

BETHESDA LUTHERAN

NEWSLETTER

February 2026
Volume 26 | Number 1

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

nonviolent.

WALKING THE WAY WITH JESUS



By Pastor Grant Vanderford

Our theme for Lent this year is **nonvioLENT**.
Walking the Way with Jesus.

Lent is a season of repentance, honesty, and return. A season when we stop pretending we're fine and hear God tell the truth about what's happening in us and around us.

Lent is also a school for **nonviolence**—not passivity, not politeness, not avoidance—but courageous discipleship. In a world trained to solve problems through force (or through the more

subtle violence of contempt, scapegoating, dehumanizing speech, and the hunger to “win”), Jesus forms a different kind of people: people who can tell the truth without destroying, who can set boundaries without cruelty, who can seek justice without becoming what they oppose.

This year we'll walk our Lenten journey through the lens of the Beatitudes, shaped by the vision in Andrew DeCort's book, *Blessed Are the Others: Jesus' Way in a Violent World*.

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DeCort describes the Beatitudes not as sentimental blessings or personality types, but as a path—**eight waystations on Jesus' road through a violent world.**

- **Poverty:** admitting our limits, our dependence, and our complicity—no more pretending we're self-made or innocent.
- **Grief:** refusing denial; lamenting what is broken without turning pain into blame.
- **Nonviolence (meekness):** regulated power—strength held back for the sake of life, not domination.
- **Justice:** hunger and thirst for right relationship, not cheap peace.
- **Compassion (mercy):** solidarity that moves toward the wounded and refuses to harden.
- **Cleanheartedness:** a heart cleansed of superiority and scapegoating so we can truly “see” God at work.
- **Peacemaking:** peace doesn't just happen; it's made—through truth, repair, and courageous love.
- **Persecution:** the sober promise that when the church stops blessing violence, there will be a cost.

In the Gospels we'll hear Jesus living this path in real time—refusing violent shortcuts, crossing boundaries, restoring dignity, standing with the excluded, and calling communities to “unbind” what death has wrapped around people. That's the heart of nonvioLENT: repentance that becomes repair, worship that becomes discipleship, prayer that becomes peacemaking.

AN INVITATION

You're invited to come and be formed by worship, prayer, and community:

- Ash Wednesday – February 18th at 6:30 p.m.
- Sunday Worship with Holy Communion — Sundays at 9:30 a.m.
- Wednesday Fellowship Meal — Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. (starting on Feb. 18th)
- Prayer Around the Cross — Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

Lent is not about trying harder. It's about returning—again and again—to Jesus, and letting his way become our way. Join us for nonvioLENT: walking the way with Jesus—from fear to courage, from harm to repair, from violence to peace with a spine.

GOD OF MERCY AND JUSTICE

Rev. Dr. Joe C. Palmore
Host Arise Unhinge Podcast

We come before You, carrying the weight
Of Minnesota and all its cities –
the grief that lingers in the streets,
the exhaustion in bodies and souls,
the sorrow that comes from seeing too much loss and
too often.

For those who are weary from protesting,
Weary from praying,
Weary from hoping and being
Disappointed again—
Be near.

For those who feel unheard, unseen, or
Unsafe in their own city,
wrap them in Your presence.

Breathe rest where there is constant tension.
Breathe courage where fear has settled in.
Breathe healing where wounds -- seen
and unseen ---still bleed.

God, be a shelter in this state.
A refuge for the brokenhearted.
A stronghold for those who refuse to
Give up on life, dignity, and peace.

Sit with the weary.
Those who feel numb.
Those who feel angry,
Those who fell guilty for the resting when other are
hurting.

God, be peace where peace feels impossible.
Be strength when strength is gone.
Be hope --- not shallow,
But fierce enough to endure

Cover Minnesota.
Let rest come.
Let healing begin.
Let justice roll forward, not tomorrow
but now.

Amen and Amen.

