



BETHESDA LUTHERAN

NEWSLETTER

November 2025

Volume 25 | Number 11

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

A LONGER, DEEPER ADVENT AT BETHESDA

By Pastor Grant Vanderford

Over the past year, you may have heard me talk about—and in recent weeks announce—a seven-week Advent season happening here at Bethesda. I've spent a good deal of time researching, praying, and discerning why we might join this movement and how it might take shape in our own context.

Why Seven Weeks?

The inspiration for this expanded season comes from The Advent Project, an ecumenical movement led by the Rev. Dr. William H. Peterson, Episcopal Priest and Dean Emeritus of Bexley Hall Seminary. Peterson's simple, but profound proposal is this:

"To make the Advent we celebrate congruent with the lectionary we already have."

In other words, the readings appointed in the Revised Common Lectionary already prepare us for

Christ's coming beginning several Sundays before December. These texts—spanning from All Saints' Sunday through Christmas—invite the Church to reflect on the many dimensions of Christ's coming: in history, in mystery, and in glory.

By stretching Advent to seven weeks, we reclaim that full biblical arc of hope and longing, giving ourselves more time to prepare our hearts for the manifestation of God's reign. It's not a "longer countdown to Christmas," but a deeper dwelling in the promise of Christ's coming—past, present, and future.

Recovering an Older Rhythm

Historically, Advent wasn't always four weeks long. In its earliest centuries, Christians observed anywhere from five to nine weeks of preparation before the Feast of the Nativity. The four-week pattern familiar to most Western Christians was standardized in Rome in the 7th century, but took centuries more to be universally adopted.

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Eastern churches have continued to keep a longer season of reflection and fasting before Christmas, emphasizing both repentance and hope.

Our tradition at Bethesda is to learn from the wisdom of the Church across time and space. This seven-week Advent gives us space to breathe, reflect, and live counter-culturally in a season that the wider world often fills with frenzy and noise.

Resisting “Americanized & Consumerist Christmas Culture”

In his movement, Peterson names what many of us feel:

“The Christmas decorations lurking in the back corners of supermarkets and home supply stores from late August... join the unrelenting barrage of advertisements and music for the holiday season... and the Parousia is complete. Against all this the Church has little defense.”

I’ll admit—I love much about this cultural version of Christmas: the music, lights, coziness, and joy. But I also recognize how easy it is for me—and perhaps for all of us—to depend on those things to get us through the darkening days of December.

Advent invites us instead to let hope, not sentimentality, sustain us; faith, not consumerism, shape us.

What to Expect in Worship

Bethesda’s worship will still feel familiar and deeply rooted in our Lutheran tradition—but we’ll let the season unfold with a new spaciousness. You’ll notice:

- Seven weekly themes drawn from the lectionary and Advent’s traditional focus—expectation, repentance, promise, joy, light, mystery, and coming.
- Progressive changes in the sanctuary: more light and color each week as we draw nearer to the Nativity.
- Music and liturgy that invite us to wait, watch, and hope—singing the “O Antiphons” (O Come, O Come, Emmanuel) and gathering around the table for Holy Communion.
- Wednesday evenings filled with fellowship, supper, and Holden Evening Prayer—a cherished time to pause together midweek.

An Invitation

This longer Advent isn’t about doing more; it’s about making room—for silence, reflection, and the slow unfolding of God’s promise. It’s about aligning our worship with the rhythm of the Church rather than the rush of the marketplace.

So come with open minds and hearts. Embrace the darkness and the light, the waiting and the wonder. Let’s walk together through these seven weeks, holding fast to the hope that Christ comes to us still—again and again and again.

Come, O come, beloved ones, to this season of waiting, hoping, and watching.

Pastor Jon



FIRST ANNUAL FALL FUNDRAISER

A SUCCESS

On October 10, the first annual Fall Fundraiser, Spaghetti Supper, and Raffle was held! While this was an inaugural event, it most certainly won't be our last.

We are so pleased with the way that our Bethesda community joined together in this effort. Nothing says fall like a hearty plate of spaghetti with garlic bread and bowl of apple crisp dessert. Thank you to those who volunteered, those who donated, and a special thank you to those that came to support the event and enjoyed the meal!

