



Mission Statement
*Sharing God's Love Wherever
We May Be*

**A Member Congregation of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America**

BETHESDA NEWS is a monthly publication of
Bethesda Lutheran Church, Jewell, IA

Bethesda Lutheran Church
439 Main St, PO Box 330, Jewell, IA 50130-0330
Phone: 515-827-5148
Email: bethesda439@gmail.com
Facebook: bethesda lutheran church, jewell IA
Website: www.bethesdajewell.com

Upcoming Dates

01/01 Church offices are closed for the holiday
01/04 Iowa Wolves Game @ 3pm
01/06 Worship at Timberland and all are welcome
01/11 Community potluck at noon-all are welcome
01/11 Sunday School resumes
01/25 Annual Meeting – see notice on calendar page back

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Stewarding the Annual Meeting in Faith To the People of God at Bethesda,

As we approach our congregation's annual meeting, it is a fitting time to reflect on stewardship not just as a financial responsibility, but as a joyful response to God's abundant grace in our lives. You might recall that a couple of months ago, during our harvest season, I offered a reflection entitled "Harvest Faith." Our annual meeting is another time during the year in which we contemplate how stewardship enriches the life of our congregation. The annual meeting is much more than a business gathering, it is a celebration of how God's people come together to discern, decide, and dedicate resources for the mission we share in Christ Jesus.

Stewardship is the faithful management of all that God entrusts to us like our time, talents, and treasures. At Bethesda, stewardship is woven into the fabric of our community life. It empowers our ministries, supports our outreach, and nurtures the spiritual growth of all ages. Think of all the wonderful ways stewardship has enriched our congregational life through the years. Not simply just this past year, but over the decades.

THE ANNUAL MEETING OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION. WE REVIEW THE PAST YEAR'S MINISTRY ACCOMPLISHMENTS MADE POSSIBLE BY YOUR GENEROUS GIVING. WE ALSO LOOK AHEAD WITH HOPE AND VISION, SETTING BUDGETS THAT REFLECT OUR COMMITMENT TO SERVE BOLDLY AND LOVE DEEPLY ESPECIALLY IN A TIME WHEN THE FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS OF POLICIES OUT OF OUR CONTROL ARE IMPACTING MEMBERS OF OUR CONGREGATION AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN VARYING WAYS.

Your participation in the annual meeting is vital. It is a chance to hear reports, ask questions, and offer your voice in shaping Bethesda's future. It is also a moment to recommit ourselves to stewardship as a spiritual discipline, one that calls us to trust God's provision and to give with open hearts.

As you prepare to join us, consider how your stewardship reflects your faith journey. Whether you are a long-time giver or just beginning to explore what it means to give, your gifts, no matter the size are seeds planted in God's kingdom. Together, we cultivate a harvest of hope, service, and transformation that empowers our congregation to follow boldly the ways Jesus Christ calls us through the Gospel to proclaim his saving grace through thought, word and deed. May our upcoming annual meeting inspire us all to live as faithful stewards, joyfully investing in the work God is doing through Bethesda not for our glory or gain, but to allow the Holy Spirit to bless our local communities as if we are Christ Jesus' hands, feet, mind and heart.

*In humble service of the Triune God,
Pastor Jonathan Dolan*

Bethesda Lutheran Church - Council Meeting Minutes- approved; 10 November 2025, 7:00 pm

Present: Jeff Scott, Sherri Hove, Sheri Muller, Rich Heeren, Jen Nibe, Marcia Wheeler, Pastor Jonathan Dolan, Lisa Peterson, Sue Lund (instead of Nicole Ferguson). Absent: Nicole Ferguson, Hans Koehnk

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm by President Jeff Scott.

Devotions were led by Pastor Jonathan Dolan.

Approval of the Agenda

Rich Heeren moved to approve the agenda as amended; Lisa Peterson seconded, and the agenda was approved unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes of the October Meeting

Lisa Peterson moved to approve the minutes as amended; Sherri Hove seconded, and the motion passed.

Financial/Treasurer's Report

Sherri Hove gave the Treasurer's Report. As of November 3, the general fund balance was \$21,390.01 and total assets were \$144,982.01.

