



The STAR of Bethlehem



Bethlehem Lutheran Church

An LCMS Congregation

902 Hitchcock Drive SW, Aiken SC 29803

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<https://sites.google.com/view/blcaikensc/home>

https://www.facebook.com/BLCAikenSC/?ref=nf_target

Redacted Website Edition

January 2026

PASTOR'S MESSAGE:

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king,
behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem saying,
“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?
For we have seen His star in the East
and have come to worship Him.” - Mt. 2:1-2*

The season of Epiphany begins on January 5th and ends on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, which this year is on February 18th. While the Epiphany season tends to get upstaged by Christmas and Easter, it is the second oldest season in the church year. The seasons of Advent and Christmas were added to the liturgical year much later in the history of the church. The theme of Epiphany is the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. The visit of the three wise men presenting their gifts to the boy Jesus, and falling down and worshiping Him, is the first Scriptural record of Gentiles recognizing Jesus as Christ, the Lord, and showing that He is not the Savior of the Jews only, but of all mankind. The Epiphany season also emphasizes the fact that the Christ is no mere man, but He is God come to us in the flesh. He is no distant, unattached deity, like all of the gods of man's imagination. The one true God comes into His creation, comes unto man, in order to rescue us from our fallen state. The epiphany of Jesus, then, is the manifestation to us of God who loves us, despite our fallen state, and comes, not to punish us, but to save us from eternal judgment, and to give us eternal life. For this, we give joyful thanks to the Lord.

-Pastor



Wise men
still seek
HIM



All items for the newsletter are to be submitted to Debbie C., editor, **no later than the 23rd of the month** and, upon approval, may be edited for space or clarity.

Early submissions are appreciated.

The STAR of Bethlehem newsletter is published monthly. The website and large print versions have been modified. The LCMS triple-cross logo is used with permission. All rights reserved.

Lutheran Resources

LCMS- Free to be Faithful

www.lcms.org/socialissues/freetobe-faithful

Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty

www.LCRLFreedom.org

Lutheran Hour Ministries

<https://www.lhm.org/>

The Lutheran Witness

<https://witness.lcms.org/>

Southeastern District, LCMS

<https://se.lcms.org/>

Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

www.lcms.org/

Concordia Publishing House

www.cph.org/

International Lutheran Council

www.ILCouncil.org

FROM THE EDITOR:

Did you enjoy the musical advent treats that Rebecca W. provided for us? (Found in Dec. *Star*.) My favorites were Day 5 - Cello & Piano, and Day 22 - Men's a Capella. What were yours? Let Rebecca know! Feedback is always appreciated.

Thanks to all who contributed to the *Star* in 2025!

Readers, what did you like? Do you want any changes in OUR newsletter? Please let me know.

~DC



CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Debbie C., Recording Secretary

THANK YOU from all of us to the benefactor who sponsored a dinner out for the Council. What a nice surprise! We enjoyed our meal at Roma's and waddled home abundantly satisfied!

The Year-End Voters' Assembly was held after the service on December 14. With 37 members in attendance (and in just 18 minutes): some council members' reports were heard; Treasurer Dana A. and Property Manager Jonathan H. were re-elected; Pastor's annual Housing Resolution (for IRS) was approved; and, the proposed 2026 Budget was accepted.

It was announced that Kathy Sa. will be completing the fellowship chairman term (through 2026). Eileen A. and Kathy St. were appointed as the 2025 Financial Review Committee.

The 2026 Mid-Year Voters' Assembly will be June-ish, date to be announced.

Please attend the installation of the newly elected officers during the service on January 11. (Per bylaws, installations and the beginning of terms is on the 2nd Sunday in January.)

Volunteers for counters, counting witnesses, and stewardship board members are still being sought. Contact Mark Z.

The elders have selected Joel C. to continue as head elder. And, Carolina C. remains head of the altar guild.

The next council meeting is after the service on Jan. 18, 2026.



MUSICAL NOTES

Rebecca W.

HYMNS FOR JANUARY

Our goal is to support you in this endeavor to introduce hymns that complement the lessons each week. A single hymn can be considered a mini sermon. We want to teach and pass on our rich Lutheran traditions found in our hymns. Please be aware that hymn selection may change from time to time.