[As published in The Minnesota Star Tribune on January 23, 2026,
prepared as an ad paid for by shelettsmakesadifference.org]

Christmas at Silver Linings

During Advent, the Outreach Committee sought and received monetary donations to provide multiple cards for each of the 36 residents living at Silver Linings in Moorhead. Gift cards were presented to the residents during an evening meal on December 18. A special thank you to Becky Erickson and Joan Kopperud for coordination, and to all who assisted with the meal prep and serving! It was a festive evening with great community connection and Christmas celebrating!





THE Christmas Program

WAS ONCE AGAIN A KID-POWERED PRODUCTION, FEATURING BOTH ADULTS AND CHILDREN IN CHARMING ROLES. KUDOS TO ADDISON AND SELAH FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING WORK!





DOUBLE PORTION MINISTRY

Bethesda's "Double Portion Ministry Program" makes connections between members, both young and young-at-heart. This cross-generational ministry is an intentional relationship building/mentor/mentee program-extension of our usual Faith Formation program for youth. From cooking to piano recitals, and attending events to making crafts, there are good things happening all around! We've seen gift-giving and conversation, volunteering together and more!





THE FACES CHANGED, THE MISSION REMAINED THE SAME: QUILTING TEAM 2025

Bethesda has a time-honored quilting tradition. For many years, a core team of Gwen Erickson, Laurie Anderson, Dee Evenson, Donna Hendrickson, and Clarice Erickson met weekly to sew and assemble quilts. Over the course of this past year, the faces have changed, but not the mission... When Gwen, Dee, and Donna moved away, Laurie and Clarice welcomed new members Jane Johnson, Cindy Larson-Casselton, Deb Fogel and Sharon Olson to the team!



What happens with the quilts?

Twice a year, before packing up their creations, the quilters display their handy work in the sanctuary. The quilts are blessed and then packed, shipped, and shared. Local recipient include: Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the New Life Center and for Homeless Veterans Red Cross. Bethesda's 53 quilts were also distributed by Lutheran World Relief to multiple locations domestically and internationally. According to Lutheran World Relief, over 300 thousand quilts were distributed to 15 countries.



Where else do the quilts go?

Members leaving the Bethesda community get wrapped in quilts as a gesture of love and remembrance of their Bethesda family. Quilts and table runners are donated as prizes for our church fundraisers, and they're also shown off in the Fellowship Hall, and then donated to provide warmth to someone in need!



Where are the materials from?

The quilt backs are lightly-used or new sheets. The fabric, backing, sewing thread and crochet cotton thread for tying are all donated. The batting used to fill the quilt is bought in very large rolls!



How does the process work?

First, several quilters volunteer their time to sew the quilt tops before bringing them to church (although some sewing does happen on one of the machines at Bethesda). The quilters then meet on Wednesday mornings. Thanks to the custodian, Brad Penas, the tables are always set up and ready! The first to arrive picks out a quilt top and a back to be assembled - the main task is to tie knots and do pinning. A pinned quilt then goes home with a volunteer for the final machine sewing.

How can I help?

All are welcome to join on Wednesday mornings at 9 a.m. The only requirement is being willing to laugh, share stories and join in the fun. Feel free to stop by and check it out! *If time is an issue*, monetary donations are welcome to defray the cost of batting, supplies, and shipping. Please make note that funds are for "quilting."

*Warm wishes & happy stitching,
Laurie Anderson, Clarice Erickson, Sharon Olson, Cindy Larson-Casselton, Jane Johnson, Deb Fogel*



“THE CREATION” THROUGH THE EYES OF A CAMEL

By Camel (a.k.a. Sharon Olson)

GENESIS 1 AND 2

“Wow I just woke up, at least I think I woke up. But I don’t remember falling asleep. In fact, I don’t remember anything before I woke up! Weird!!!

“Hi All! Let me show you around. Over there is an Oasis, that’s where the camels, like me, hang out. An Oasis is a piece of land with some water and trees. There isn’t much water in the desert so where there is water, everyone hangs out. Today all the camels were talking in the Oasis about the action around here in the last few days. This is the story we talked about.