Congratulations to the following winners of the raffle:

- Connie Ohren – quilt
- Sharon Olson – quilt
- Clair Keene – quilt wall hanging
- Laurie Anderson – quilted table runner & embroidered dish towels
- Sharon Larson – Christmas throw quilt
- Deb Fogel – Watercolor painting by Rick Vanderford
- Willy Jacobson – Watercolor painting by Rick Vanderford
- Judy Videen - Meat bundle
- Zoe Wenaas – Red River Zoo passes
- Jolene Beckman – KidCo Children's Museum
- Selah Vanderford – fall-themed fleece blanket
- Cindy Casselton – RedHawks tickets (2026 season)
- Addison Wenaas – Halloween basket
- Phyllis Martin - \$100 Coburns gift card
- Keith Phillips – Fargo Force tickets

All proceeds from this fundraiser will go to our outreach ministries that benefit our brothers and sisters in the community. Plans are already underway for the 2nd annual fall fundraiser!



MILITARY APPRECIATION DAY

ADULT FORUM TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9

By Twila Nicholson

In conjunction with Veteran's Day, our Bethesda Lutheran Church family will honor our members and family members who have served and those who currently serve in the military. We also honor family members that sacrificed all for our country.

The recognition will include:

- a Wall of Honor
- hearing from Veterans
- the retirement of the old and dedication of the new Narthex flag
- Pastor Grant offering a prayer for all military

Wall of Honor:

Please send a photo of you or a loved one from military time or bring one to the church office by November 2.

Please also include a note about when you (they) joined, when you (they) mustered out, and a few details about where you or they (including fallen loved ones) were stationed.

Flag Ceremony:

The cherished narthex flag is being retired with a demonstration of how a flag should be properly folded. A new flag will be dedicated, followed by a prayer from Pastor Grant.

Several members including Eddie Bernhardson, Bob Belsly, and Larry Nicholson will speak of their service to our country. Others will be welcomed to speak at the forum as well!

Contact:

Jane Johnson at janej@bethesdamhd.org

Twila Nicholson at twilani2@gmail.com
or cell: 701-238-9633



OUTREACH MINISTRY: ACTIVITY ABOUNDS

By Joel Westby

Bethesda's Outreach Ministry has a bountiful list of activities happening. Here are the ways you can share, and thank you if you've already shared in some of these efforts to reach out and love our neighbors!

WALL CROSS/LAMPS

We are collecting wall crosses and other wall decorations for Down Home. Please bring these items to the collection cabinet in the narthex. In addition, if you have lamps for Down Home, they are still be collected! So far we have contributed nearly 100 lamps.

FOOD PANTRIES

With the likely pause in SNAP supplemental support (November 1), we are emphasizing the need that local food pantries will have with serving additional people. So in addition to food and monetary donations, the need for volunteers may also increase. If you have been thinking about volunteering, please give one of the food pantries a call today.

You can bring non-perishable food items to the church for the two pantries listed:

FOOD PANTRIES

Dorothy Day
1308 Main Ave, Moorhead
218-656-7628

Youthworks
1330 18th Avenue S, Fargo
701-232-8558

SOUP JARS

You can support a special Churches United fundraiser by purchasing a "soup jar" for \$20. Each one has the ingredients for making delicious potato soup. Maybe buy one for yourself, and buy a couple for giving away.

Check in the church office or buy one or more after worship during fellowship!

SILVER LININGS CHRISTMAS

Starting in November, Bethesda will be collecting money to provide Christmas gifts cards and meals for the residents of Silver Linings (Churches United's new 55+ apartments just north of Moorhead's Cash Wise grocery store).

Monetary donations can be brought or sent to the church office. The money will then be used to purchase cards from local downtown businesses.

We hope to provide multiple cards for each of the 36 residents living at Silver Linings.

The gift cards will be presented to the residents at an evening meal on Thursday, December 18. If you would like to volunteer to assist with the meal prep or serving, contact Becky Erickson or Joan Kopperud.

As a reminder, we will never ask you to purchase gift cards. The church will do that part of this process.