January 4:

523: O Word of God Incarnate **MUNICH**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6o_lzpCdxE&list=RDk6o_lzpCdxE&start_radio=1

410: Within the Father's House **FRANCONIA**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKMQc4NcWD8&list=RDEKMQc4NcWD8&start_radio=1

399: The Star Proclaims the King is Here **WO GOTT ZUM HAUS**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xeSTAqeNAFk&list=RDxeSTAqeNAFk&start_radio=1

376: Once in Royal David's City **IRBY**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKcIcnOYVb8&list=RDaKcIcnOYVb8&start_radio=1

January 11:

398: Hail to the Lord's Anointed **FREUT EUCH, IHR LIEBEN**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuoLbh_cqAg&list=RDyuoLbh_cqAg&start_radio=1

600: Mark How the Lamb of God's Self-Offering **RENDEZ A DIEU**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHvwaldxKok&list=RDyHvwaldxKok&start_radio=1

405: To Jordan's River Came Our Lord **WINCHESTER NEW**

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=LSB+594

594: God's Only Child, I Gladly Say It **BACHOFEN**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igIhhbDge-4&list=RDigIhhbDge-4&start_radio=1

January 18

795: Voices Raised to You We Offer **SONG OF PRAISES**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVYWaRujK30&list=RDoVYWaRujK30&start_radio=1

402: The Only Son from Heaven **HERR CHRIST, DER EINIG GOTTS SOHN**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJJMdt7m9KU&list=RDxJJMdt7m9KU&start_radio=1

540: Christ the Word of God **HOLY MANNA**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJJMdt7m9KU&list=RDxJJMdt7m9KU&start_radio=1

702: My Faith Looks Up to Thee **OLIVET**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLz6vEKBsPI&list=RDoLz6vEKBsPI&start_radio=1

January 25

539: O Christ Our True and Only Light **MOVILLE**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9Pe_VOgxiE&list=RDH9Pe_VOgxiE&start_radio=1

856: O Christ, Who Called the 12 **TERRA BEATA**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRgDummBwXY&list=RDTRgDummBwXY&start_radio=1

849: Praise the One Who Breathes the Darkness **BEACH SPRING**

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=LSB++849

649: Blest Be the Tie that Binds **BOYLSTON**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMWF3eNMiHw&list=RDUMWF3eNMiHw&start_radio=1



CURRENT BLC COUNCIL MEMBERS

*Term-limited (someone else must serve next election)

Jan. 12, 2025- Jan 10, 2027

(Even-year elections, next election 2026 Year-End Meeting)

President – Joel C.*

Vice President – vacant

Recording Secretary – Debbie C.*

Stewardship Chairman – Mark Z.

Fellowship Chairman – Kathy S.

Jan. 18, 2026 – Jan. 9, 2028

(Odd-year election, next election 2027 Year-End Meeting)

Treasurer – Dana A.*

Property Manager – Jonathan H.*

Education Chairman – vacant

Evangelism & Mission Chairman – vacant

2026 Head Elder – Joel C.

Pastor Engwall – Advisory

Note: Per bylaws, installation of council members, and the start of the term, is the 2nd Sunday in January.



CHRISTMAS AND THE TURNING OF THE YEAR

As we draw near to Christmas and stand on the threshold of a new year, we pause to reflect not only on the passage of time, but on the faithfulness of God who carries His people through every season of life.

At Christmas, we are reminded that our Lord did not come in power or splendor as the world defines it, but in humility — as a child laid in a manger. In that holy night, God stepped into our broken world, not from a distance, but fully present among us. In Jesus Christ, God came to dwell with His people, to bear our burdens, forgive our sins, and give us life that death itself cannot overcome.

The angel's words to the shepherds still ring true for us today:

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

This promise is for every believer, at every stage of life. Christ continues to come to us through His Word and Sacraments, bringing forgiveness, peace, and hope that do not fade with time.

We give thanks to God for the faithful ministry we receive among us, especially through the preaching and pastoral care of **Pastor Engwall**. We also give thanks to God for the faithful help

He provides alongside Pastor Engwall in his ministry — a reminder that the Lord often strengthens His servants through those who walk faithfully beside them.

As elders, we are called to serve quietly — to pray for you, to care for you, and to walk alongside you as fellow members of Christ's body. As the year turns, we rest with you in the sure promises of God. Whatever lies ahead, known or unknown, we trust that the same Lord who came for us at Bethlehem remains with us still. His mercies are new every morning, His promises do not fail, and His love endures.

