office. Names will not be listed without consent.*

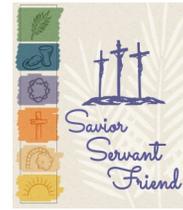


**Spring Cleaning for the Soul**

Ash Wednesday is February 18, 2026, and it marks the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. Lent hints of spring, a time when the earth begins to awaken from a winter's nap, and new growth bursts forth all about us.

More personally, it is an opportunity to enter into a springtime for our spirit. For centuries Christians have used the 40 days of Lent to seek spiritual growth. Sincere repentance, a changing of heart, casting off old sinful practices and seeking to commune with our creator help us go in the right direction. Spending serious time in silence and prayer focuses our attention. Reading spiritual literature, becoming more knowledgeable about the New Testament, meeting in small groups with other Christians to share personal stories of faith can all be immensely stimulating. Joining with others to serve the helpless and hopeless can strengthen our spiritual life.

Lent is a time to let God do "spring cleaning" within us. It's our opportunity to allow God to help us toss out the "stuff" that hinders us and then freshen up the "new creature" we are meant to be as followers of Christ.



Lent provides us with a perfect chance to explore these extraordinary attributes of our **SAVIOR, SERVANT & FRIEND**, Jesus. It is a time to marvel at the many blessings we received when he laid down his life for us on the cross and then rose victorious from the grave.

Each service in this series dwells upon a different aspect of our greatest Friend and what each characteristic means to us as his followers. The schedule and topic of each messages is as follows:

- † **FEB. 25 • WEEK 1 • HEALER:** Jesus heals us when we are wounded and weakened by sin.
- † **MAR. 4 • WEEK 2 • LISTENER:** Jesus listens to us like no other and answers our questions and concerns.
- † **MAR. 11 • WEEK 3 • ENCOURAGER:** Jesus encourages us in our faith to live our lives for him.
- † **MAR. 18 • WEEK 4 • PROTECTOR:** Jesus protects us from the devil and from danger and keeps us safe in him.
- † **MAR. 25 • WEEK 5 • COMFORTER:** Jesus comforts us in struggles and sorrows so that we might find rest in his promises.

Some of our Bethesda members have already volunteered to share the messages from this very special series at our mid-week worship services every week at 7:00 p.m. beginning Wednesday, February 25. We also take a few moments just prior to beginning of worship, and sing a couple hymns, requested by members of the assembly, to prepare us for worship. Won't you join us? All are welcome—come as you are—and please, bring a friend!



**SOUP/SANDWICH SUPPERS BEGIN FEB. 25!**

Prior to the mid-week Lenten worship services on Wednesday evenings, there will be soup & sandwich supper held in the lower level beginning at 6:00PM. Volunteers are needed to sign up to bring soup, and those who attend are asked to bring sandwiches to share.

A sign-up sheet is on the table by the front door at the church. If you have any questions about the worship schedule or the suppers, please feel free to contact the church office.



## Birthdays

- 1 Vicki Hood
- 2 Brandon Belt
- 4 Jaxon Hartman  
Kathy Janicek  
Suzanne Walaszek  
Ashley Barnett
- 6 Shirley Kelly  
Caroline Tautkus
- 9 Olivia Nielsen
- 12 Monica Swanstrom
- 15 Dave Cook
- 19 Janelle Dykstra
- 20 Bob Stone
- 22 Dustin Belt
- 24 Ethan Garcia
- 25 Everett Pannier  
Dalton Gray
- 28 Sue Costello  
Landri Harmon



## Anniversaries

- 4 Vern & Carol Schroeder (71)
- 14 Terry & Sue Costello
- 18 Jay & Laurie Green
- 19 Paul & Jamie Harmon
- 21 Andrew & Tristan Zahnle
- 23 (Jeffery) & Jennah Cody

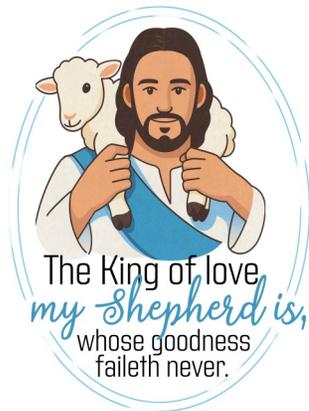
## The Love God Desires

God's love is never meant to stop with us; it's meant to flow through us. When we love others, we reflect his very heart. As 1 John 4:12 (NIV) reminds us, "If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

This is the true mark of a Christian — love that reaches beyond comfort zones, opinions and differences. Jesus said in John 13:35 (NIV), "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

The world is watching, not to see how loudly we profess our faith but how deeply we practice it. Every act of compassion, every gentle word and every moment of grace reveals something divine — God's love at work in us. The more we give that love away, the more it grows within us, mirroring the heart of Christ, who gave Himself for all.

So ask yourself: Does the world recognize you as his disciple by the way you love?



