



The STAR of Bethlehem



**Bethlehem Lutheran Church
An LCMS Congregation**

902 Hitchcock Drive SW, Aiken SC 29803

Pastor John Engwall, 803-649-6417, blcaikensc@gmail.com

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

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

Redacted Website Edition

April 2026

03-08-26

A Letter from Pastor Engwall to The Body of Christ at Bethlehem Lutheran Church

My dear, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

I have accepted the call to serve as the pastor of Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sweet Springs, Missouri, Missouri District. My final service at Bethlehem will be on Sunday, April 19th.

This decision comes only after much heartfelt, often tearful, prayer, many conversations, and dedicated discernment.

Even though I believe that I need to go to Immanuel, and serve the body of Christ assembled there, as I have served you, it is not easy to bring to a close my ministry at Bethlehem, and make room for your next pastor, whom the Lord will send to you, and who will walk with you, through Bethlehem's next chapter.

In all of this, rest assured that the Lord is with you, it is His church, and He knows the plans that He has for His bride, and for each of us, His children.

Teffie and I thank you for your continued prayers. We love you all very much.

In Christ,
-Pastor



Holy Week Schedule - page 2

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HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday – March 29

10:30 Divine Service

Maundy Thursday – April 2

7pm Service

Good Friday – April 3

7pm Service



EASTER – APRIL 5

9:00am Breakfast

Sign-up sheet will be posted

**10:00 BLC Group photo
for Engwall's**

10:10 – Flowering of the Cross
Bring fresh or artificial flowers as
desired. Some artificial flowers
available for use.

10:30 Divine Service
Outside, weather permitting

[FROM THE EDITOR:]

Many thanks to Pastor Engwall for his regular contributions to, and careful proofreading of, the *Star* these last many years. And, thanks to Teffie for taking photos whenever I asked. Thanks also for all you've done for me, and for our BLC family. Y'all are loved and will be missed.

May your new adventure provide you with joy and abundant blessings. God be with you.



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 OUR COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With Pastor Engwall departing to answer another call, Bethlehem enters a period full of both opportunity and stress. During this Lenten season, we should remember Christ's words to the disciples, "I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you" (Jn 14:18), "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am going away and I will come to you'" (Jn 14:27-28). While we may have challenging moments, the Board of Elders and the Church Council are working to keep things running as normally as possible.

There will be services every Sunday. One of the difficulties is our relative isolation from the other LCMS churches in South Carolina. This makes obtaining a traditional vacancy pastor difficult. What we are planning is to alternate between Divine Service with Communion led by a guest pastor and Divine Service without Communion led by an elder. At the moment, we have Pastor Scott Simpson, Associate Pastor at Holy Trinity in Columbia, scheduled for April 26th and myself leading the service on May 3rd. We are praying things work out such that Pastor Simpson will be able to continue serving regularly, but if not, we will be contacting other pastors on the pulpit supply list and filling in with elder led services, as needed.

Bible studies will continue. Doug N. will be leading the Sunday morning Bible study. Tuesday morning Women's Bible study is under development. Wednesday evening will continue. We will meet and allow that group decide what they would like to do. Fellowship opportunities will continue so please join us. [See dates on announcements page.]

The Board of Elders and the Church Council worked together to decide that the Call Committee would consist of seven members. The three elders, myself, Steve W., and Tom T., are part of the committee. Our goal was to get a reasonable cross section to best represent the congregation. Some of those we asked declined, which is okay. Others we did not ask because they are already filling big roles within the church. The rest of the committee will consist of Doug K., Mark Z., Rebecca S., and Joanne M.. While these may be the committee members, everyone still has a role. One of the advantages of modern technology is that everybody posts everything. If you are curious about pastors on the call list, go to their church websites and watch their sermons. See how they run their services. Do they chant? What music do they choose? We can't be everywhere and the more eyes and ears we have, the better. Relay your opinions to the committee.

So, what are we asking of you? Three things. 1) Pray. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul exhorts us to "pray without ceasing" (1Th 5:17). Pray for a smooth transition, pray for knowledge and wisdom, pray for those making decisions. 2) Participate. Attend services, Bible studies, and fellowship opportunities. There will be surveys and questionnaires. Complete them as quickly as possible. Ask questions of the call committee. Participate in vetting pastors. Submit names of potential pastors. We want everyone to have a voice in this process. You may be asked to take on a task. Please help as you are able. Volunteer to help out with altar guild or fellowship or visiting shut-ins or anywhere you see a need. There is plenty to do. 3) We ask for your patience. While we may want the process to move quickly, things work out in God's time. You may not understand why some decisions are made, but realize that we are trying to do our best for the whole church. We will communicate about the call process and Bethlehem's needs regularly via announcements and the *Star*.