May this Christmas season draw our hearts again to the manger and the cross, where we see most clearly the depth of God's love for us. And may the year ahead be marked by trust in Christ, care for one another, and the enduring hope we have in our Savior.

In Him alone is our peace.

In Him alone is our hope.

A blessed Christmas and a grace-filled New Year to you all.

*In Christ,
The Elders*



Matthew 3:16–17

[16] And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (ESV)

From Jan. 11 Gospel Reading

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"INVISIBLE"

And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. (Luke 1:59-62)

Just imagine how frustrated Elizabeth must have been with the neighbors. They won't listen to her when she tells them the baby's name—no, they have to go "over her head" to ask Zechariah. She probably wanted to throw something at them.

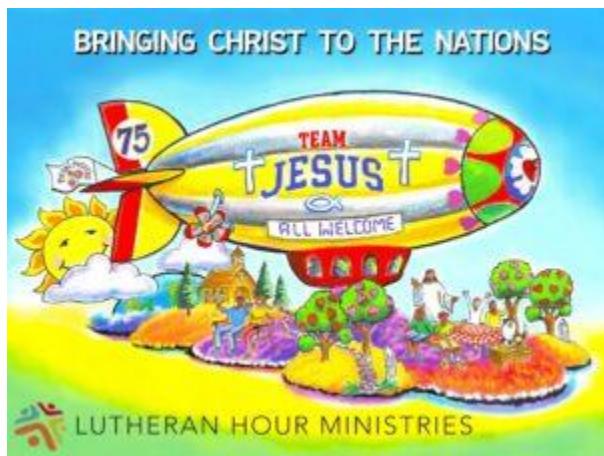
That kind of thing can make you feel like you're invisible—like people are looking right past you to find someone who really matters. If it happens often enough, you may start believing them—that in fact you don't matter, you have no value, and your feelings and opinions don't count.

But God doesn't overlook us—even the last, least, and lowest of us. It was for us that He was born into our world as a helpless baby. It was for us that Jesus taught and served and cared for people—and then allowed Himself to be betrayed into death, though He had done nothing wrong. Jesus knew that His death would set us free from the power of death—and His resurrection would lead directly to ours. How much do you matter? Enough for Jesus to give Himself for you—gladly.

WE PRAY: Lord, when I feel invisible, remind me that You see me and care for me, please. Amen.



Daily Devotions from Lutheran Hour Ministries
Received via email December 14, 2025



Building off the parade theme of "The Magic in Teamwork," the 2026 Lutheran Hour Ministries float entry is titled "Bringing Christ to the Nations®" and marks the 75th time the ministry has been part of the parade. The float will feature a "Team Jesus" blimp flying over the world. Coming forth from the church, Jesus celebrates with 12 modern-day disciples, as it features the message ALL WELCOME. "Team Jesus" serves as a reminder that it takes everyone to fulfill the callings Christ has placed upon us to do the work of bringing Christ and His redeeming love to the world. Riders on the 2026 float will represent some of the vocations Christ has called us for the building of His church and furtherance of the Gospel message: a teacher, a missionary, a pastor, and others. Additional

symbolism will include the Luther Seal on the nose of the blimp, crosses on the side, "75" on the tail in honor of our 75th year having a Christian float in the parade, and a **Petal Pushers®** banner to highlight the annual volunteer efforts of around 4,000 individuals.

The LHM float will be positioned as the 33rd entry in the 2026 parade. The float should pass by the Grandstand between approximately 8:40 and 8:50 a.m. PST.

https://www.lhm.org/dont-miss-lhms-float-during-the-2026-rose-parade/?sfmc_id=56310123

2025 IN REVIEW

BLC CELEBRATES!