Someone named God looked around but there was nothing to look at and I mean NOTHING TO LOOK AT! God thought this was boring, so he decided to decorate. He thought about what he needed to do. He did some planning, even drew up some ideas. God didn’t want to put this off so he gave himself a deadline. He thought, ‘I want this right away’ so – 7 days, that should do it!!

First of all, God made the Earth, but he still couldn’t see anything, so he added some light.

Even with light, there was nothing to look at, so he made the sky, and some land and added some water. Well, he found that there were some problems with his plan with the light on all the time, it was “HOT”. Have you ever been in the sun in the desert? It was HOT! God decided to shut off the sun for a few hours, but then it was dark again. So, he made a less intense light and called it the moon.

The camels and I talked to God and told him that earth still wasn’t much fun with nothing to do. So, I suggested to God that he should add some variety to the animals. He added some other creatures, you know like lions and monkeys and elephants and snakes. That added some fun, those monkeys really know how to have a good time.

But the elephants they just kind of walked around and spit water on the rest of us – that got old real fast. And I never trusted the lions; they thought they were the king of Eden and were bossing the rest of us around. Plus, they were eyeing everyone else like we were a piece

of meat. And I don’t trust the snakes I just have a hunch they will cause trouble sometime!!!

God decided that he needed to create someone, besides the camels, to help watch over the land. He was worried that if this world actually worked out, he should have someone besides the camels in charge. So, he made a couple of trial creatures in his image. Adam and Eve were created, the camels approved and felt they were pretty cool.

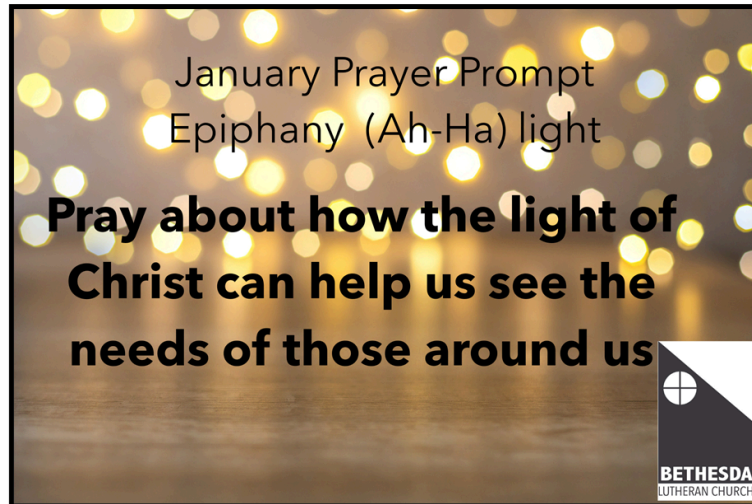
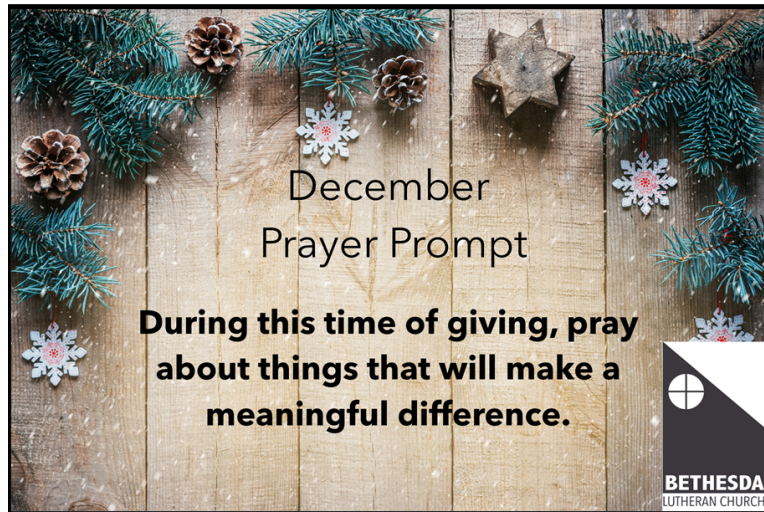
God and I looked around and thought this world is pretty great. We were pretty tired this had been a busy six days. We couldn’t think of anything left to do so and God had met his deadline. I thanked him and told him to take a rest. On the seventh day God and the camels rested!