Lisa Peterson moved to approve the Treasurer's Report; Jen Nibe seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Pastor's Report

- Pastor Dolan distributed a copy of his pastoral activities for October 2025.
- He met with the Board of Education, Board of Trustees, and the Board of Evangelism and Stewardship.
- Pastor Dolan attended the Middle School Band and Choir concert in addition to the High School Musical, *Cinderella*.
- Attendance at Confirmation has been strong with an average of 16 per week. However, worship attendance by the Confirmands has not been as strong, with only 5 or 6 attending each week.
- High School Youth Group attendance has also been strong. The pumpkin auction went very well. The youth group did a wonderful job painting the pumpkins, and the congregation showed their support. Approximately \$3,000 was raised for the Giving Tree. The High School Youth Group also hosted a "bonfire kickoff" on October 29, where all 12 members were in attendance.
- The Adult Education Class "Use of the Means of Grace" has been positively received so far. Approximately 10 people have been attending. They are reviewing the materials at a slower pace, so sessions may be extended into December.
- Pastor Dolan attended "New to Synod Day" in Waverly on October 23. Bishop Kevin Jones led the session, and 6 other pastors attended as well.
- The monthly Pastor's Meeting was replaced by the required boundary training workshop, which was held on November 6 at Bethany Lutheran Church in Iowa Falls.
- Pastor Dolan will be taking vacation from December 25-January 1. There will be a Hymns and Carols service on December 28.

Old Business

Special Congregation Meeting October 12: A Special Congregational Meeting was held on October 12. The Congregation approved \$8,600 to pay for the replacement of the chapel A/C unit.

Financial Firm: The Council continued the discussion regarding having Weber Accounting, from Ames, work with Bethesda for financial services, including payroll, bookkeeping, taxes, and auditing. The cost of these services have been quoted as \$200 per month. Sherri Hove will gather more information regarding a contract.

New Business

South Hamilton Elementary Donation to the Lord's Cupboard: The South Hamilton Elementary School donated 350 boxes of cereal to the Lord's Cupboard on November 10.

Iowa Surveillance Team quote: Iowa Surveillance Team sent an email quote regarding security cameras for Bethesda. The Council is not interested in pursuing this at this time.

Church Sanctuary Lights: The Coordinating Committee is in the early stages of planning for new lights in the sanctuary.

Metronet: Metronet sent an email quote for internet and phone. There is no interest at this time.

Administrative Assistant Bonus: The Council has approved periodic bonuses for the Administrative Assistant in the past. They expressed interest in repeating this at some point in 2025.

Lisa Peterson moved to award Donna Busch a compensation payment of \$3,000 to be paid from the General Fund; Rich Heeren seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Cookie Walk: Sherri Hove brought a few options for where the money from the cookie walk would go. Options include the Lord's Cupboard, the air conditioner replacement fund, and any suggestions brought forth by the Council.

Lisa Peterson moved that the donations from the cookie walk go to the Lord's Cupboard; Sherri Hove seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Christmas Gifts: Marcia Wheeler brought up the topic of Christmas gifts for church staff members and congregational volunteers. In the past, a few individuals who have received gifts have expressed that the gift was not necessary. After discussion, the Council decided to make a donation in the name of the volunteers, known and unknown, to the South Hamilton Elementary School Lunch Fund.

Rich Heeren moved that the money that is spent on Christmas gifts for the church staff and volunteers instead be donated to the South Hamilton Elementary School Lunch Fund, in the amount of \$300 to be taken from the Undesignated Missions Fund; Jen Nibe seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Board Reports

Education: Jen Nibe reported that Riverside has provided the dates for VBS for 2026. Bethesda will be hosting VBS June 8-10.

(continued on following page)

Deacons: Rich Heeren reported that the Deacons have been attending Confirmation regularly.

Evangelism/Stewardship: Sue Lund reported that the coat drive is over, and Nicole will be taking the remaining coats over to Bethesda in Ames. Sue would appreciate a few more volunteers for the Lord's Cupboard; the deacons will make an announcement after church. With the recent pause in SNAP benefits, the Lord's Cupboard has been seeing an increase in food pantry visitors.

