



BETHELITE

MAY 1, 2026: VOL 75, NO. 5

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Living, Breathing Faith

There is something about this season, Eastertide, that feels like spring in the soul.

Eastertide is not just a single morning of alleluias, but a whole season where resurrection keeps unfolding. Where life keeps surprising us. Where what once seemed finished begins again.

In her poem, *Sometimes*, poet Mary Oliver writes:

"Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it."

It is hard to imagine a more fitting description of Easter faith. Because Easter did not begin with certainty. It began with attention. With Mary standing in a garden, noticing what did not make sense. It began with astonishment, as grief gave way to recognition. And it spread because someone dared to tell the story: I have seen the Lord.

This is the rhythm of resurrection. And it is still happening.

(con't ...)



Pastor Lauren Wrightsman



(con't from page 1...)

In the church, we celebrate Easter for fifty days—but we do not leave it there. We are an Easter people. Resurrection is not confined to a season on the calendar. It is the rhythm of our lives.

We live in the promise that death does not have the final word. We trust that new life is always possible. We believe that Christ is still at work, still breathing life into weary hearts, still calling hope out of despair, still bringing something new where we least expect it.

This is not just something we remember. It is something we live. Faith is not something we simply hold. It is something that holds us. Something that breathes through us, day after day, season after season. This is not a silent faith, it is a living, breathing, faith.

It is faith that notices—paying attention to where God is at work in the world around us. It is faith that is astonished - still surprised by grace, still open to joy, still willing to wonder. It is faith that tells the story - through words, through actions, through lives that bear witness to hope.

After the resurrection, the disciples did not suddenly have everything figured out. They still questioned. They still doubted. They still wondered what came next. But something had changed. Christ breathed on them, and their faith became something living and moving. Something they could not keep to themselves.

And that same breath still moves among us.

In this season, as the world around us comes alive with green shoots and longer days, we are invited to notice the quiet ways resurrection is unfolding in our own lives. In acts of kindness. In moments of courage. In communities that choose love over fear.

Faith, like spring, does not arrive all at once. It grows and unfolds. It breathes.

May we be a people who live out this faith. A people who allow ourselves to be astonished by grace and mercy, hope and light. May we be a people who tell the story. Because Christ is risen. Not only then—but now. And that changes everything.

Blessings,
Pastor Lauren Wrightsman

ATTENDER TO MEMBER

Join the Bethel Family

May 17 | 10:30 am

Are you ready to take the next step in your faith journey? Join our "Attender to Member" classes at Bethel Lutheran Church! **Attender to Member** sessions are a welcoming opportunity to learn more about our church's mission, beliefs, and ministries, and to explore what it means to become a member of our faith community.

Whether you're new to Bethel or have been attending for years, we'd love to have you join us. A light lunch will be served. Registration is required.

For more information or to sign up, contact Chelssey at chelssey@bethel-madison.org or scan the QR code.



CONFIRMATION 2026

Sunday, May 17
During 9 am service



Bethel proudly celebrates the **Affirmation of Baptism of our 2026 Confirmands**. Please join us in the Emmaus Room after the service for a reception in honor of these faithful young people. Confirmands include: Harry Gaytan, Arya Knofliceck, Liam Louther, Savannah Scheib, Madison Schneider and Lukas Trine.

Hephatha Strong Baby Sanctuary Fundraiser

Sundays, May 10 - June 21 | after 9 am service

From Mother's Day to Father's Day, **Bethel's Moms Group** invites the congregation to take part in a special fundraiser and donation drive supporting Hephatha Lutheran Church Strong Baby Sanctuary. Running from May 10 through June 21, this six-week effort combines financial giving with donations of essential baby items to serve young mothers and families in Milwaukee.

Strong Baby Sanctuary is a ministry rooted in compassion, dignity, and hope. Its mission is to offer spiritual support, guidance, and education to expectant mothers, new mothers, and families with babies under 12 months of age. Through caring relationships and practical assistance, the program helps families navigate the early months of parenting while building confidence, stability, and community.

The need for ministries like this is significant. Infant mortality remains a serious challenge in many urban communities, and young mothers often face financial stress, limited resources, and social isolation.

