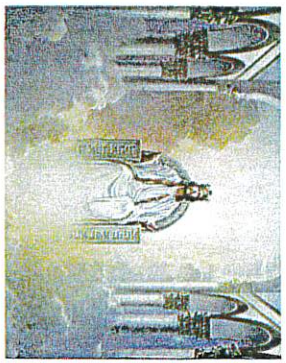
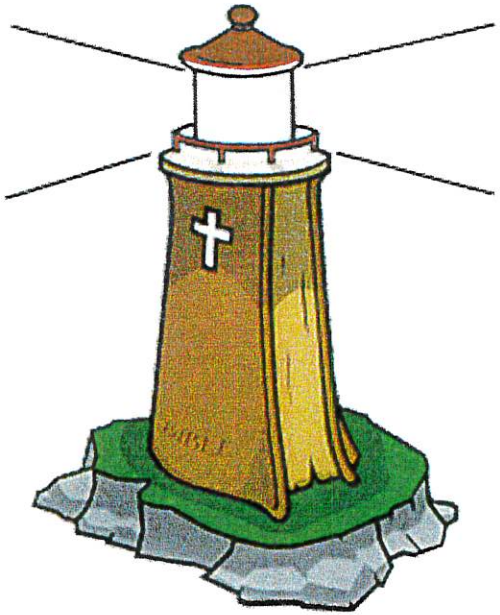


Bethany and East Lemonweir Lutheran Churches
618 West River Street
New Lisbon, WI. 53950

RETURN SERVICES *REQUESTED*

The Beacon

Bethany / East Lemonweir Parish
January 2026



"If any of you lack wisdom, you should pray to God, who will give it to you; because God gives generously and graciously to all."
—James 1:5

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

As I'm writing these thoughts to share with you, there are 7 days left until Christmas. It's hard to think about January, the New Year, and resolutions before I've arrived at Christmas. I guess—that's why Christmas music is in my mind. The above lyrics come from the hymn *In the Bleak Midwinter* by the mid to late 19th century poet, Christian Georgina Rossetti. Gustav Holst (orchestral suite *The Planets*) set the words to the Cranham tune and published it in 1906. One can poke holes in Rossetti's theology behind the poem as well as its historical accuracy, as we can poke holes in any writing—but I think that takes the fun and comfort out of the poem.

Astrological winter began on December 21 and it doesn't end until March 20 at 10:46AM when astrological spring begins. So if we do the math—January is hardly mid-winter—but I'm talking about the song anyway. Because January can feel like 2 months packed into one—it can seem never ending—cold, and dark. In other words—January can seem bleak—no matter how many positive thinking and wellness resolutions we may try and keep. Which brings me to the second verse.

Heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
heav'n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

In the midst of bleakness—cold, Israel's foreign occupation by the Roman Empire, unrest, great disparity among social and economic classes, disease, and short life expectancy—God came to earth to be with us in His creation in a whole new way. God saw the bleakness the tiredness and recognized that all humanity needed to see God's love in a vivid and very real way. So, God came—not as a conquering hero or powerful king—but as a baby laid in a manger with isolated shepherds being the first to hear the news that the Messiah has come.

God came for all humanity and therefore—came for probably as many reasons. But one of the most common—is for restoration. So that our relationships with God and each other can be restored. God came so that forgiveness and righteousness can be felt here and now and not just hoped for or granted to just a few.

It is a great gift---but even a great gift can leave us with a sense of bleakness. How can we ever pay God back? But the thing is—God's gifts aren't given so that they can be paid back. They are simply given because God loves. It's impossible for any human to pay God back for the gifts given to us through Jesus Christ. But what we can do is respond. We can let God's gifts change us so that we can see light and hope during the bleakness.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him—give my heart.

Christ's Peace be with you!
Pastor Lucy

This is the QR code that will take you to the Bethany Vanco site where you can donate online to multiple Bethany funds.