Worship: Marcia Wheeler reported that the Worship Committee met with Pastor Dolan on November 3. The community Thanksgiving service will be held on November 23 at UCC at 7:00 pm. The Hanging of the Greens service will be on November 30, which is also the 1st Sunday of Advent. The Advent Services will be on Wednesday (December 3, 10, and 17) evenings at 6:30 pm using the Holden Worship Service. The Christmas Eve service will be at 6:30 pm. There will not be a Christmas Day service. There will be a Hymns and Carols service on December 28. The name tags went over well, so they will be doing this monthly. The next time they will be distributed is on the 3rd Sunday of December.

Trustees: Lisa Peterson reported on some of the maintenance activities going on at the parsonage and the church. The invoice for carpet cleaning will be turned in. Lisa has been using some pesticide to take care of spiders. A tree fell at the parsonage. The water heater at the church has been acting up. The rod has been replaced and drained twice. The carpet has been removed at the parsonage.



Board of Deacons:

Confirmation students participated in the Christmas program on December 12th and helped package up cookies to our residence at Timberland. They also participated in a sing-a-long on December 12th. Confirmation classes will start back up on January 6th.

Board of Worship: Did not meet in December.

Youth: Hans Koehnk emailed the minutes of the October 21, 2025 Youth Board meeting to the Council. Both Confirmation and High School youth have been invited to an Iowa Wolves game on January 4, 2026. Thirty-five tickets have been purchased for their Faith and Family Day and there will be a concert after. The pumpkin auction was a success again this year. However, Lynn needs to be asked to be the auctioneer far in advance. The proceeds will be used to support the Giving Tree. Shopping for gifts will be done by the High School Youth on November 19th with wrapping to follow on December 3. The High School Youth will still meet in Advent at 7:30, after the service. The 7th and 8th graders seem to be having fun at their Sunday School sessions.

Call Committee: Hans Koehnk reported that he is in the process of setting up a meeting again after communication with the Synod. He also sent out an email asking the Call Committee members to attend youth Sunday School.

The next council meeting will be held on Monday, December 8 at 7:00 pm.

Lisa Peterson moved to adjourn the meeting; Sherri Hove seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 8:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Sheri Muller

What We Really Need

Twelve ministers were on a flight headed to a conference in Seattle when the plane hit a fierce storm. Trying to calm their nerves, they told the flight attendant, "Let the pilot know everything's fine — there are twelve ministers on board!"

A few minutes later, the flight attendant returned from the cockpit.

"Well?" one of the pastors asked with a grin. "What did the pilot say?"

She smiled and replied, "He said he was glad to have 12 ministers aboard, but he would rather have four good engines."

Interim Pastor: Rev. Jonathan Dolan
Deacon roster:
Pat Melchert: 515-451-0389; Richard Heeren: 515-231-2886; Sergio Gomez Roaro: 515-310-2096; Josh Hilfiker: 515-460-3637
 ====
Donna Busch, Admin. Assist.; Lisa Peterson, Custodian; Julie Lutjen, Accompanist; Confirmation Students, Sound and Technical Team
 ====
Congregation Officers:
Jeff Scott, President; Vacant, Vice-Pres.
Sherri Hove, Treasurer; Sheri Muller, Secretary

Attendance

Attendance	
11/30	Cancelled
12/02	30 – Timberland
12/03	31-Advent
12/07	60
12/10	30-Advent
12/14	106
12/17	9-Advent
12/21	59
12/24	111
12/28	50

TRUSTWORTHY STEWARDS

After making people in his own image, God entrusted them with the rest of his creation. He wants us to manage well our bodies, our minds and our earthly home. Consider these stewardship quotes from Christian thinkers:

“We ourselves are not masters of our own ability and knowledge. They, like our talents and health, are a loan presented for our use. We must live as people who know that such temporary possessions are not true belongings and that we must give account for our management of them.”

—Albert Schweitzer

“Our God is not a God who discards what he has made, who is defeated by sin and evil. Our God is a redeeming God, a God who is determined to reclaim his fallen world, setting it free from its enslavement to corruption and bringing it to a final state of glory.”

