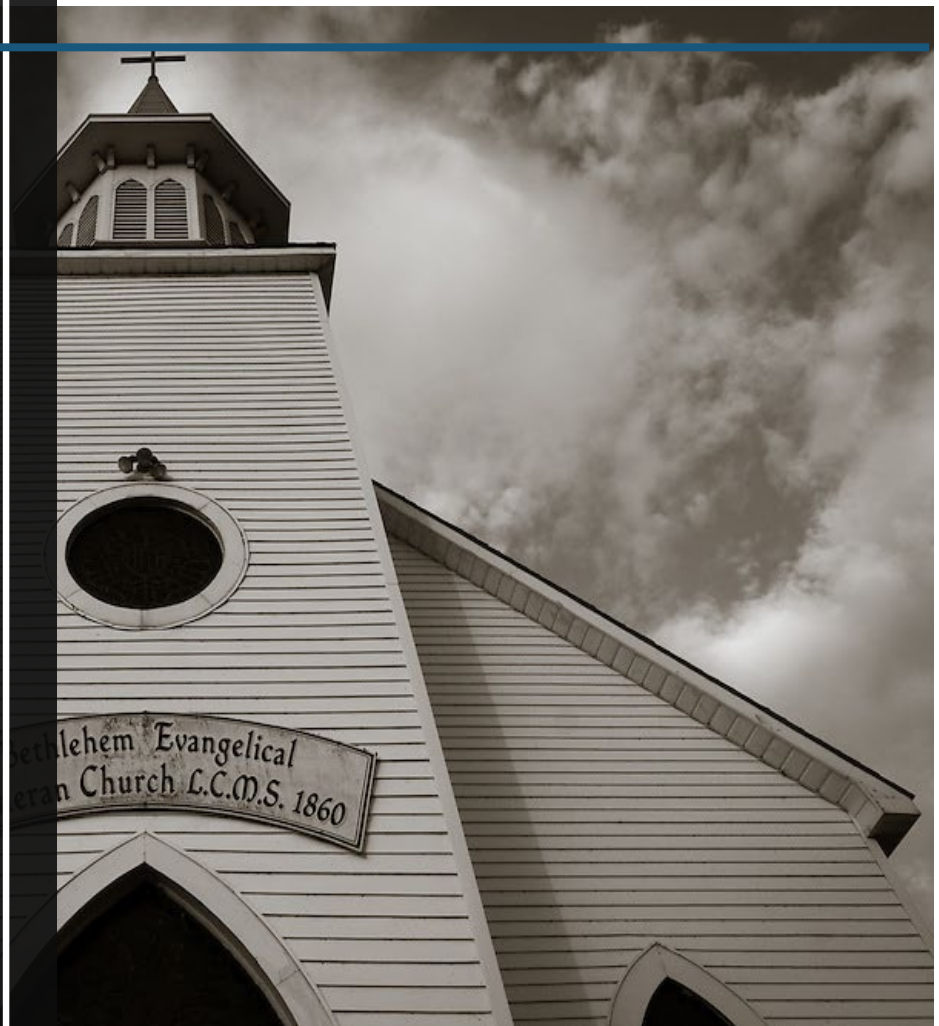


Ghost Town Gazette

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
William Penn, Texas

Vol. 4, No. 2, February 2026



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PG. 2

The Gift We Need Every Week

PG. 3

Through the Church Year: 40 Days of Lent

PG. 4

Heroes of Faith: St. Polycarp of Smyrna

PG. 5

Youth League Update

PG. 6-7

The Lutheran Confessions – Article XIX – The Cause of Sin

PG. 8-14

Updates & Information

“Lord Jesus, You are
my righteousness, I
am your sin. You took
on you what was
mine; yet set on me
what was yours.”

- Martin Luther

THE GIFT WE NEED EVERY WEEK

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Beginning this Lent, we will celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday. This is not a change made lightly, nor is it meant to turn Lent into something it is not. Rather, it flows directly from what Lent is, and what the Sundays in Lent, and every Sunday, most certainly are.

Lent is forty days long. That number matters. Forty days recalls Israel's wandering, Moses on Sinai, Elijah's journey, and our Lord's forty days of fasting and temptation. Yet if you count the days from Ash Wednesday to Easter, you will notice something curious: there are actually forty-six days. Why? Because the Sundays in Lent are not counted as part of Lent at all. They never have been.