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Colette G
Mary Beth B
Linda L
Debby B
Jerome M
Tommy M



JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

21 - Roger & Charlsie B

CONGRATULATIONS

Juanita R. – a new great-granddaughter, name TBD

Jim & Kathy S. – a new granddaughter, Emmie

Let us know your special events.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Sandy A. (Confirmation)
Hampton C. (Transfer)
Suzy E. (Baptism & Confirmation)
Mike and Marie O. (Transfer)



Pastor and Hampton C



Mike and Marie O, and Pastor

WEDDINGS

Rev. Colin F. and Abigail G. (non-members)
Jacob R. and Philippa E. (non-members)

COMMUNITY DONATIONS

- **ACTS**
 - Monthly food collections
 - About 30% of donated rummage sale items
- **Life Choices Baby Bottle Drive** - \$605.95
- **Angel Tree** – 32 gifts were provided to men and women with mental challenges residing in local care homes.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Outdoor Easter Service



Deaconess Sandra Rhein's Presentation -About \$440 donated



Rummage Sale



WORSHIP, SERVICE, FELLOWSHIP...





CALLED HOME TO CHRIST in 2025



JOY ANN K.



Charlotte C., July 30



Gerri W., Jan 5



Many thanks to all who have served the Lord through service at BLC this year: Pastor, elders, musicians, council, ushers, altar guild, office help, fellowship, cooking, donations, yard work, special events, property maintenance, cleaning, praying, visiting, driving, etc., and, to all those who work in unseen and/or unrecognized ways.

John 1:32–34

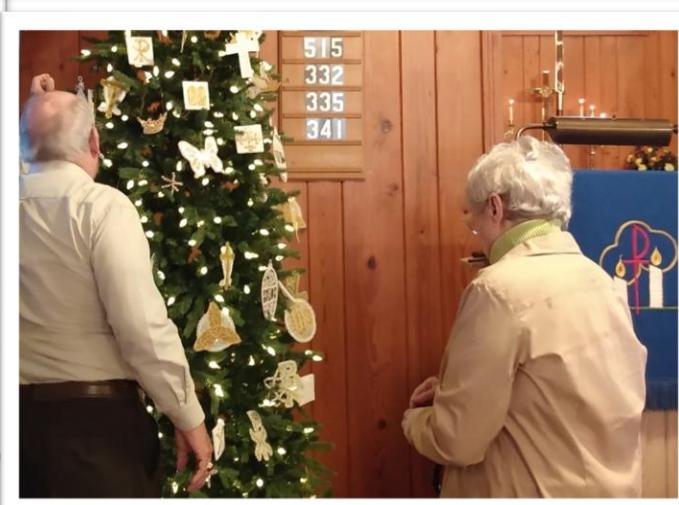
[32] And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. [33] I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ [34] And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” (ESV)