While Pastor Engwall is leaving, he is not the church. We are, and we are the Body of Christ, and together we will navigate through the vacancy to a new Pastor. So, "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am going away and I will come to you.'" (Jn 14:27-28)

Yours in Christ, Joel C.

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Debbie C., Recording Secretary

Carolina corralled us and managed to get a group picture, finally. We don't often hold still! 😊

At our most recent meeting on March 15, we primarily discussed how to fulfill the needs BLC will have during the pastoral vacancy. Please see Head Elder Joel C's letter to the congregation on page 3. He will keep us updated throughout the call process.



L to R: Property Manager Jonathan H, Stewardship Chairman Mark Z, Fellowship Chairman Kathy Sa, Recording Secretary Debbie C, Treasurer Dana A, and President & Head Elder Joel C

Starting April 20, Elders Joel and Steve will be monitoring the church phone, email, and pastor's email address. You

may also contact them directly. They'll also manage calling post announcements. Those under Pastor Engwall's Elders' Care List may contact any elder as needed, and any elder may be in contact with you. Helga will remain active as volunteer church secretary (and financial secretary). Continue to contact Debbie C for any changes to the directory, anniversary & birthday lists, or regarding the *Star*.

This is God's church. We carry on with joy and anticipation. Please keep attending and participating in events.

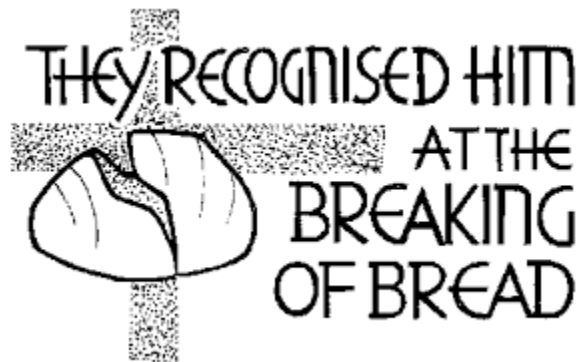
Our next council meet meeting will be after the service on April 12.



Luke 24:33–35

[33] And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, [34] saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" [35] Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (ESV)

From Apr. 12 Gospel Reading





WITH GRATITUDE AND BLESSINGS:

PASTOR ENGWALL'S NEW CALL

As our congregation approaches a meaningful transition, we give thanks for the faithful service of Pastor John Engwall and his wife, Teffie, as they prepare to answer God's call to Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sweet Springs, Missouri.

Pastor Engwall's final service with us will be held on Sunday, April 19th. During his time here, he has faithfully proclaimed God's Word, administered the Sacraments, and shepherded this congregation with care, humility, and dedication. Teffie has also been a blessing to our church family, offering her support, kindness, and presence in countless ways.

Many of us have also been richly blessed through the Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday Bible studies. These gatherings were not only times of learning, but of thoughtful discussion and growth. Questions—sometimes simple, sometimes deeper and more challenging—were always welcomed. Pastor Engwall approached each one with patience, insight, and a genuine joy in engaging the conversation. In those moments, we were reminded that growing in faith often comes through seeking, asking, and learning together as a community.

While we will miss them, we rejoice that the Lord continues to call His servants into new fields of service. As it is written in Romans 10:15, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

And while we send Pastor Engwall and Teffie off with our prayers and blessings, we do so with a smile as well—knowing that should he ever find himself in need of "employment," he would always be welcomed back among us. After all, faithful servants who teach, guide, and patiently answer our many questions are not so easily replaced.



We invite all members to join us in giving thanks for Pastor Engwall's ministry and to keep Pastor and Teffie Engwall in our prayers as they begin this next chapter. May the Lord bless their journey, strengthen them in their calling, and grant them joy and peace in their new congregation.

In Christ,
The Elders

[John 10:10b](#)

[I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.](#)
(ESV)

From April 26 Gospel Reading

APRIL STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE

As I searched and prayed for inspiration for my first monthly message from the Stewardship Board, the March 23rd devotion in *Portals of Prayer* gave me that inspiration. (Yes, I procrastinated until Debbie's publishing deadline; shame on me.)

We've all heard the words of encouragement, "You've got this", at one time or another. I'd like to change that to, "We've got this."

Many of you have been members of BLC much longer than I. If you are longtime LCMS Lutheran, you probably have experienced pastoral vacancies at one time or another. I don't want to call this "normal", but God has a plan for each and every one of us, including pastors. It is hard to accept sometimes, but in my opinion, a temporary vacancy reminds all of us WE are the Church. I believe a pastor is one of God's many blessings to his people.