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/worshipvolunteer

Available Slot	
Assistant Minister 0 of 1 slots filled	Sign Up
Communion Assistant All 2 slots filled	
Aaron Wenaas AW	
Sharon Olson SO	

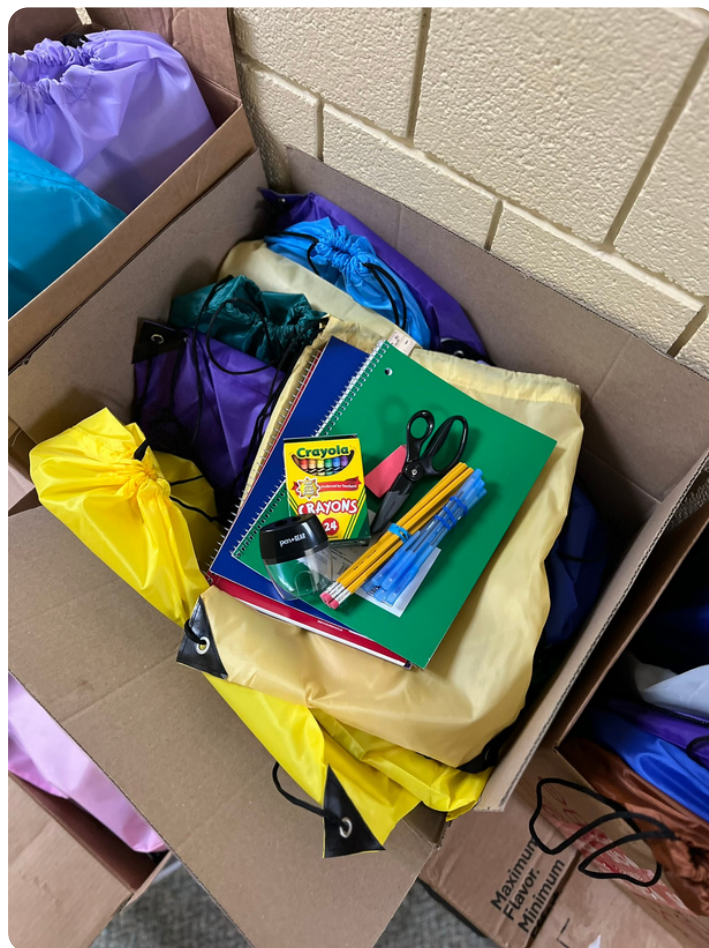
School Kits Shipped!

by Becky Erickson and Sue Reinhart

Thanks to those that helped in September with being the hands for God’s work! As a result, 113 school kits were prepped, then packed into 9 big boxes and delivered to the Lutheran World Relief pick-up site.

A gracious thank you to those that donated supplies, assembled kits, packed boxes, BAS for prepping pens and pencils, and to Marty Ohren for hauling the boxes of school kits and the quilts to the drop off.

God’s Work, Our Hands!



FORMED & RE-FORMED

Through our Stewardship month of October, you were invited to reflect on the themes of being 'Formed and Re-formed' by Trust, in Gratitude, by Persistence, and in Humility, all in the context of how we can return to God a portion of what He has first given us. I hope you found these reflections engaging, and that they led you to deepen your understanding of what it means to be a Steward of our church building, our faith community, and of God's world. It is your generosity and gifts of time and treasure that make Bethesda a trusted place of healing and worship.

Thank you to everyone who returned their card on Commitment Sunday, which was October 26th. If you did not return a commitment card, you are still welcome to bring yours to the church office at any time.

Similarly, commitments for online giving are also welcome. These commitments allow the church council to plan and budget appropriately for the upcoming year.

A special thanks to Nancy Lund for her preview of the 2026 church budget, and to Alex Benson-Tuff, Willy Jacobson, and Kelli Anderson for their sermons and temple talks throughout the month. Hearing different voices from our congregation during worship enriches our community, and I am grateful for your willingness to share.

Thank you again to everyone for your generosity through this Stewardship month and as we look towards the next year.