Strong Baby Sanctuary responds by surrounding families with encouragement, faith, and tangible support. They provide education for healthy child development, access to needed baby supplies, and a welcoming environment where families know they are valued and loved.

Bethel has partnered with Hephatha in the past, and we are grateful for the opportunity to continue that relationship through this congregation-wide effort. Last year, Bethel members gave generously in support of this ministry, helping provide resources directly to mothers and infants who needed them most. We hope to build on that spirit of generosity again this spring.

Beginning on Mother's Day, each week of the drive will feature a different theme of requested items, giving members many ways to participate. Donations may include newly purchased baby supplies as well as gently used items in good condition. Common needs often include baby clothing, blankets, books, bottles, and other essentials for infant care. Financial gifts are also especially helpful, allowing the ministry to respond flexibly to urgent and changing needs.

This fundraiser is more than a collection drive—it is an opportunity to live out our faith by caring for neighbors and supporting families during a tender and important season of life. Every gift, whether large or small, becomes part of a larger story of love, encouragement, and hope.

Please watch upcoming bulletins and weekly emails for donation themes, drop-off details, and ways to give. Thank you for helping Bethel share Christ's care with mothers, babies, and families through Hephatha Strong Baby Sanctuary.

*You can give now by scanning the QR code or go to **Realm Giving**.*



Bethel's Moms Group

Motherhood is one of life's greatest blessings—but it can also be demanding, joyful, exhausting, beautiful, and unpredictable, sometimes all in the same day. At Bethel Lutheran Church, the **Moms Group** was created to offer connection, encouragement, and community for women navigating the many seasons of motherhood.

Bethel's Moms Group is a welcoming space where mothers can support and lift one another up through both the joys and struggles of parenting. Whether celebrating milestones, sharing challenges, or simply enjoying conversation with others who understand the daily rhythms of family life, this group reminds moms that they do not have to walk the journey alone.



While meetings often focus on the needs and experiences of mothers with young children, moms with children of all ages are warmly invited to attend. Parenting changes over time, but the need for friendship, wisdom, and support remains. The shared experiences of mothers in different stages of life create meaningful conversations and helpful encouragement for everyone involved.

Gatherings take place once a month and include a variety of topics and activities connected to everyday life as a mom. Some meetings may center on practical parenting conversations, faith and family life, self-care, seasonal activities, or simply time to connect and recharge. Each gathering is designed to be welcoming, relaxed, and supportive.

Beyond the meetings themselves, the Moms Group has become an important ministry of care and service within Bethel. Members have worked together on projects that support families both within the congregation and in the wider community, including this month's Hephatha Strong Baby Sanctuary Fundraiser, living out Bethel's commitment to faith in action.

If you are looking for friendship, encouragement, and a place to belong, Bethel's Moms Group would love to welcome you. Whether you are a new mom, a seasoned parent, or somewhere in between, there is a seat for you at the table.

Please watch the weekly bulletin, church emails, and announcements for upcoming meeting dates and details.

We hope you'll join us!

Little Things with Great Love



Deacon Jessica McCarty

My first three months serving as **Deacon of Congregational Care** have unfolded in beautiful ways, much like how Pr. Lauren describes faith and the season of spring in her article this month. The welcome I've felt, the people I've met, and the stories I've heard have made a deep imprint on my heart and inspire me to dive more deeply into the care needs of the Bethel community.

As a Deacon, or Minister of Word & Service, I am called to connect the church with the needs of the world, serving on the margins and bringing the world's needs into the church. Neighborly service in the world, or diakonia in Greek, is what motivates me to listen deeply to where the spirit is leading. And I am grateful it led me to Bethel, where I focus my ~10 hours per week on hospital calls, grief support, presiding at funerals/worship services, and collaborating with Care Team volunteers, who visit with those in our community who are unable to connect with church in person.