## February Helpers

### Ushers & Greeters

Steve & Dee Janssen

### Lector [Comm. Asst.]

- 1 Deb Stone [Bob Stone]
- 8 ~need volunteer~
- 15 Jan Horberg [Carol Onken]
- 18 [Ash W.] ~need volunteer~
- 22 Cadi Birkliid

### Refreshments

- 1 MaryEllen Brackemyer
- 8 Jean Geerts
- 15 Jan Horberg
- 22 ~Open~

### Offering Counters

Al Janicek & Deb Stone have assumed these duties. Offerings can be mailed to or dropped off at the church at any time if you are unable to attend Sunday worship services.

### Altar Flowers

- 1 The Haas Family
- 8 ~Open~
- 15 ~Open~
- 22 \*No flowers during Lent\*

### Altar Guild

Carol Onken, Mona Milder



Members (of all ages) are invited to join together for a time of food & fellowship at our monthly "Meet & Eat".

In February, we will be dining at "Urban Eats" located at 130 E. Main St. in Morrison (the old True Value building) on Thursday, February 19 at 6:00 PM. To assist in planning, there will be a sign up sheet (including menu choices) on the table in the Fellowship Room. Please sign up by Sunday, Feb. 15. Those needing a ride or having questions should contact Andrea Dalton @ 772-4929.



### Our Mission Statement:

**BETHESDA LUTHERAN CHURCH WELCOMES ALL  
AND JOYFULLY SHARES GOD'S LOVE**

# F · E · B · R · U · A · R · Y

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p><b>9:00AM Worship</b>  <i>Guest: Kathy Burkheimer</i>  <b>10:00AM Fellowship Hour</b>  <b>10:00AM Sunday School</b></p>	<p>2</p> <p><b>9:00AM Diet Club</b></p>	<p>3</p> <p><b>6:00PM MMTA</b>  <i>(Rehearsals)</i></p>	<p>4</p> <p><b>8:00AM - NOON Quilters</b>   <b>7:00PM Sr. Choir</b></p>	<p>5</p> <p><b>6:00PM MMTA</b>  <i>(Rehearsals)</i></p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p><b>*BLDG. RSVD.*</b>  <b>2-4:00PM WaTanYe</b>  <i>(Planning Mtg.)</i></p>
<p>8</p> <p><b>9:00AM Worship</b>  <i>Guest: Pr. John Cunningham</i>  <b>10:00AM Fellowship Hour</b>  <b>10:00AM Sunday School</b>   <b>4:00PM MMTA</b>  <i>Board Meeting</i></p>	<p>9</p> <p><b>6:00PM Church Council</b></p>	<p>10</p> <p><b>3:00PM WaTanYe</b>   <b>6:00PM MMTA</b>  <i>(Rehearsals)</i></p>	<p>11</p> <p><b>8:00AM - NOON Quilters</b>   <b>6:15PM Hospitality Comm. Meeting</b>  <b>7:00PM Sr. Choir</b></p>	<p>12</p> <p><b>1:00PM WELCA</b>  <i>Bus. Mtg. &amp; Bible Study (in Chapel)</i>   <b>6:00PM MMTA</b>  <i>(Rehearsals)</i></p>	<p>13</p> <p><i>*Deb will arrive at the office later in the morning due to a pre-surgery appt. w/Bob at 8:30 a.m.</i></p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15</p> <p><b>9:00AM Worship</b>  <i>Guest: Pr. Leo Patterson</i>  <b>[Installation of Council]</b>  <b>10:00AM Fellowship Hour</b>  <b>10:00AM Sunday School</b></p>	<p>16</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Presidents Day</i></p> </div> <p><b>9:00AM Diet Club</b>  <b>10:00AM Worship &amp; Music Committee Meeting</b></p>	<p>17</p> <p><i>*Newsletter* Deadline!</i>   <b>6:00PM MMTA</b>  <i>(Rehearsals)</i></p>	<p>18</p> <p><b>8:30AM - 1:00PM Quilters</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>ASH</b>  <i>Wednesday</i></p> </div> <p><b>7:00PM Worship</b>  <i>Pr. Kathy Burkheimer</i></p>	<p>19</p> <p><b>6:00PM Meet &amp; Eat</b>  <i>(See. Page 5!)</i>   <b>6:00PM MMTA</b>  <i>(Rehearsals)</i></p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22</p> <p><b>9:00AM Worship</b>  <i>Guest: Pr. Quentin Fleming</i>  <b>10:00AM Fellowship Hour</b>  <b>10:00AM Sunday School</b></p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p> <p><i>*Newsletter* Assembly/Mailing</i>   <b>6:00PM MMTA</b>  <i>(Rehearsals)</i></p>	<p>25</p> <p><b>8:30AM - 1:00PM Quilters</b>  <b>Noon - Community Lenten Lunch ("TBA" see. Pg. 2)</b>   <b>6:00PM Soup Supper</b>  <b>7:00PM Mid-Week Service</b>  <b>7:45PM Sr. Choir</b></p>	<p>26</p> <p><b>6:00PM MMTA</b>  <i>(Rehearsals)</i></p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>