Sundays are always celebrations of the resurrection. Even in the most penitential season of the Church Year, when the Alleluia is set aside, and our eyes are fixed on Christ's journey to the cross, each Sunday stands as a "little Easter." The fast pauses. The tomb looms in the distance, but the risen Christ still meets His people.

And how does the risen Christ come to us? He comes with gifts. Holy Communion is not our sacrifice to God, but God's gift to us: the true body and blood of Christ, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. We need this gift often because we are sinners often. We are weak often. We are burdened, tempted, anxious, and worn down by the world, our flesh, and the devil, often.

Weekly Communion is not about doing "more church." It is about receiving more mercy. It is about being fed by Christ Himself, who knows exactly what His people need on their journey through repentance and faith. In the Lord's Supper, Christ strengthens faith, forgives sin, comforts troubled consciences, and binds us to Himself and to one another.

Lent reminds us of our sin and our need for repentance. The Sundays in Lent remind us that repentance is never an end in itself. It always leads us back to Christ and His gifts. That is why, even as we walk the road to the cross, we gather each Sunday around the altar, to receive the very life Christ won for us there.

In the midst of a somber season, the risen Lord still says, "Take, eat... Take, drink." And it is good, indeed, necessary, that we receive all of God's gifts as often as He gives them.

In Christ's Service and Yours,
Pastor Krieg



**"For as often
as you eat
this bread
and drink the
cup, you
proclaim the
Lord's
death until he
comes."**

**1 Corinthians
11:26**



THROUGH THE CHURCH YEAR: WHY DO WE CELEBRATE LENT FOR SIX WEEKS?

Don't forget what Lent is all about! It is a time when we are reminded of what Jesus gave up for us, and a time when we look forward to and prepare for His death and resurrection!

During these forty days of Lent, we remember the faithfulness of God to His people and how His faithfulness is complete in Jesus Christ, our Savior. Jesus remains faithful to us, always being where He promises to be: in His Word and Sacraments.

To the Parents: Continue to encourage your children in their Lenten preparation. During worship, point out the places where our Lord comes to us (i.e., God's Word, Holy Communion, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution). Remember that being their example and companion on this Lenten journey makes a difference!

We celebrate Lent for six weeks. Not counting Sundays, this adds up to forty days. These forty days remind us of Christ's temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11). There He was without food for forty days. We remember the temptation of the Israelites in the desert after the Lord had delivered them from Egypt. This lasted forty years (Num. 14:34). Finally, we can remember the story of Noah and his family. After forty days and forty nights in the ark, it finally stopped raining, and the Lord delivered them just as He promised. (Gen. 7:17).



“Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal high priest himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth and in all gentleness and in all freedom from anger and forbearance and steadfastness and patient endurance and purity, and may he give to you a share and a place among his saints, and to us with you, and to all those under heaven who will yet believe in our Lord and God Jesus Christ and in his Father who raised him from the dead.”

The Epistle of Polycarp to the
Philippians



HEROES OF FAITH: ST. POLYCARP OF SMYRNA

Each month, we will highlight one of the many heroes of the Christian faith who have stood firm in the truth of Holy Scripture. We will look at the apostles who knew our Lord Jesus Christ personally, his friends who were witnesses to His miracles, the faithful ancestors of the Old Testament who patiently awaited His first Advent, as well as the many other Godly men and women who have been bold witnesses throughout the years, to the one true faith. We look to them not as people to be worshiped or prayed to but as ordinary sinners, like us, to whom the Holy Spirit gave faith to be extraordinary. They are holy because the blood of Christ forgave their sins. They are holy because the Holy Spirit gave them a living faith in which the love of Christ shone through.

On February 23rd, the Church remembers St. Polycarp of Smyrna, pastor and martyr.

Polycarp was a disciple of the apostle John and served faithfully as bishop of Smyrna for many years. In a time of persecution, false teaching, and fear, Polycarp remained steadfast in the apostolic faith, shepherding Christ's flock with the Word of God. In his old age, Polycarp was arrested and ordered to renounce Christ. When urged to deny Jesus and save his life, Polycarp famously replied, "Eighty-six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" He was burned at the stake, confessing Christ to the end. We remember Polycarp not for his courage alone, but for the faith God sustained in him. His martyrdom proclaims the same truth he preached: Jesus Christ is faithful unto death, and His cross is stronger than the fires of this world.