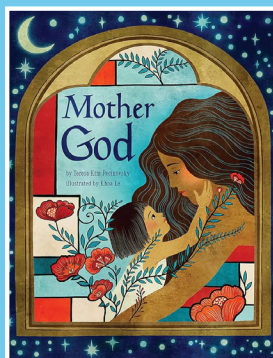
When someone asks me what it is I do as a Deacon on a daily basis, I often answer "little things with great love." But these are not "little things" to me. Accompanying people in their joys and

sorrows, strengthening the net of care and connection within the congregation, and being tuned into the spiritual/emotional needs of those outside of our community are of great importance to me, and I feel privileged to serve in this way.

Professor and author Norma Cook Everist sums it up best. "Deacons respond to the unhealed hurts of the world. Diakonia is not an add-on, but essential to the life and work of the church. Service is offered not just so people will be ready to hear the gospel. Nor is diakonia merely the carrier of the gospel. In service is the real presence of Christ and salvation."

GIGGLES & GRACE

Sunday, May 3rd
9 am in the Library



Join Paula Evenson, Director of Kids & Family Ministry, for some joke telling and the reading of ***Mother God*** by **Kim Pecinovsky**. With lyrical, rhyming text and exquisite illustrations, *Mother God* introduces readers to a dozen images of God inspired by feminine descriptions from Scripture.

BUILDING
UNITY FOR
NONVIOLENT
ACTION

**Building
Unity**
Peace. Justice.
Sustainability. Democracy.

Building Unity for Nonviolent Action (BU4NVA) is a coalition of more than 25 organizations (including Advent Lutheran Church, Plymouth Congregational Church, NAACP, and Voces de la Frontera) mobilizing the Madison community to respond peacefully to harmful and unjust actions and policies of the U.S. government. Monthly Unity gatherings help build relationships, share information, and strengthen a united movement for peace, people, and the planet.

Four Principles of Nonviolence:

1. Seek not to defeat or humiliate, but to reconcile differences and eliminate unjust actions rather than harm individuals.
2. Bring attention to injustice.
3. Choose love, not hate — following the example of Jesus.
4. Stand firm for what is right through active goodwill.

Awakening love and care for our neighbors is what BU4NVA is all about.

To learn more visit: www.buildingunitywisconsin.org. If you are interested in weekly updates, contact Sue Murray at: bethel@bethel-madison.org.

Bethel's Fantastic Plastic Recycling Project Results

In the eighteen months since it began in October 2024, Bethel's Plastic Recycling Project has kept more than 10,000 K-Cup coffee capsules (about 150 pounds) and 35 SUV-loads of Styrofoam—our “fan favorites”—out of landfills and from finding their way into rivers, streams, and lakes.



Bethel staff, led by Chelssey Hewitt, have helped cover the cost of K-Cup recycling and have largely transitioned to compostable pods. **Caring for Creation** members **Kathy Gettrust** and **Sigrid Knuti** lead the project.



In partnership with First United Methodist Church, we also collect and responsibly recycle dental supplies, old socks, markers, pens, pencils, crayons, and more.



Join us! Pick up a brochure at our convenient recycling drop-off site in the parking lot vestibule or at the reception desk, and follow the simple directions.

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL PICNIC

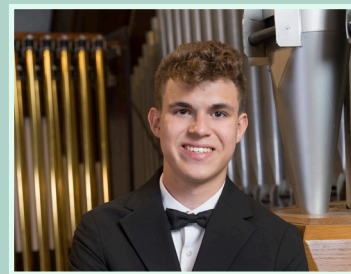
Saturday, June 6
6- 8 pm
at Bethel Horizons



Join us for the **Bethel Lutheran Church Congregational Picnic** and enjoy an evening of fellowship, dinner, worship, pie, and ice cream.

Guests are welcome beginning at 4:30 p.m., dinner will be served from 5:00–6:00 p.m., worship begins at 6:30 p.m. which includes blessing the Horizons' summer staff, and pie and ice cream will be served at 7:30 p.m. Horizons golf carts will be available to transport from the parking lot if needed.

More info/registration coming soon.



ALEX WILKINSON'S SENIOR ORGAN RECITAL

Featuring works by
Bach, Alain,
Widor, and others
Sunday, May 17
2 pm - free event!
in the Sanctuary

Bethel Lutheran Church is pleased to host **Alex Wilkinson's Senior Organ Recital**, an afternoon of inspiring music featuring works by Bach, Alain, Widor, and other master composers. Alex, a senior at Vel Phillips Memorial High School, has studied organ with Wendy Ward after first being introduced to the instrument at Bethel by Gary Lewis. He plans to serve this summer as a **senior counselor at Bethel Horizons** before attending Oberlin Conservatory of Music in the fall to pursue a bachelor's degree in organ performance. All are welcome.