From Jan. 18 Gospel Reading

DECORATING THE CHRISMON TREE

1ST Sunday of Advent, Nov. 30, 2025





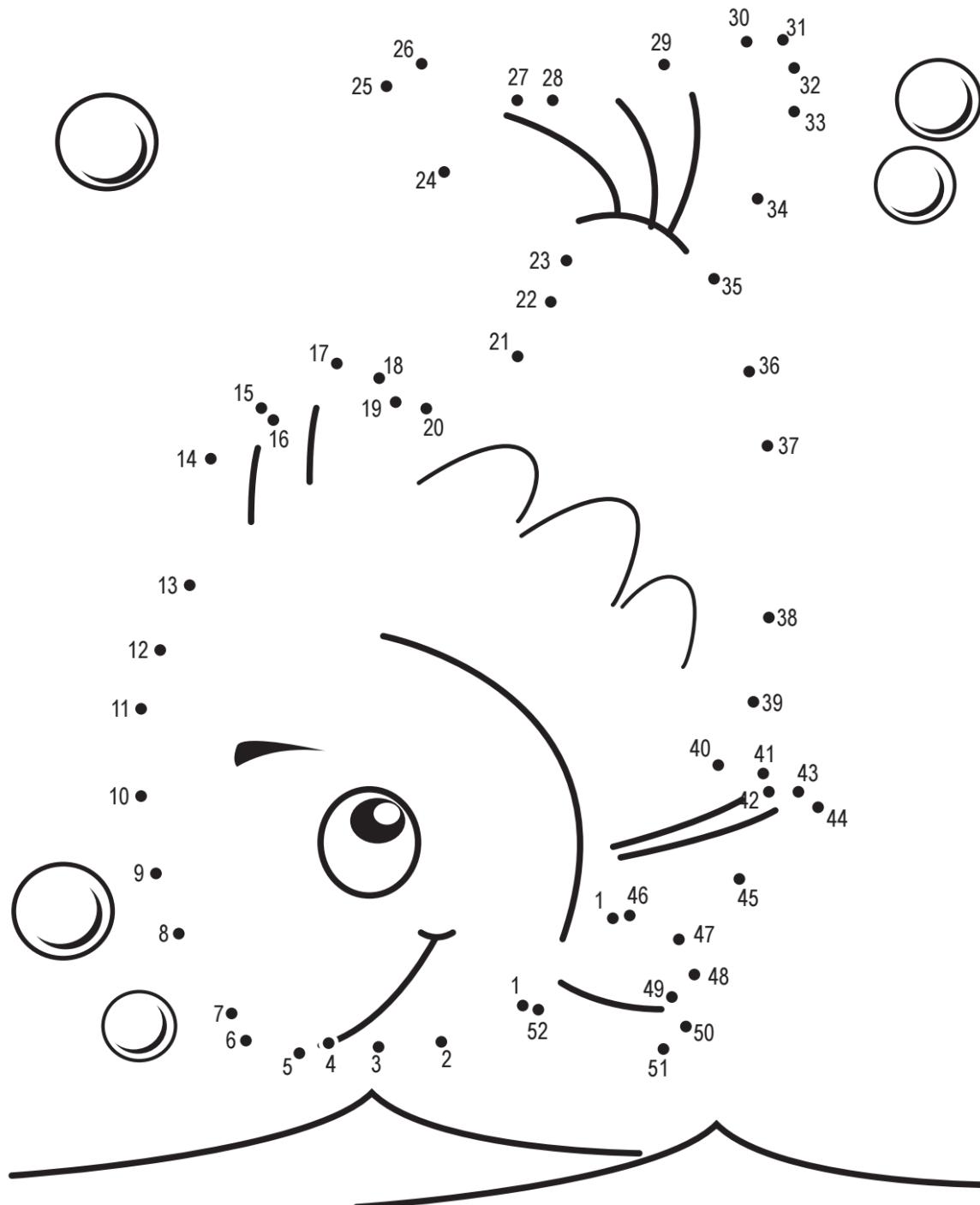




Peter Catches a Big Fish

CONNECT THE DOTS

Begin at number 1 and draw a line to each number after that to connect all of the dots. When you finish you will have a picture you can color too!



January 2026

Vocabulary from Gospel Readings

Find the words in the grid. When you are done, the unused letters in the grid will spell out a hidden message. Pick them out from left to right, top line to bottom line. Words can go horizontally, vertically and diagonally in all eight directions.

D	E	T	S	E	R	R	A	H	A	S	R	E	H	C	A	E	T	P	P	Y
T	R	E	A	S	U	R	E	D	N	J	E	R	U	S	A	L	E	M	E	W
C	Y	E	A	R	G	N	Z	G	N	I	D	N	A	T	S	R	E	D	N	U
I	L	K	I	N	G	D	O	M	Z	K	W	T	H	S	B	K	G	K	L	F
R	H	A	I	A	S	I	T	L	P	Y	M	F	I	S	H	E	R	M	E	N
C	L	N	P	V	C	P	H	P	Q	M	D	D	T	E	D	J	M	P	P	D
U	Q	L	F	B	X	T	G	W	D	E	E	E	W	N	J	M	B	D	M	B
M	P	L	E	G	N	A	I	F	Z	S	M	J	A	K	Y	S	J	M	L	N
C	T	Q	P	E	V	T	E	I	A	P	G	W	T	R	Q	P	O	M	B	B
I	B	R	P	Y	N	D	T	E	L	O	A	K	E	A	W	I	U	M	T	
S	G	E	Z	E	O	P	L	E	S	P	B	N	R	D	M	R	R	H	O	D
E	R	N	S	V	A	P	L	P	T	P	A	V	S	C	D	I	N	E	W	E
D	R	S	E	B	N	W	E	D	H	V	N	S	F	W	Y	T	E	A	G	H
T	X	O	F	H	V	L	M	V	E	T	F	A	S	X	E	I	Y	L	G	S
D	H	R	V	L	E	J	B	D	Z	V	Q	O	Z	O	L	R	F	I	M	I
E	R	G	M	A	E	A	L	M	M	M	I	T	L	A	V	Z	S	N	M	N
V	M	J	I	S	F	O	V	O	C	B	N	E	T	L	R	E	K	G	R	O
O	Q	K	U	L	H	T	D	E	H	F	B	H	C	T	O	E	R	Q	Y	T
L	T	S	H	E	N	S	B	J	N	C	P	M	N	N	H	W	T	Q	B	S
E	C	G	B	L	I	Z	W	T	C	A	M	R	A	C	O	Z	E	H	T	A
B	B	M	M	W	Z	L	Z	N	N	H	W	O	R	L	D	C	K	D	N	Q