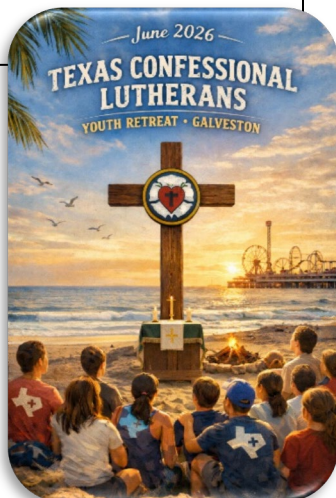


NEXT MEETING



On Sunday, February 8th, the Youth League will meet during Sunday school. We will be discussing our summer trip, our next outing, quiz night, and preparing for the Soup for the Group.

If you are going to attend our **summer trip** to Galveston in June, you need to let Pastor Krieg know so we can get the accommodations lined up for everyone.



YOUTH LEAGUE UPDATE

January was a productive month for our Youth League as they rolled up their sleeves and got to work. The group helped take down and store all the Christmas decorations, giving the church a fresh start after the Christmas season. Their hard work and teamwork were a big help to the congregation.

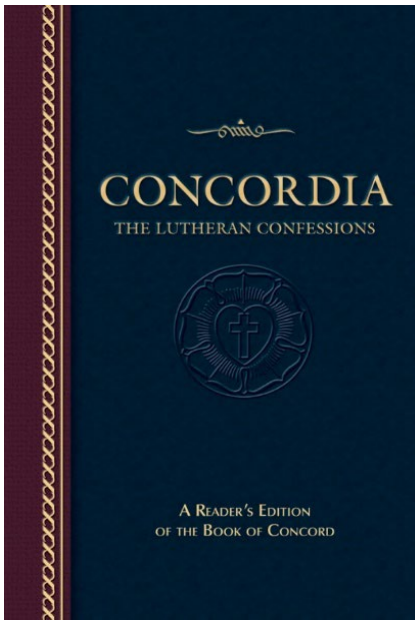
The Youth League also spent time planning ahead, especially for their upcoming "Soup for the Group" fundraiser on February 8. This event will help support youth activities and upcoming trips. The students were excited to prepare and serve as a way to give back.

In addition, the group made an important decision regarding summer plans. After discussion, they chose to attend the Texas Confessional Lutheran Youth Retreat in Galveston rather than the Higher Things retreat in St. Louis. The students are looking forward to gathering with other confessional Lutheran youth for worship, learning, and fellowship.

January set a strong tone for the months ahead.

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS: ARTICLE XIX

THE CAUSE OF SIN



Article XIX, entitled, *The Cause of Sin*, may at first glance seem to be unnecessary. Is an explanation of such a basic doctrine really needed? Although there was no disagreement on this doctrine between Catholics and Lutherans at that time, many errors have been spread about the cause of sin.

When we discussed Original sin (AC II), we traced sin back to the fall of Adam and Eve. But this article causes us to go back even farther. The sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden was caused by the seduction of the devil in the form of a serpent (Genesis 3:1-5). The apostle John makes it clear that the serpent who deceived Eve was the devil, "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). As a result of the temptation by the devil, many people will be lost, condemned to hell. For this reason, Jesus describes him as a murderer (John 8:44).

AC XIX begins by declaring God is not the cause of sin, rather the devil and our own sinful flesh is the cause: *"Our churches teach that although God creates and preserves nature, the cause of sin is located in the will of the wicked, that is, the devil and ungodly people. Without God's help, this will turns itself away from God, as Christ says, "When he lies, he speaks out of his own character" (John 8:44).*

Polls show well over half of American adults deny the existence of the devil! Even the majority of professing Christians deny that the devil is a real personal being! Scripture is clear about the existence of the devil and his purpose. Scripture warns that the devil is dangerous and on the prowl (1 Peter 5:8-9), deceitful and crafty (2 Corinthians 11:3), he disguises himself to look good (2 Corinthians 11:14), and is at work in the world leading people into all kinds of sin (Ephesians 2:1-2).

Those who think the devil is not real, and he is only a symbol of evil, are ignorant and foolish (1 John 5:19). He is the very source of evil and sin in the world, and his primary goal is to lead people away from God and away from the true knowledge of Christ as our Savior from sin.