In Christ,
Drew Robinson



Tiny fellowship happening in the nursery with a newly donated tea set

WEDNESDAYS IN ADVENT

5:30 P.M.
EVENING MEAL

6:30-7 P.M.
ADVENT VESPERS
WITH HOLDEN
EVENING PRAYER

MENU

November 12	Lasagna
November 19	Taco Bar
December 3	Spaghetti
December 10	Scalloped potatoes and ham
December 17	Potato and ham soup

**Vegetarian options will be available*



Bethesda Evangelical Lutheran Church 2025 Bethesda Budget

Sep-25

(Church only)

	MTD			YTD		
	Actual	Budget	over Budget	Actual	Budget	over Budget
Total Income	\$22,749	\$22,859	(\$110)	\$219,590	\$216,523	\$3,067
Total Expenses	\$27,177	\$24,692	\$2,485	\$207,159	\$222,281	(\$15,122)
Net Income	(\$4,428)	(\$1,833)	(\$2,595)	\$12,431	(\$5,758)	\$18,189

TWICE AS NICE

QUILTING TO SHARE

Quilting ministry is dual purpose – twice as nice. Ministry to the recipients and to their makers. Quilts are shared to local and international ministries. A quilt provides warmth and shelter to someone in need. The ministry provides a sense of purpose and fellowship to those that made them.

On Wednesday mornings, a small group meets in the narthex of Bethesda Lutheran Church to make quilts. The tables, thanks to the custodian, are waiting for us to spread out quilt backs, batting and tops to tie and pin. We select one of the tops that someone designed and sewed, a donated sheet as backing, some tying thread, and then we get to work. Once the quilt is tied and pinned, someone sews the edging either on the church's machine or takes it home.

As our hands work on quilts, we share life stories, commiseration, laughter and learning. We often pause to share a cup of tea or coffee with a light snack. ***Quilting is a ministry of fellowship, friendship, and community for us, providing a way to make a difference in our lives and the lives of others - one quilt at a time.***

Twice a year, quilts are displayed in the sanctuary. In October, 30 quilts covered the pews with another 6 hanging in the fellowship hall. Just last week, the quilts were boxed for shipping to Lutheran World Relief, while a few stayed for local missions. A few even grace the fellowship hall walls, until they are donated.

Ways to support the quilting ministry:

- Donate! Funds to help defray the cost of batting and shipping; cotton fabric or new/lightly used flat sheets; sewing thread, crochet thread



- Cut blocks (fabric and instructions can be provided)
- Sew 60"x80" quilt tops; precut blocks and instructions available
- Pray for those crafting and receiving these quilts

If you show up on a Wednesday morning, we start about 9 a.m. and wrap up before noon, but you don't need to stay for the entire 3 hours!

For more information, talk to one of the quilters or e-mail janej@bethesdamhd.org

BETHESDA CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

OCT 13, 2025

Meeting called to order by Kelli Anderson.

Motion to suspend the agenda for discussion about Scouting America by guest Rachel Jackson (Drew/Aaron approved). There are two cub scout packs in the Moorhead community, but none in our area (South Moorhead).

Rachel is proposing that Bethesda be a host for a new family pack. BLC would need to host a bank account to retain the scout's finances and material goods as the host non-profit. Any physical goods would need to be stored by the church.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Additions to agenda: Add cemetery to ministry team reports.

Motion to approve agenda as amended (Sharon/Aaron approved).

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Motion to approve the minutes (Nancy/Joel approved).

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Net income has dropped from ~\$16k to ~\$12k. Building on Faith donations were large; \$173k in the bank as of now, before making payment for work in the courtyard.

2026 budget preview:

2026 budget is generally stable from 2025, except for a ~4.5% increase compensation for Pr. Grant. This raise is based on and in line with the synod guidelines. Additionally, the \$8k grant from the synod was for 2025 only, and so will not be received again in 2026.

Open discussion held regarding into what line item or fund the proceeds from the spaghetti dinner fundraiser will be deposited. The 2025 budget included a line item for \$3.5k from fundraisers; the dinner was advertised as a 'fundraiser for outreach.' Motion to split the net revenue from the fundraiser dinner between the Helping Hands fund and Outreach dedicated accounts. (Joel/Nancy approved)

Motion to approve the treasurer's report (Drew/Sharon approved).