January 2026 Worship Assistants

East Lemonweir Readers

1/4 Diane Clark

1/11 Billie Jo Haschke

1/18 Kathryn Pitcel

1/25 Connie Wolfgram

East Lemonweir Greeters

1/4 Henry & Margarete Hummelbeck

1/11 Gayle Hempel

1/18 Roger & Kathryn Pitcel

1/25 Connie Wolfgram

Bethany

1/4

Assit Minister – Mark Hansen

Reader – Debby Hansen

Communion Asst – Mark Hansen

Ushers – Larry & Kathy Thome

1/11

Assit Minister – Beth Preuss

Reader – Ross Hardie

Communion Assts – Beth Preuss, Ross Hardie & Inger Kirkwood

Ushers – Shane Gesler & Collette Schultz

1/18

Assist Minister – Larry Thome

Reader – Barb Parker

Communion Asst – Larry Thome

Usher – Tim Parker & Karl Katuin

1/25

Assist Minister – Michaele Korbein

Reader - Sheila Stark

Communion Assts – Michaele Korbein, Betty Krotzman, Barb Parker

Ushers Mark & Debby Hansen

2026 Food Pantry
Monthly Themes

January: "Winter Wonderland" – soups, stew, stuffing, mac & cheese, cocoa

February: "Feeling Fruity" – canned fruits, applesauce, fruit cocktail

March: "Spring Cleaning" – toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, deodorant

April: "Going Green" – green beans, peas, pickles, green pasta

May: "Pasta Party" – tomato sauce, noodles, pizza crust (packaged), Ramen

June: "Breakfast of Champions" – cereal, oatmeal, granola, pancake/waffle mix, syrup, juice

July: "We CAN!" – any canned food

August: "Back to School" – peanut butter, jelly/jam, granola bars, juice boxes

September: "Snack Attack" - fruit bars, granola bars, cookies, crackers, trail mix

October: "'*Meat*' the Need" – canned meats, tuna, stew, hamburger/tuna helper

November: "Holiday Helper" – stuffing, rice, jello, canned items: corn, beans, potatoes, cranberries, carrots, pumpkin, evaporated milk

December: "A Child is Born" – baby food, formula, brownies & cake mixes, muffin mixes, pudding, diapers, baby wipes

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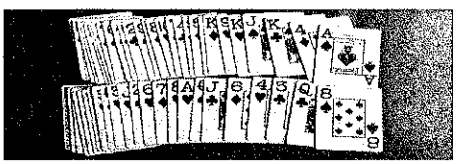
Game Day at Bethany~

***Let's Play! Bring a game to share. Some examples include Candyland, Cribbage, Uno, and Scrabble.**

January 18th



Ideas and Suggestions when donating to your local food pantry and/or Blessing Box

(Thinking outside of the box!)

- Cans with pop tops and/or donate a can opener
- Oil
- Spices or salt and pepper
- Coffee and tea bags
- Sugar and flour
- Bread
- Boxed milk
- Cake mixes and frosting
- Dishwashing detergent
- Laundry detergent
- Feminine hygiene products

Prime Rib Dinner

Saturday
January 24
2026

5:00 PM — Doors Open

Appetizers

Purchase of Raffle Basket Tickets

6:00 PM— Dinner

Sponsored by the
East Lemonweir Lutheran Church
Cty. Hwy. S between
New Lisbon and Elroy off Hwy. 80

"The Little White Church on the Hill"

Cost: $30.00 per person

A limited number of tickets will be sold

For Tickets Contact: Dawn Nelson 608-547-5209
or Jennifer Sarnow 608-847-7057

W-ELCA News

Mission statement: To mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

All ladies of Bethany are considered a member of W-ELCA and are earnestly welcome to be a part of Rachel Circle

Sincere thanks to everyone who helped or participated in any way with all our Christmas Happenings: potluck brunch, fruit baskets, advent supper, church decorating and silent stocking auction. So much happening and so much fellowship as we await the birth of our Savior.

Winter 2026 Bible studies from *gather* is "Embodied prayer" by Rev. Liv Larson Andrews. Prayer is an important part of our relationship with God, and one of the ways we respond to God speaking in our lives. At the same time, we may carry all kinds of baggage or heavy questions about prayer: Am I doing it "right?" Do I pray enough? Is prayer always done with words? This two-part Bible study looks to Scripture as a guide to explore some different ways we can pray with our bodies---and with the body of the earth. Session One in January is Praying with our bodies, and we will journey with the Apostle Paul, Mary, the Psalms and more to learn about embodied practices of prayer.