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS: ARTICLE XIX – THE CAUSE OF SIN

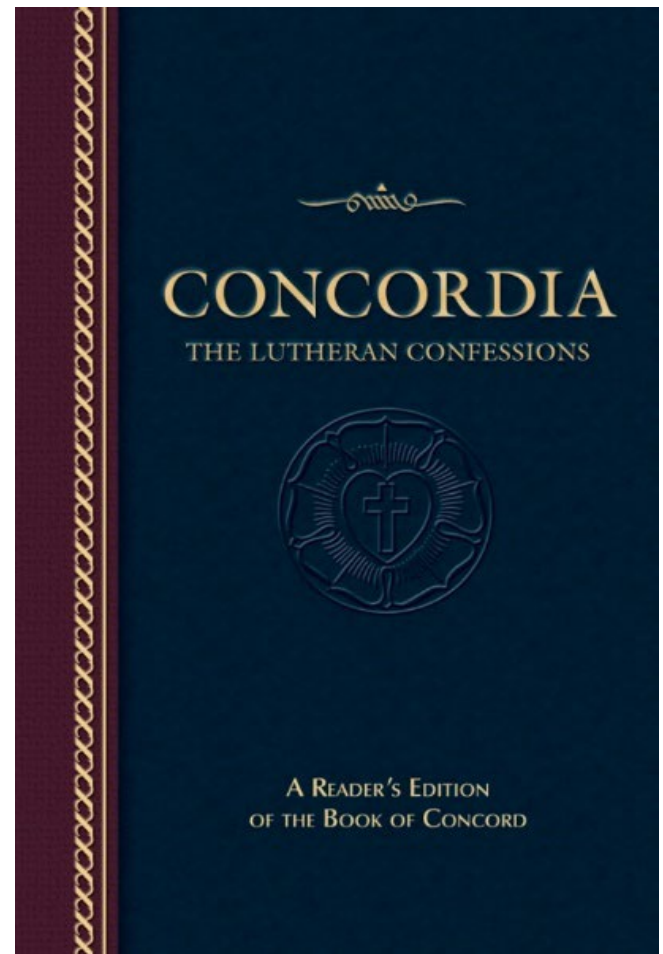
The devil and his evil angels are even at work, leading people away from the truth by introducing error into the teachings of the visible church (1 John 4:1-3). The devil is also at work through the Anti-Christ to lead people from the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8-10).

The devil is very real and a dangerous adversary for every human being. The reality of the devil and his role in connection with sin does not excuse sin or relieve human beings of our responsibility for it. Despite the work of the devil, our guilt and our responsibility for sin remain.

Some would like to make God responsible for sin. But God's will is in complete opposition to sin and the devil (Psalm 5:4-6). Although God hates sin, He does permit sin and evil in the world. God allows evil to come upon unbelievers and believers alike. No one is immune from the effects of sin, but at times, we might wonder why God allows bad things to happen to His children. One example is Job, who God allowed to be tested by the devil to strengthen his faith. James reminds us God is not to blame for troubles in our life, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (James 1:13-14).

Much more could be said about sin and its cause. Knowing the devil is very real, and he is after us, can at times cause us to despair. By ourselves, we don't stand a chance against the attacks of the devil and the struggles with our own sinful flesh. Our sin already condemns us! But do not lose hope! (1 John 3:8).

At times, we may feel powerless against the devil, but the LORD has given us all we need to defend against his attacks. Paul tells us to trust in the Lord, our defender (Ephesians 6:10-11). Thanks be to God whose Word defends us from the attacks of the devil, and keeps us on the narrow way. May He continue to be with us until the end!



MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

As of the last regularly scheduled voters meeting on January 28th, 2026.

Received Through Baptism

Rylee Anne Molitor – Jan. 11th



3RD ANNUAL QUIZ NIGHT



The Bethlehem Lutheran Church Youth League, in conjunction with the Grace Lutheran Church Youth League in Brenham, would like to invite you to the 3rd Annual Quiz Night on Friday, February 20th, at the Sons of Hermann Hall in Brenham. The night will begin at 6 pm and finish at 9 pm.

For those who have not participated, let me explain. The evening will consist of 10 rounds of trivia. Questions are answered by teams using the provided forms. The forms are collected and tabulated after each round, and team standings are announced during the evening. Each round will have a different focus to test your overall trivia knowledge. Prizes will be awarded to the winners after each round throughout the night. A Quiz Night Champion will be crowned at the end of the evening. Will your team be proven the smartest in Washington County? Will the trophy go to Grace, or will Bethlehem keep it? Sign up to find out!