Getting back to the term "normal", I know our President Joel is working very hard to maintain BLC's daily operational consistency. I encourage everyone to try to maintain their church life as normally as possible, including attending regular services and Bible studies, and by continued offering support.

Now I put my stewardship hat on regarding offerings. Our Savior calls us to follow Him in generosity and teaches us to act accordingly to our gifts. "The one who contributes, let him give in generosity." (Rom. 12: 8). We do not give grudgingly, but willingly and cheerfully each "as he has decided in his heart" (2 Cor. 9:7).

Yes, temporarily, we will not have a pastor's salary to maintain, however there will be other expenses such as visitation pastor's compensations, future pastor candidate visitation expenses, etc. Please keep in mind the work and ministry of BLC needs to continue as "normal" as possible throughout the coming weeks.

As we approach Pastor's closing days of service to us at BLC, we will be sad to see him depart, but I encourage us all to rejoice in the Lord for his new call to Immanuel in Missouri. May I suggest we adopt "We've got this" as our motto going forward through the call process and the anticipation of our next pastor.

Again, from *Portals of Prayer*: *We pray Gracious Lord God, help me to be still, knowing You have everything under control. In Jesus name, Amen.* (Portals of Prayer, Vol. 89, No. 270, Dr. James Freese)

WE'VE GOT THIS!

Mark Z.,
Stewardship Director



1 Corinthians 15:3-4

[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (ESV)

From Easter Sunday Epistle Reading

BLC CELEBRATES!

BIRTHDAYS

Mark Z
Alecia K
Alex C
Helga W
Dane M
Charlsie B
Rebecca S



ANNIVERSARIES

None

Contact Debbie C. to add your special occasions or to make corrections.

CALLED HOME TO CHRIST

SANDY A.



September 2, 1957 – February 28, 2026

ANNE H.



March 31, 1939 - March 10, 2026

WELCOMED IN BAPTISM
March 1, 2026

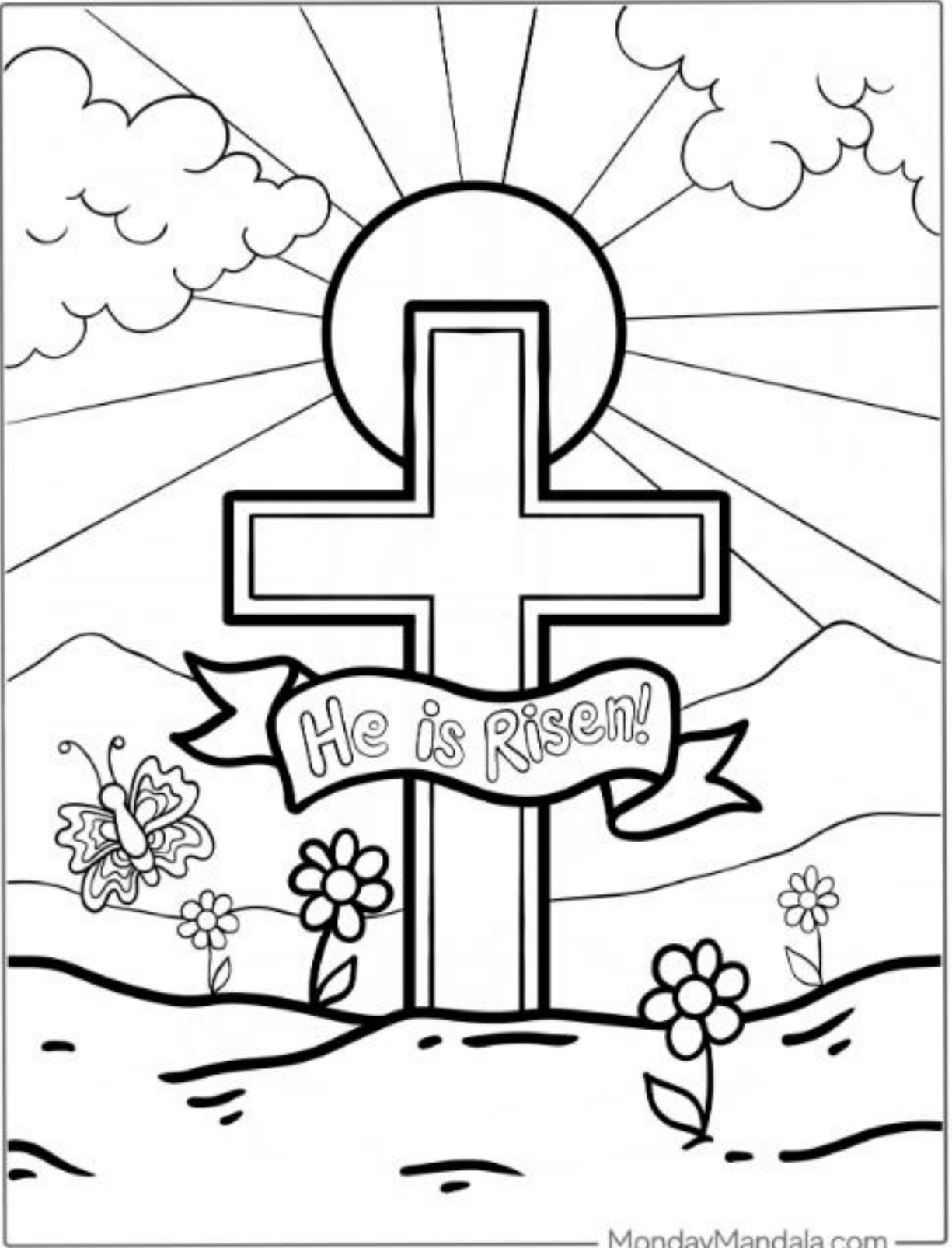
ABIGAIL W.
(Contact information not available
at time of publication.)