—Douglas J. Moo, *Creation Care*

Fund Balances to-date: December 29, 2025

Fund Name	2025 Budget (only applies to General Fund)	Needed per week to meet budget- GF	Needed @ 52 weeks to meet budget-GF	Actual received 52 weeks	Disbursements to-date	To-date Transfers from Contingency Fund	Fund Balances
General Fund	\$186,911.72	\$3,594.46	\$186,911.72	\$178,432.87	\$159,968.45		\$18,464.42
Sunday School	NA	NA	NA	\$1,214.12	\$986.84		\$7,278.34
Youth & Family	NA	NA	NA	\$6,658.74	\$6,836.29		\$20,909.21
Designated Missions	NA	NA	NA	\$24,876.37	\$25,125.34	\$3,200.00	\$8,183.32
Undesignated Missions	NA	NA	NA	\$860.00	\$772.73		\$2,983.40
Discretionary Fund	NA	NA	NA	\$948.00	\$1,440.25		\$685.11
Capital Improvements	NA	NA	NA	\$4,511.00	\$3,500.00		\$7,811.02
Gifts and Memorials	NA	NA	NA	\$481.08	\$2,191.56		\$10,782.46
Contingency Fund	NA	NA	NA	-0-	\$13,168.24		\$53,848.28
Endowment Fund*	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		

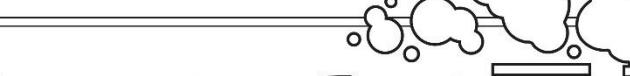
*Funds managed offsite

Note: This is for everyone's information and is: **General Fund ONLY**

General Fund	Income	Transferred from Contingency Fund	Disbursements	Fund Balance at end of month
January Only	\$13,193.18	-0-	\$6,130.65	\$7,062.53
February Only	\$12,102.04	-0-	\$8,869.90	\$10,294.67
March Only	\$13,416.82	-0-	\$15,816.36	\$7,895.13
April Only	\$15,434.29	-0-	\$8,667.71	\$14,591.76
May Only	\$12,805.36	-0-	\$7,136.60	\$20,260.52
June Only	\$11,891.51	-0-	\$8,624.03	\$23,465.98
July Only	\$13,855.47	-0-	\$15,146.23	\$21,174.22
August Only	\$14,340.98	-0-	\$15,481.41	\$18,816.52
September Only	\$17,106.61	NA	\$16,907.63	\$19,094.17
October Only	\$18,691.54	NA	\$16,395.70	\$21,390.01
November Only	\$13,679.78	NA	\$19,584.75	\$15,485.04
December Only	NA	NA	NA	NA



PUZZLE



TRANSLATE GOD'S WORD

The Bible we use is translated into English from other languages.
"Translate" the verse below using the code.

CODE	E=△	L=□	R=+
A= 	G= ●	M= ↗	S= ■
B= 	H= ▲	N= †	SH= *
D= 	I= ▲	O= ♪	T= ⌚
	K=	P= □	TH= ♦

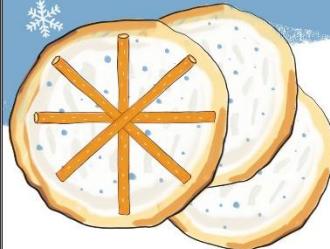
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Proverbs 3:13

Answer: Happy is the one who finds wisdom and the one who gets understanding.

Snowflake SNACK CAKES



Celebrate the beauty of winter with these fun snowflake-inspired treats!



What you need:

- Graham cracker squares or sugar cookies
- White frosting or marshmallow fluff
- Pretzel sticks (snowflake arms)
- Shredded coconut or white sprinkles
- Mini marshmallows or candy pearls

What you do:

1. Frost each cracker or cookie.
2. Arrange pretzel sticks in a crisscross for the snowflake base.
3. Sprinkle with coconut or sprinkles for snow.
4. Add marshmallows or candy pearls to the ends for detail.

Lesson tie-in:

Remind kids that God made each of us unique—just like no two snowflakes are alike!
(Psalm 139:14, KJV)



Community Matters!

I'd like to thank the confirmation classes for helping make the tie blankets that were given out through the Lord's Cupboard. The people were very appreciative to receive one. Also, a big thank you to Pastor Jonathan Dolan. The confirmation kids did a great job.



Thanks again,
Sharon Teig



Tuesday Together Time

The South Hamilton Community is invited to "Tuesday Together Time" each Tuesday at noon held in Bethesda Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall. Bring a potluck dish to share with others. All tableware is provided. Don't have food prepared, please come! There is always plenty and, if you desire, a container is provided for you to put a little donation in to go toward Global Good Gifts. **Donations are growing again; total at this time is \$442.00.**

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON TUESDAY? DO YOU NEED A LITTLE FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY? JOIN US – THERE'S A PLACE READY AND WAITING FOR YOU!