© 2025 by DeborahC. Made using 1-2-3 Word Search Maker™

Angel	Dove	Jesus	Spirit
Answers	Eight	Journey	Teachers
Arrested	Favor	Kingdom	Temple
Astonished	Fishermen	Lamb	Treasured
Baptized	Followed	Light	Understanding
Behold	Gospel	Naphtali	Water
Beloved	Healing	Nazareth	Wisdom
Circumcised	Heaven	Passover	Witness
Conceived	Isaiah	Pleased	Womb
Darkness	Jerusalem	Repent	World

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DIRECTORY UPDATES

Add:

ACTS Collection Item: 1# bags of rice
Questions: ACTS Liaison Contact Mark Z.

It's time to sign up for flowers on the **2026 Flower Chart**. See the poster in the east narthex information center. The cost remains \$21.60

FELLOWSHIP

Happy New Year! The fellowship team is working on this year's fun social activities. We request suggestions! Our first social will be a potluck on January 25 after the service. Meat will be provided. More activities to come. Thank you!

~ The Fellowship Team
Contact: Kathy S., Fellowship Chairman

BLC CLASSIFIEDS

To place a classified ad in the *Star*, please submit the information to me by the usual monthly deadline- noon on the 23rd day of the month.

Please use your BLC Directory for contact information.
~DC

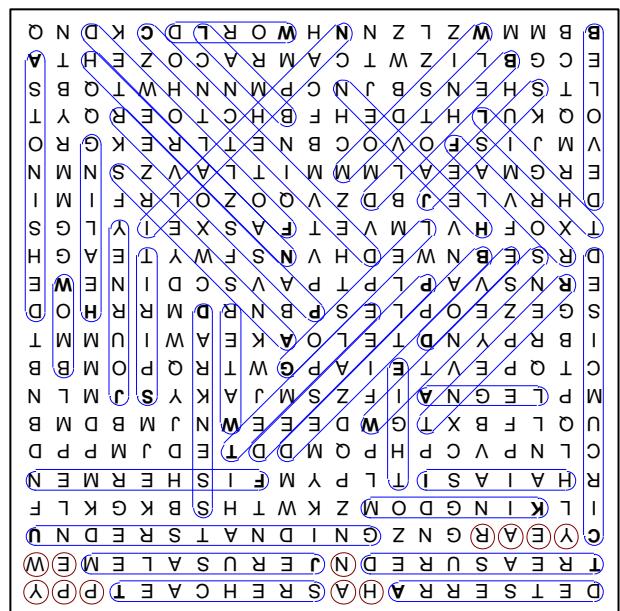


SERVICES OFFERED:

Dana A. (in his "semi-retirement") now is providing residential painting services, available to members and non-members alike. He offers great work at an affordable price, with MANY references available. Services include trim, ceilings, and cabinets.

For Sale: Wanted: Referrals Requested:

Personals: Etc.:



January 2026

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AIKEN, SC

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
			7pm Service New Year's Eve	New Year's Day		Pastor's Day Off
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9am Bible Study 10:30 Service ACTS & TLC Meals	10am Women's Bible Study Epiphany	10am Women's Bible Study	7pm Bible Study	Pastor Shut-in Visits		Pastor's Day Off
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9am Bible Study 10:30 Service w/ Council Installation Baptism of Our Lord	10am Women's Bible Study	7pm Bible Study	Pastor Shut-in Visits			Pastor's Day Off
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9am Bible Study 10:30 Service, TLC 11:45 Council Mtg	10am Women's Bible Study	7pm Bible Study	Pastor Shut-in Visits			Pastor's Day Off
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
9am Bible Study 10:30 Service Potluck	10am Women's Bible Study	7pm Bible Study	Pastor Shut-in Visits			
	2		Notes			
			ACTS Collection item: 1# bags of rice			