CHAT N' CHEW
"Red, White and BBQ"
Tuesday, May 26
6- 8 pm
at the Forde's

Join us at the Forde's for food and fellowship featuring brats and BBQ! Register on Realm or contact Kathy Forde or Carrie Bernhardt on Sundays.



CIRCLE OF LOVE
GOLF OUTING
Monday, Sep 28
Blackhawk Country Club

Save the Date!

Golf season is here. Plan now for the Circle of Love golf outing.

Make your plans to golf or support financially, or both!

REALM CONNECT: YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS

As we continue to grow in how we use **Realm Connect** at Bethel, one of the most important next steps is hearing directly from you. Over the past several months, many of you have logged in, updated your information, and begun using Realm more regularly—and that has already made a meaningful difference. Our records are becoming more accurate, communication is improving, and we are better able to support the life of our congregation.

Now, we want to take the next step together.

YOU'RE INVITED: CONGREGATIONAL LISTENING SESSIONS

Throughout May, I will be hosting a series of **congregational listening sessions**. These are intentionally informal, with **no set agenda**—simply an opportunity for you to stop in, share your experience, ask questions, and offer feedback on what is working well and what you would like to see improved or added in Realm.

These sessions can also serve as **help times** if you need assistance navigating Realm, updating your profile, or understanding its features.

All sessions will be held in Room 120, and you are welcome to come and go as your schedule allows.

UPCOMING DATES:

- **May 24 | 8:00–11:00 AM**
- **May 31 | 8:00–11:00 AM**

Please feel free to “pop in” at any time during these windows—I would truly value the opportunity to hear from you.

LOOKING AHEAD: ONGOING HELP HOURS

Beginning in June, I will also be offering **monthly Sunday help hours** for anyone who would like assistance or has questions about Realm.

- SAVE THE DATE:**
- **June 14 | 8:00–11:00 AM**
 - **July 12 | 8:00–11:00 AM**

These will also take place in **Room 120** and are open to anyone who would like support or simply wants to learn more.

A QUICK REMINDER: LOG IN & VERIFY YOUR INFORMATION

If you haven't already done so, please take a few minutes to **log in to Realm Connect** and **verify that your profile information is accurate and up to date**. This includes your contact information, household details, and communication preferences.

Keeping this information current helps Bethel:

- Communicate with you in the ways you prefer
- Ensure you receive relevant updates and opportunities
- Maintain an accurate membership roster for ministry planning

Even a quick check-in makes a difference.

Bethel Lutheran Church



NEED HELP WITH REALM?

If you're unable to attend one of the listening sessions or help hours, I am always happy to meet with you individually. Simply email me at Chelsey@Bethel-Madison.org to schedule a time.

Thank you for being part of this ongoing work. Your feedback, participation, and willingness to engage are what make Realm a meaningful tool for our entire Bethel community.



ADULT VBS

June 23 - 25

Dottie's Ranch
Oregon, WI

Save the date! Bethel will hold its first-ever **Adult Vacation Bible School**, June 23–25 at Dottie's Ranch near Oregon, Wisconsin, just a short drive from Madison. When registration opens in May, you may sign up for one, two, or all three days as your schedule allows. A daily fee (TBD) will help cover lunch and supplies.

The theme for the three days is **Bread & Wine: Food for Body & Soul**. Each day will include a Bible study led by Pastor Lauren, a baking lesson from "Auntie Jill," and free time to explore the beautiful nature preserve surrounding Dottie's Ranch. The day will conclude with a tasting of the day's baking and an optional BYOB wine gathering on the patio.

Bread and wine hold deep meaning throughout Scripture. Bread appears from manna in the wilderness to Jesus' words, "I am the bread of life." Wine is also woven throughout the Bible as a sign of joy, blessing, and celebration. It is fitting that Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine, and that wine became the symbol of the new covenant established through his death and resurrection.