At Christmas time, I, the Camel, joined the Bethesda youth, for the Christmas Program. What a blessed event. It brought back so many memories for me. I have decided to tell you some stories about my life as a camel. This is my first story. With more to come....

SEE! THERE I AM!



PRAYER PROMPTS





Updates from the Synod

February 2026

This monthly insert is just onewaytostayconnectedwithwhat'sgoingon in the Northwestern Minnesota Synod. You'll find highlights of recent news, upcoming events, and ways our synod is walking together in ministry. We hope it helps you see the bigger picture of how God is at work through the Northwestern Minnesota Synod.



Upcoming Events



February 2-March 20

Online Boundaries Training

February 9

Treasurer 101: Stewardship Zoom

February 12 |

Giving Hearts Day

February 18 |

Ash Wednesday

February 24-March 17 |

Online Anti-Racism Book Read



March 6

In-Person Boundaries & Anti-Racism Training

March 9-11

Senior Pastor Retreat

March 21

The Great NWMN Synod Get Together

March 29

Palm Sunday



Discernment and Calling

The synod continues to walk with individuals discerning calls to ordained and lay leadership. If you or someone you know is sensing a call, resources and conversation partners are available through the synod office.



GIVING HEARTS DAY

**Mark your calendars for
Giving Hearts Day!**

On February 12, our synod will join many local organizations in this regional day of generosity.



From the Bishop's Desk

Beloved siblings in Christ,

As we move through these winter weeks together, I am mindful of the many pressures and uncertainties facing our communities and our world. In moments like these, the church is called not to look away, but to remain rooted in Christ's love and to show up for one another with compassion, courage, and hope. Thank you for the faithful ways you continue to serve, pray, and care for your neighbors. May God strengthen you for the work you are doing, often quietly and faithfully, for the sake of the gospel.

Grace and peace,
Bishop Bill



Resource of the Month



Prayer Requests

A Word of Hope from Minnesota Bishops and Bishop Curry

The Minnesota bishops recently released a video featuring the ELCA Presiding Bishop Yahiel Curry, offering a message of hope, faith, and love for the church and our communities. In a time marked by uncertainty and division, this resource invites reflection on how we are called to live as neighbors rooted in God's love.

view the video here:



We invite congregations and leaders to share prayer requests with the synod and to hold the ministries, leaders, and communities of our synod in prayer. Your prayers sustain our shared work and deepen our connection to one another.



Synod Staff

Pr. Bill Tesch | Bishop

Pr. Genelle Netland | Associate to Bishop for Leadership

Pr. Rebel Hurd | Associate to Bishop for Mission / D.E.M.

Pr. Keith Pearson | Minister for Generosity

Morgan Olson | Communications & Events

Rachel Haun | Office Administrator

Stay Connected with
NWMN
Synod

e-news | updates



NEW TOOL FOR VOLUNTEERS

"Sign-Up Genius" is an electronic tool used for organizing volunteers and time slots - and we're going to give it a try for assigning worship assistants!

The great part is that you can sign up *yourself!* Organized by days, and then by positions, each line will show a tan-colored "Sign Up" button for those spots that need a volunteer. Alternatively, if we have enough volunteers, the line will say "Full."

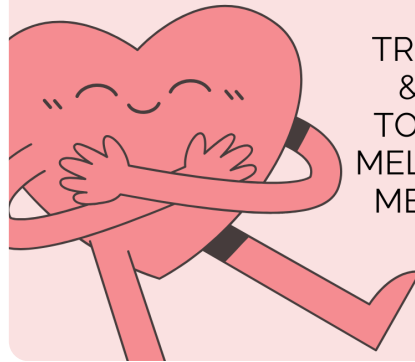
Simply click the button to "Sign Up" and you'll be asked for your name and e-mail. *An option allows you to add a phone number or comment, if you wish.* You can also edit and remove your sign-up if a conflict occurs.