PASTOR'S REPORT:

Written report to be sent at a later date. Verbal report: Wonders of Worship started and has been great. Continuing education (in Atlanta) was really good; still processing the experience.

MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS:

Parish Life

The spaghetti dinner fundraiser raised \$2,080 on meal tickets and + \$1,120 on raffle tickets. Thrivent provided \$250 to cover expenses. Total expenses have not yet been subtracted to determine the net income.

Sub-committee met 10/13, and began discussion of Advent meals. Advent starts 11/9. There will be no meal or service on 11/26. There are 5 other Wednesdays on which meals will be served.

Also began discussion of a spring fundraiser – possibly a rummage sale in addition to a meal, coordinated with Outreach.

Outreach

Looking to accept donations of wall crosses for Down Home and wall hangings in the coming weeks. Possible Angel Tree project and meal planned for Bright Skies. And possibly a 'friend feast' at Youth Works on 11/25.

Property

Vote by e-mail approved additional concrete work to make a permanent path to the BAS enclosed playground. Work has not yet begun, but is anticipated to be done yet this season.

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The past weekend's rain and heavy wind showed where the roof is still leaking. This included some spots in the sanctuary and the far north hallway. The bathrooms remained dry and no drips were seen in the fellowship areas. Next stages of BoF property improvements are starting to be discussed.

Lifelong Learning

Last meeting was 9/11. Sunday, November 9 (before Veteran's Day) will be military appreciation day. The flag will be retired and delivered to the American Legion. The Sunday presentation with Prof. Michelle Lelwica about the youth detention center was well received.

Stewardship

Stewardship month is underway. Mailers were completed and sent. Budget preview will be next Sunday, and commitment Sunday is 10/26.

Cemetery

The dirt pile was removed, but more has reappeared. A new committee president will be needed, as Theresa is moving away. On 10/13 a person called the church office regarding an improperly placed burial. This is supposed to have already been resolved. Motion to approve ministry team reports en masse (Joel/Twila approved).

OLD BUSINESS:

County request for visitation space. The county has retracted their request.

Motion to conclude old business (Drew/Aaron approved).



Kelli Anderson preaching about stewardship

NEW BUSINESS:

Election of Acting Council President

President Kelli Anderson has accepted a new job which requires relocation away from Moorhead, and as such will be resigning from her position as both a council-person and congregation president. Pr. Grant called for open nominations for an acting council president, effective at the conclusion of the October council meeting.

Motion to elect Marty Ohren as the acting council president, effective after the

October council meeting (Joel/Aaron approved).

Discussion - as past president, Marty is familiar with the responsibilities required and willing to take on this role again.

Motion to accept Kelli Anderson's resignation as both congregation president and council person with deep gratitude. (Drew/Joel approved).

Scouting America Charter Request

Open discussion to clarify any expenses that would be incurred by BLC - \$100 annually for charter fees, and to allow S.A. to use our tax exempt status. Motion to become a charter organization for Scouting America as requested by Rachel, with the conditions of use on Tuesday/Thursday after 6 p.m. (Aaron/Joel approved).

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

Vision 2030 Task Force / Strategic Planning

Marty has agreed to be a 'first member' of the vision 2030 task force.

Constitution Review Process

Adjourn with Lord's Prayer

Motion to adjourn (Nancy/Sharon approved).



AFTERNOON OF FUN AND FELLOWSHIP

Join us for Fun and Fellowship playing Hand and Foot,
a Canasta like card game.

Don't know how to play? It is easy and we'll gladly teach you!

We've invited our friends from Eventide to join the fun.

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

Time: **1-4 p.m. on 1st & 4th Tuesdays** of the month, beginning
November 4 and **November 25**.

Parking is available in the lot.

Come enjoy the cards, the company, and the friendships!