More information about Bethel's Adult VBS will be coming in May, along with registration details.

Summer@ Horizons

**A Retreat for the
Whole Family**

June 30 - July 2
Bethel Horizons



You are invited to spend three fun days at Horizons with activities for all ages including hiking, swimming, biking, service projects, ropes/cliff adventures, art activities, group activities/games, kid-friendly entertainment, adult nights out, and of course, campfires!

This is a family-friendly, intergenerational event open to the public and hosted by Bethel Horizons.

Lodging and Food? Reserve your own bedroom with private bath in the Prairie Center or camp at the Tent & Trailer campground. Leave the cooking to us - all meals will be provided. We can accommodate dietary restrictions.

Cost: Thanks to a generous Bethel Endowment Grant, we are able to offer reduced rates! Family with indoor lodging \$600; Family staying in the campground \$450; Individual with indoor lodging \$300; Individual in the campground \$200. Scholarships are available. Please prayerfully consider what you can contribute. Registration costs cover accommodations, activities, and meals.

Questions? Contact Heather at heather@bethel-madison. Scan QR code to register: org.registration.



Vacation Bible Camp

Aug 3 - 6
Bethel Horizons

VBC@Horizons is a cherished Bethel tradition. Kids through age 18 are welcome for a week of camp, faith formation, and fun. Your children or grandchildren will be transformed by a week spent living in Christian community at Bethel Horizons. Adults are welcome, bring the whole family!

- Children ages 5 and up can attend day camp without an adult.
- Children ages 8-18 can attend overnight camp without an adult.

To Register click on the QR code to go to the Bethel Horizons website and then click on the words "Register Here" and login or create a new account. You just need the special code Bethel26 when it asks for the "GHR ID." This code will allow you to see VBC as an option to select for registration.



Vacation Bible Camp Jr.

Aug 4
Bethel Horizons

New this year, **VBC Jr** for kids and parents birth-5yr. Childcare staff will lead programming for the whole family. You also have the option to spend the night, bring grandparents or go 'rogue' and do your own thing.

Scan QR code to register:





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BETHEL

LUTHERAN CHURCH

312 Wisconsin Avenue
Madison, WI 53703



LOOKING AHEAD

Mon, May 25

Memorial Day

Sat, June 6

Horizons Bikeathon

Congregational Picnic

Sun, June 21

Concert Series: Piano Trio

FUND FACT\$

In 2026, Bethel has 363 households who have pledged support for their church this year. Thank you for making a plan!

The most popular age for creating a **Charitable Gift Annuity** is found to be 79 years old. Continued high gift annuity rates make a one-time life income QCD option especially appealing, and reinforce CGAs as a smart, tax-efficient way to give and receive. Up to \$50,000 from your IRA is allowable to set up a CGA, we arrange these gift plans with the help of the ELCA Foundation and the paperwork is minimal.

Just after tax time is the time of year when donors are most open to learning how gifts made this year can reduce their tax bill next year, satisfy required distributions, or support long-term charitable goals.

As followers of Christ, our desire to give generously stems from our faith rather than tax benefits we might receive. But understanding how tax laws affect charitable giving can help us be better stewards of our resources.

MARCH 2026 YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS

	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Variance
REVENUES			
Offerings	445,858	423,575	22,283
Miscellaneous revenue	49,946	112,668	(62,722)
Non-operating revenue	5,840	5,625	215
Total Revenue	501,644	541,868	(40,224)
MINISTRY INVESTMENTS			
Staff	363,247	399,930	(36,683)
Ministry & Resource Teams	107,336	107,731	(395)
Benevolence	13,625	12,550	1,075
Administration	27,950	21,452	6,498
Total Ministry Investments	512,159	541,663	(29,504)
Total Net Income (Loss)	(10,515)	205	(10,720)

A complete copy of the financial statements are posted to Realm;
you can access these through your Bethel Realm profile.



bethel_madison



Bethel.Lutheran.Madison.WI



BethelLutheranTV

Worship Times: Sunday at 7:30am & 9am - Traditional
Saturday at 5pm - Casual/Jazz