As the administrator, Jane is then automatically notified of every sign-up! Call or e-mail janej@bethesdamhd.org if you have any questions.

Take a look! bethesdamhd.org/worship

METRO-GNOMES & CHOCOLATE TREATS

TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 10
6:30 P.M.



BRING YOUR
FAVORITE
CHOCOLATE
TREAT TO SHARE
& COME LISTEN
TO THE MUSICAL
MELODIES OF THE
METRO-GNOMES
BAND!

SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER

ONLINE

WORSHIP
ASSISTANTS
NEEDED!

BETHESDAMHD.ORG/WORSHIP

Afternoon of fun
& fellowship

Where: The Linden (1500 7th St S, Moorhead)

When: First & fourth Tuesdays of the month

Time: 1-4 p.m.

Come enjoy visiting
& friendships!



nonviolent.

WALKING THE WAY WITH JESUS



ASH WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 18
6:30 P.M. WORSHIP
5:30 P.M. MEAL

WEDNESDAYS IN LENT

5:30 P.M. MEAL
6:30-7 P.M. VESPERS

Feb 18	Soups & breads
Feb 25	Taco bar
Mar 4	Pizza & salad
Mar 11	Scalloped potatoes & ham
Mar 18	Pulled pork sandwiches & beans
Mar 25	Pancakes, eggs & sausage

**vegetarian options will be available*

ADULT FORUM

FEBRUARY 22
**FOLLOWING
WORSHIP**



JOIN US FOR A
CONVERSATION ON
**"WORKING THROUGH
GRIEF & LEARNING TO
EMBRACE LIFE'S
BLESSINGS"**

PRESENTED BY DEB
HADLEY & DENISE
HADLEY WITH KT
HUMBLE HEARTS
GRIEF SUPPORT
SERVICES

wednesday **feb.25**

JOIN US ON THIS LENTEN
EVENING WHEN 85 MEMBERS
OF THE CONCORDIA CHAPEL
CHOIR WILL HAVE DINNER
WITH OUR COMMUNITY
+ SHARE THEIR MUSICAL
TALENTS DURING WORSHIP!

5:30 P.M. MEAL
6:30 P.M. WORSHIP



OATMEAL COOKIES

Time: 10 - 12
min.
Temp: 375°

1 cup brown sugar	1/4 tsp. salt
1 cup lard	1 tsp. cinnamon
1 cup raisins	2 eggs
1/2 cup water	1 tsp. soda
2 cups oatmeal	2 cups flour

Boil raisins in 1/2 cup water. Mix other ingredients together and add raisins. Drop by teaspoon on pan. Bake.

Verna Larson
by Gary Larson

COCONUT DATE OATMEAL COOKIES

Time: 8 - 10
min.
Temp: 350°

Serves: 100 cookies

1 cup white sugar	1/2 cup coconut
1 cup brown sugar	2 cups quick cook oatmeal
1 cup shortening	2 cups flour
2 eggs	1 tsp. soda
2 tsp. vanilla	1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup dates, finely cut	

Cream together sugars and shortening. Add eggs and vanilla. Combine dry ingredients and add to first mixture. Roll into balls and roll in sugar. Flatten with fork and bake.