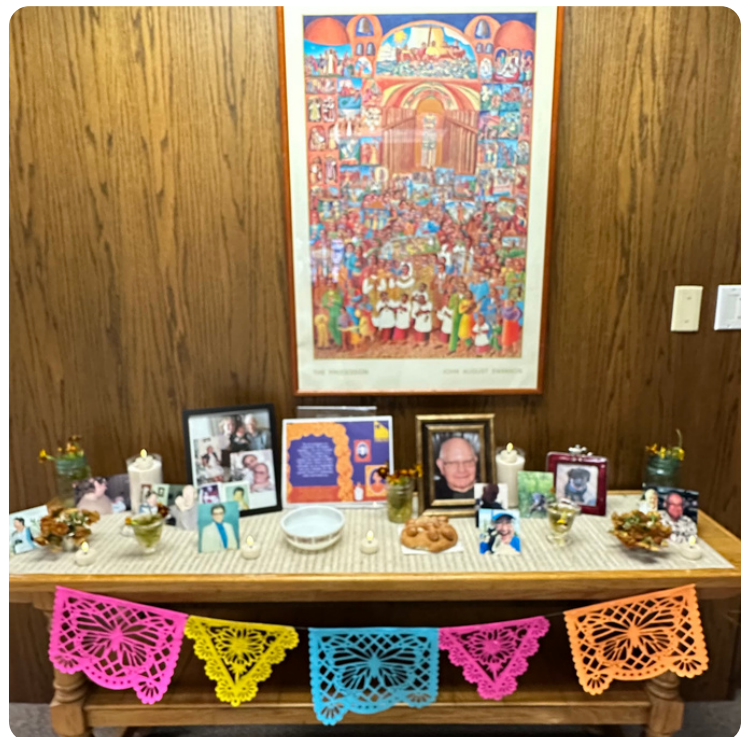
Any questions, contact Sharon Bungum Olson at 701-799-6428 or
olsonmom58103@yahoo.com.



Prayer Prompt

NOVEMBER

Pray for the people that
have been influential in
your faith walk.



SECOND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

NOISY OFFERING



NEXT DATE: NOVEMBER 9

Bethesda CUB SCOUT PACK

Lego Fun Day

November 9
2-4 p.m.

Pack Meeting

November 13
6:30 p.m.

BLOOD DRIVE *at Bethesda*



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3

2:00 - 6:30 P.M. BLOOD DONATIONS

5:30 P.M. ADVENT MEAL

6:30 P.M. WORSHIP

SIGN UP AT

BETHESDAMHD.ORG/EVENTS

*Remember to check
out the calendar!*

bethesdamhd.org/calendar

Calendar

Click on an event to see more details!

< September 2025 >

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31 9:30am Worship 10:00am Ch.	1 Office & Building	2	3 9:00am Quilts 10:00am Lunch	4 3:45pm BAS Ch.	5 Office Closed C.	6 1:00pm BAS Ch.





Scouting America
Northern Lights Council

LEARN ABOUT SCOUTING! LEGO BUILD DAY

November 9, 2025

Calling all builders, dreamers, and adventurers! Lego Fun Day is coming to Bethesda Lutheran Church on November 9 from 2:00-4:00 PM! From towering creations to zippy vehicles, kids will get hands-on time with Lego stations designed for big imaginations. While the kids play, there's space for parents to connect with other families in the community. It's free, fun, and the perfect way to spend an afternoon together.



MORE INFORMATION

Cub Scouts is a fun, family-centered program for boys and girls in grades K-5. It's all about trying new things, making friends, and learning by doing; whether that's camping, building, racing cars, exploring the outdoors, or giving back through service projects. Cub Scouts encourages kids to grow in confidence, creativity, and teamwork while parents and caregivers stay actively involved.



ScoutingNLC.org/join



rachel.jackson@scouting.org



218.994.7543

Bethesda Lutheran Church

401 40th Ave S
Moorhead MN



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CONTACT US:

Bethesda Lutheran Church
401 40th Ave. South, Moorhead

Phone: 701-212-6637

Email:

kari.penas@bethesdaallstars.com

REQUIREMENTS:

- Must be 3 years old
- Must be potty trained

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

OFFICERS

Marty Ohren
Aaron Wenaas
Drew Robinson
Nancy Lund

Acting President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer

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