Upcoming Events:
Tues., Jan. 4:00 pm, Rachel Circle meets in the conference room. Consider starting 2026 being a part of Rachel Circle for fellowship and Bible study.

A thought: In the New Year, never forget to thank your past years because they enabled you to reach today! Without the stairs of the past, you cannot arrive at the future.

Bethany Lutheran Church – New Lisbon, Wisconsin
East Lemonweir Lutheran Church – Elroy, Wisconsin
Special Council Meeting – 2026 Budget Planning
Wednesday, December 3, 2025

Meeting Purpose:	Discuss 2026 draft budget and identify areas of shared costs between both churches. Input to the meeting is the draft 2026 Bethany budget.
Bethany Council Members Present:	Karl Katuin, Mark Hansen, Debby Hansen, Michaele Korbein, Glenda Swinehart, Inger Kirkwood, Deanna Smith, Larry Thome
East Lemonweir Council Members Present:	Marlene Pelton, Roger Pitcel, Audrey Scholl, Connie Wolfgram, Kathy Pitcel, Gail Hempl
Also Attending:	Pastor Lucy Hardie
Call to Order:	Karl Katuin called the meeting to order at 4:29 PM.
70/30 Split:	***Roger Pitcel made the request to keep the budget split at 70% for Bethany and 30% for East Lemonweir. The motion was seconded by Michaele Korbein and passed 14-0.***
Pastor Salary:	A discussion was had regarding the 2026 salary for Pastor Lucy. Per the synod guidelines, for a Pastor with three years of experience, her base salary should be $46,079. This included a increase to the synod guidelines based on cost of living and keeping in line with other synod's salary guidelines. ***Mark Hansen made a motion to set Pastor Lucy's base salary for 2026 at $46,079 and seconded by Roger Pitcel. The motion passed 14-0.***
Secretary Hourly Rate:	Karl Katuin read a letter from Betty Krotzman stating the she was comfortable with her current salary and stated that she did not require a salary increase for 2026. Both Councils appreciated Betty's work and her wanting to stay at the same salary. No motion or vote was required to keep Betty's salary as is at $22.00 per hour.
Budget Line-Item Review:	The Councils reviewed the budget as presented by Michaele Korbein. There were a few questions and comments, and the only change that was made was with regards increasing the "Church Office Phone/Internet" budget from $1,600 to $2,000. The average monthly bill is ~$171, which comes out to $2,052 annually. ***Mark Hansen made a motion to approve the 2026 Joint Budget with revisions and seconded by Glenda Swinehart. The motion passed 14-0.***
Adjournment:	***Roger Pitcel made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Glenda Swinehart; motion passed 14-0.*** The meeting adjourned at 4:53 PM.