Potluck
March 22







MondayMandala.com

APRIL 2026

Find the words in the grid. Words can go horizontally, vertically and diagonally in all eight directions.

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

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Acts	Fellowship	Potluck
BibleStudies	Flowers	Prayer
Call	GoodFriday	Spring
DiningOut	HolyWeek	Teamwork
Discernment	Lent	Transitions
Easter	Maundy	Triduum
Faith	Opportunities	Volunteers
Farewells	Pollen	Worship

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please note that we hope to get a BLC family photo to give to the Engwall's between Easter breakfast and the flowering of the cross before the Divine Service.

BE IN THE WORD – Please note Bible study plans in Joel's letter.

Sunday Morning Bible Study – 9am, ongoing, Doug leads starting April 26

Tuesday Women's Bible Study – stay tuned

Wednesday Bible Study – 7pm, resumes April 22

APRIL FELLOWSHIP

April 5 - 9am Easter Potluck Breakfast – sign-up sheet posted

April 19 – Engwall Farewell Luncheon Potluck after the service – sign-up sheet to be posted

April 21 – 5:30pm BLC Night Out at Sakiya, near Publix off Whiskey

THANK YOU to all who helped with the church clean-up day on March 28!

ACTS COLLECTION ITEM FOR APRIL: Cereal (other food items also accepted!)

Don't forget, ACTS can always use cleaning products, can openers, etc. Thanks!

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.

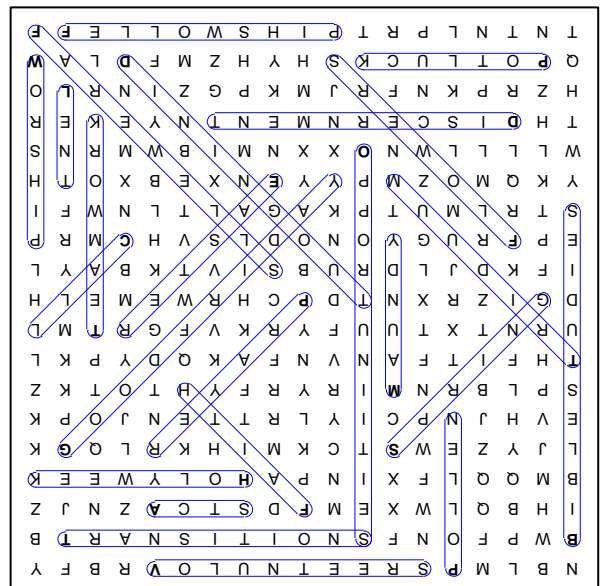
Please use your BLC Directory for contact information.

~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, ETC...



April 2026

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AIKEN, SC

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
				7pm Service	7pm Service	Pastor's Day Off
				Maundy Thurs	Good Friday	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
9am Breakfast 10:30 Service Easter ACT						Pastor's Day Off
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
9am Bible Study 10:30 Service Council Mtg & TLC						Pastor's Day Off
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
9am Bible Study 10:30 Service Pastor's last service Potluck		5:30p Dining Out Sukiya	7pm Bible Study			
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
9am Bible Study 10:30 Service TLC			7pm Bible Study			
3	4					
						ACTS: Cereal
						Notes