In lieu of giving Christmas gifts to each other this year, those in attendance for the Christmas party gave donations to The Lord's Cupboard totaling \$310.00. Thank you, one and all!

The Lunch Wagon – Jewell Residents

- **Do you need assistance with meals?**
- **Do you live in Jewell?**
- **Are you homebound?**
- **Are you recovering at home?**
- If you answered yes to any of these questions, you can contact:**
 - Susan Lund at 515-290-3000 or**
 - Sarah Freeman at 515-291-1528**
- **Lunches will be delivered Monday through Friday between 11:30 to 12:15.**
- **The cost of the lunch is \$5.00 per meal.**
- **Lunches will be prepared in Jewell by:**
 - JEWELL MARKET:**
Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs and
 - THE MALIBU: Fri.**
- **Lunches will NOT be delivered on holidays.**



Proud Partner of
Food Bank of
Iowa

The Lord's Cupboard Food Pantry is open each Monday of the month from 5:00 to 6:30 pm. Additionally, the Lord's Cupboard is open the *first Monday* of each month from 1:00 to 2:00 pm. If you know someone in need of food assistance, please let them know of the availability of The Lord's Cupboard. If you have questions, please talk with Karla Alanis Palomo (515) 310-0151 or the church office.

The Lord's Cupboard's location: Jewell, PO Box 330, 439 Main Street, Jewell 50130-0330.
Phone: 515-827-5148

Are you interested in volunteering your time with the Lord's Cupboard? More volunteers are needed and we would be very glad to accept your help. Please contact Karla @ 515-310-0151; or Sue @ 515-290-3000; or leave a message at the church office for a return call @ 515-827-5148.

Volunteers are always needed and the help is greatly appreciated.

The next Mobile Food Truck is scheduled for February.

Received from Jeff Nelson:

Feliz Navidad from New Mexico:

I'm still at Brookdale in Albuquerque, the senior living facility. We survived a major water leak "flood" in November of '24. Due to water damage I had to move out of my unit to the assisted living section until March of this year. The restoration company did a good job of getting my place put back together (they had moved everything out of the apartment and into a storage unit). And overall Brookdale is now doing a better job of looking for worn out pipes and such to avoid a repeat of that "disaster."

The Lord continues to be good in providing opportunities for me to serve here. I help lead a weekly Bible study, preach occasionally (the regular pastor who comes to Brookdale on Sunday mornings sometimes has to be out of town), help to lead a weekly group that watches the Bible-based series called The Chosen, and if a resident passes away, I coordinate an informal memorial gathering (sometimes the person's family members are able to attend). I'm very grateful for all of this, to feel useful at Brookdale.

I do get in-town and out-of-town visitors on occasion. Since I lived here for 13 years back in the 80's and 90's, there are still some friends who are here and we reconnect sometimes. A few months ago three high school friends visited from Iowa, a daughter of a Guam friend (who moved to eastern New Mexico) dropped in with her fiancé, and a longtime friend from my earlier Albq days visited with his wife.

Healthwise, having lived with polio for over 70 years, I'm having some aging challenges. And earlier in the year I developed a nagging cough that has gotten a little worse over time. Doctors haven't been able to pinpoint a cause as yet. I will be seeing an ear-nose-throat doc in early February of '26. I pray that visit will shed some light on what's happening. I'm blessed to have a power wheelchair to get around, although I can still walk around the apartment with my walker. I also have a very good physical therapist who comes to the facility twice a month to help ease my "on and off" back pain.

It's hard to believe I've already been at Brookdale for over three years. Although this place has issues (like anywhere there are many people living together), there is a strong sense of community here, and people look out for each other. There are about 140 residents in our facility. We have both independent and assisted living sections.

I keep in touch with a number of friends from my time in Guam. The Alokoa family is doing pretty well. Mom Merleen has retired but keeps busy with church and projects and keeping tabs on the kids, including my godson AJ, now in his early 20's. They have visited Albuquerque a couple times.

A blessed Christmas to you, and a new year in which God continues to lead and guide.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR PICTURES INCLUDED WITH JEFF'S EMAIL GREETINGS TO BETHESDA.



Festive Decorations



Pastor James and Debbie



Alokoa Family-December 2025