Submitted by Larry Thome, Bethany Council Secretary

Old Business	
2026 Budget:	After the joint budget meeting with East Lemonweir, Michaele Korbein made the agreed upon changes to the budget. The Council reviewed the budget, and made one minor change on the Discipleship budget line. ***Mark Hansen made a motion to accept the 2026 Bethany budget as modified and present it to the congregation at the annual meeting, seconded by Inger Kirkwood; motion passed 8-0.***
Roof Heating Cable Electric Outlets:	To help combat ice dams on the roof of the church, heat tape was added to the roof last year. This tape was connected to electric outlets using multiple extension cords, which in not a recommended way to run electricity outdoors. Mark Hansen had contacted Gray Electric, Crowley Electric, Wireman Electric and Pat Shaw Electric for quotes on installing outside outlets. Only Gray Electric provided a quote of $1,967 for the job. ***Mark Hansen made a motion to accept the $1,967 bid from Gray Electric for the roof heating cable outlets, seconded by Glenda Swinehart; motion passed 8-0.***
New Business	
Offering Plate Security:	There had been some questions on how secure our offering plates are during our worship. Generally, there is not a much cash in the plates as most giving is in the form of checks, however Pastor will look into options in 2026 to see if anything is feasible.
2026 Council Positions:	The Council started discussing open positions for 2026 as there are a few Council members rolling off. Some names were discussed, and the Council will finalize a slate at the January Council meeting to present for a congregational vote at the annual meeting.
Audit Assistance:	Currently there are two members on the financial audit committee. One of the members is unable to participate in the audit process. Per our Constitution/By-Laws, two people are required for the audit. Kathy Thome was part of the audit committee last year and assisted in putting together the audit procedures, so she was asked to help with the 2025 audit. ***Larry Thome made a motion to accept Kathy Thome to assist with the 2025 audit, seconded by Debby Hansen; motion passed 8-0.***
Annual Reports:	Council members were reminded to provide their year end reports for the annual meeting to the church secretary (Betty Krotzman) by December 28th. The annual meeting will be held on January 18th following worship service. Announcements of the annual meeting need to be made on January 4th and 11th.
Church Cleaning over Christmas:	Our part-time cleaning service, Red Maple Cleaning, is unable to provide cleaning over the holidays. Mike and Inger Kirkwood have volunteered to clean in their absence.
Next Meeting:	The next Council meeting will be January 4th, 2026 at 12:00 PM. Pastor Lucy will provide devotions and Kark Katuin will do announcements during service.
Prayer/Adjourn Meeting:	Pastor Lucy led the Council in a prayer. ***Glenda Swinehart made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Debby Hansen; motion passed 8-0.*** The meeting adjourned at 12:57 PM.

Submitted by Larry Thome, Council Secretary

Bethany Lutheran Church – New Lisbon, Wisconsin

Church Council Meeting Minutes

Sunday, December 7, 2025

Council Members Present:	Karl Katuin, Pastor Lucy Hardie, Mark Hansen, Debby Hansen, Inger Kirkwood, Glenda Swinehart, Michaele Korbein, Deanna Smith, Larry Thome
Council Members Absent:	None
Guests:	None

Agenda

Call to Order:	President Karl Katuin called the Council meeting to order at 11:56 AM
Agenda Approval:	Karl Katuin presented the agenda for approval. There were no changes to the agenda. ***Debby Hansen made a motion to accept the meeting agenda as presented, seconded by Michaele Korbein; motion passed 8-0.***
Devotion:	Karl Katuin shared a devotion about how our heavenly father is a good father. Bring your petitions to God, persevere in speaking to God. Karl also shared a message about Mary, the mother of Jesus and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and how Mary leaned on Elizabeth during her pregnancy.
Secretary's Report: *(Larry)*	Larry Thome presented the minutes from the November 2025 Council Meeting. There were no questions on the report as presented. ***Mark Hansen made a motion to accept the November 2025 Council Meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Glenda Swinehart; motion passed 8-0.*** Larry Thome also presented the minutes from the Joint Council budget meeting with East Lemonweir. There were no questions on the report as presented. ***Deanna Smith made a motion to accept the minutes from the Joint Council budget meeting with East Lemonweir as presented, seconded by Glenda Swinehart; motion passed 8-0.***
Treasurer's Report: *(Michaele)*	Michaele Korbein presented the General Fund Checking Register, the Savings Summary Report, the Statement of Financial Income and Expense and the Bethany Memorial Summary Report as of November 30, 2025. There were no questions or comments on the reports as presented. Michaele also mentioned that there was a $30,000 CD from the Bank of Mauston that was coming due in December. She will research new rates and renew the CD. ***Mark Hansen made a motion to accept the Treasurer's reports as presented, seconded by Deanna Smith; motion passed 8-0.***
Pastor's Report:	Pastor Lucy completed her First Call Conference, required for new pastors for their first three years of ministry. She will not be required to participate in this in the future. Pastor Lucy is also planning another Communion class (for new communicants or people who would like a refresher on communion).