Gwen Erickson

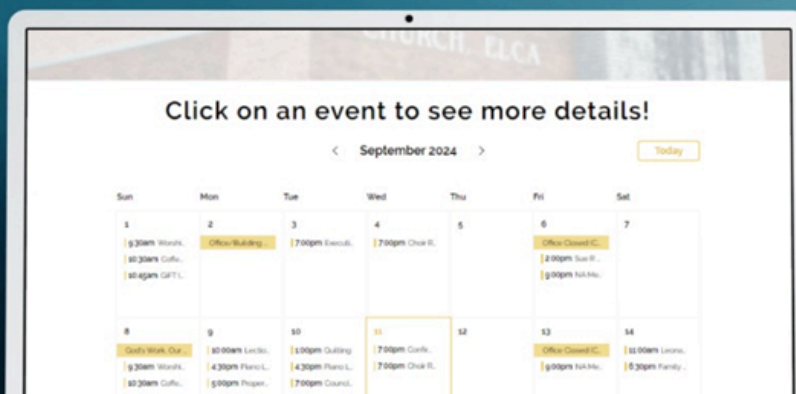
ADULT FORUM

MARCH 15 FOLLOWING WORSHIP



JOIN US FOR A
CONVERSATION
ON
**"PRE-PLANNING
FUNERALS"**
PRESENTED BY
TOM PENCE,
LICENSED
FUNERAL
DIRECTOR
AT KORSMO
FUNERAL SERVICE

All events are on the calendar!
bethesdamhd.org/calendar



Fill the Pew this Lent

JOIN US IN COLLECTING DONATIONS FOR THE
MOORHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS HOMELESS &
DISPLACED STUDENT PROGRAM

STARTING FEBRUARY 18

GRANOLA BARS
POP TARTS
INDIVIDUAL PACKS OF
CRACKERS
INDIVIDUAL PACKS OF CEREAL

STARTING FEBRUARY 25

SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER
HAIR SPRAY + MOUSSE
COMBS/BRUSHES
HAIR ACCESSORIES

STARTING MARCH 4

FRUIT CUPS + JUICE BOXES
PUDDING + GELATIN SNACK
PACKS
APPLESAUCE POUCHES
INDIVIDUAL SERVINGS OF NUTS

STARTING MARCH 11

LIP BALM
LOTION
DEODORANT
RAZORS + SHAVING CREAM

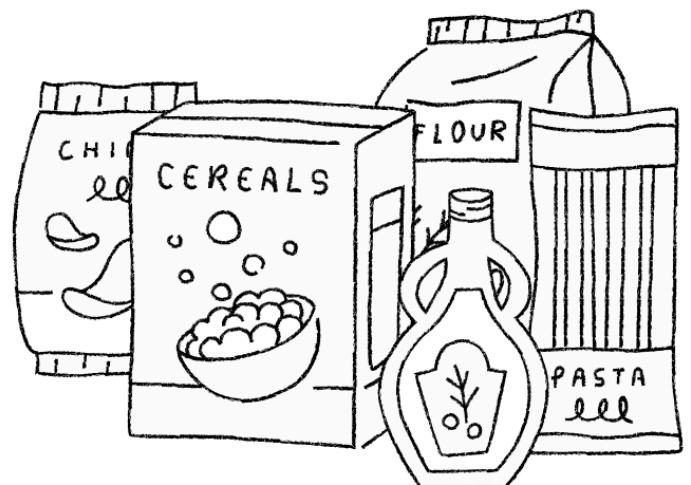
MARCH 18 - INDIVIDUAL SERVINGS:

TUNA OR CHICKEN PACKETS
MAC & CHEESE, RAMEN, SOUPS
SPAGHETTIOS, ETC.

MARCH 25

BODY + FACE WASH
FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS
TRAVEL SIZE TISSUES
BAND AIDS
FIRST AID SUPPLIES

*Sponsored by
Outreach Ministries*



**SAVE THE
DATE!**

BLOOD DRIVE
at Bethesda



**THURSDAY
APRIL 30
3:30-7 P.M.**



CHURCH STAFF

Pr. Grant Vanderford
Jane Johnson
Tyler Pyle
Jillian Jaros
Tammy Costin
Billi Jo Townsend

Pastor
Office Administrator
Pianist
Choir & Handbell Director
Health Ministry
Financials

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COUNCIL 2026

Marty Ohren
Aaron Wenaas
Drew Robinson
Nancy Lund

Sharon Bungum-Olson
Libby Sternhagen-Schwenk
Matthew Benson-Tuff
Heath Baxter
Joel Westby