Committee Reports

Education: *(Deanna)*	Family Sunday School is set for December 14th after worship. Santa and Mrs. Claus will visit!
Discipleship: *(Glenda and Debby)*	Decorations for Christmas in the Park (Riverside) were completed. There are 72 mittens/hats that were collected from the mitten tree that are now in Riverside Park.
Social Concerns: *(Inger)*	No new updates other than we will be receiving names of families needing food gift cards from the New Lisbon School District.
Worship: *(Larry)*	Holiday services are set including Readings and Carols for the Sunday after Christmas. Pastor Lucy confirmed that the bishop will not provide a message for congregations, but she will incorporate some synod-wide themes into the worship service. Online giving is up and running and on our website. Pastor will also incorporate into the bulletin or some other method for Christmas Eve service.
Property: *(Mark)*	Four members have signed up to assist in snow shoveling around the entryways to the church.

East Lemonweir Lutheran Church

Bethany Lutheran Church

Joint Council Meeting

2026 Budget

December 3, 2025

Members Present:

East Lemonweir – Marlene Pelton, Roger Pitcel, Audrey Scholl, Kathy Pitcel, Gail Hempel

Bethany – Karl Katuin, Mark Hansen, Debby Hansen, Michaele Korbein, Glenda Swinehart, Inger Kirkwood, Deanna Smith, Larry Thome

Pastor Lucy Hardie in attendance.

Karl Katuin opened the meeting at 4:30 pm.

Motion by Roger Pitcel to keep the 70/30 split on expenses. Michaele Korbein seconded the motion. Motion passed.

There was discussion on the Pastor's salary. Mark Hansen made the motion to go with the Synod guideline of $46,079. Roger Pitcel seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Betty Krotzman, Church Secretary, requested no changes to her salary.

The 2026 was reviewed. There were discussion and questions on internet and phone to increase budgeted amount to $2000.00. Mark Hansen made motion to accept budget with revisions. Glenda Swinehart seconded motion. Motion carried.

Roger Pitcel made a motion to adjourn, second by Glenda Swinehart, motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 4:55 pm.

East Lemonweir Council Meeting

December 14, 2025

The Council Meeting was called to order at 11:30 am by Roger Nelson.

Those present were: Pastor Lucy Hardie, Roger Nelson, Marlene Pelton, Kathryn Pitcel, Roger Pitcel, Gayle Hempel, Audrey Scholl, Connie Wolfgram.

Margarette Hummelbeck was absent.

Pastor Lucy Hardie led us in prayer.

The Secretary report had corrections: Gayle Hemple's name was corrected. Discussion about front door was removed. Marlene Pelton made a motion to approve the minutes with the above corrections. Gayle Hempel seconded the motion. Motion carried.

A motion to approve the Treasurer's Report was made by Audrey Scholl, seconded by Marlene Pelton. Motion carried.

2026 Budget – Secretary salary did not change. Bethany's Treasurer will be getting final Pastor benefit numbers to East as soon as possible in the new year. Adjustments were made to the "Our Church Home" section of the budget to reflect realistic costs for 2026. Motion to approve the budget was made by Roger Pitcel and it was seconded by Marlene Pelton. Motion carried.

East Lemonweir Annual Meeting will be January 25th, 2026. Two members' terms are ending (Roger Nelson and Margarette Hummelbeck). Possible nominees will be asked by current council members.

Pastor's Report – Audrey Scholl will lead service December 28th as Pastor will be on vacation.

Marlene Pelton – Suggested a $300 check to secretary. Motion by Kathryn Pitcel and second by Gayle Hempel. Motion carried.

Roger Pitcel made motion to adjourn, second by Connie Wolfgram. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Wolfgram

Secretary

JANUARY 2025 CELEBRATIONS

Happy New Year!

East Lemonweir Birthdays

Betty Johnson – 11

Heinrich Hummelbeck – 12

Kade Stoughtenger – 15

Jennifer Sarnow – 18

No East Lemonweir Anniversaries!

Bethany Birthdays

Shanda Sletten – 4

Fred Wehman – 6

Jon Van Meter – 7

Penny Wehman – 7

Kenneth Adams – 9

Judy Zobal – 13

Katherine Means – 30

Bethany Anniversaries

Pete & Deanna Smith - 21

John&Christina Krotzman –24

Tim & Barb Parker - 28

If name is missing on the Celebration Page, please let us know.