Apart from being great fun, the evening raises money for both youth groups to attend their youth conference this summer. Quiz teams consist of 6 people at a cost of \$20 per person (which can be paid the night of). A light supper and snacks will be provided during the evening. There are excellent prizes up for grabs throughout the night and for the winning teams. We would love it if you could enter a team in the quiz, or if you cannot, please consider sponsoring a round. Please RSVP by February 9th. For questions or to RSVP, contact Pastor Krieg.

SENT IN LOVE

Recently, a letter was mailed to members of our congregation who have not attended worship in a year. I want the entire congregation to understand why this letter was sent and, just as importantly, the spirit in which it was written.

This letter was not sent out of frustration, pressure, or judgment. It was sent out of deep pastoral concern and Christian love. As Christians, we confess that God has chosen to care for His people through means that are concrete and personal: the preaching of His Word, the forgiveness spoken in His name, the water of Holy Baptism, and the true body and blood of Christ given in the Lord's Supper. When members are absent from the Church's gathered life for extended periods, it is not simply a matter of attendance; it is a matter of spiritual care.

Out of that concern, I reached out personally to let those members know they are remembered, prayed for, and always welcome. I share the letter here so that the congregation can see for themselves that its tone is warm, gentle, and inviting:



Grace, mercy, and peace to you in Christ Jesus.

As we begin a new year, I have been praying for you and thinking about the members of our congregation whom I have not seen for some time. I write to you not out of disappointment, but out of deep pastoral love and genuine concern for your faith and life in Christ.

Our Lord knows how easily we are pulled away by the weight of life, busy schedules, hardships, disappointments, and even quiet struggles that others may never see. Yet Christ has not withdrawn from you. He continues to come to His people in concrete, life-giving ways: through His Word proclaimed, through the forgiveness spoken, through the water of Holy Baptism, and through His true body and blood given for you in the Lord's Supper. These Means of Grace are not rewards for the strong, but gifts for the weary, the struggling, and the burdened.

If there is something that has been keeping you from church, something painful, difficult, or unresolved, I would very much welcome the opportunity to visit with you, listen, and walk with you as your pastor. And if you have found another Christian congregation where you are regularly hearing God's Word and receiving His Sacraments, I would be grateful to know that as well.

Please know this: you are missed, you are prayed for, and you are always welcome. My hope and prayer is that this new year might be a time of renewed life together around Christ and His gifts.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

*In Christ's Service and Yours,
Pastor Krieg*

This pastoral concern is not carried by the pastor alone. Scripture reminds us that we are members of one body, and that we care for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We invite you, as fellow members of this congregation, to reach out to those you have not seen in a while. A phone call, a text, a note, or a simple invitation to worship can be a powerful expression of Christ's love. Often, people stay away not because they feel unwelcome, but because they assume they've been forgotten. Let us gently prove otherwise.

May the Lord continue to gather us around His Word and Sacraments, renew us by His grace, and teach us to care for one another in love.

FROM THE BOARD OF MISSIONS



Board of Mission

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
William Penn, Texas

Lutheran Education Scholarship Initiative

The Board of Missions has undertaken the task of establishing a Lutheran Education Scholarship for Bethlehem members. This scholarship will be available to any Bethlehem member who attends an LCMS parochial school, university, or seminary. The Board has just begun the work of setting up this scholarship, and more details will be shared in the months ahead. As plans develop, the congregation will be kept informed about eligibility, how to apply, and opportunities to contribute in support of Lutheran education.

**"And these words
that I command
you today shall
be on your
heart. You shall
teach them
diligently to your
children, and
shall talk of them
when you sit in
your house, and
when you walk
by the way, and
when you lie
down, and when
you rise."**

**Deuteronomy
6:6-7**

Qualified Parochial Schools in Our Area:

- Grace Lutheran School (Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and High School) – Brenham
- Trinity Lutheran Preschool – Navasota
- Holy Cross Learning Center (Preschool) – College Station

Qualified LCMS Universities:

- Luther Classical College – Casper, Wyoming
- Concordia University Chicago – River Forest, Illinois
- Concordia University Irvine – Irvine, California
- Concordia University Nebraska – Seward, Nebraska
- Concordia University St. Paul – St. Paul, Minnesota
- Concordia University Wisconsin – Mequon, Wisconsin
- Concordia University Ann Arbor – Ann Arbor, Michigan
- Concordia University Texas – Austin, Texas

Qualified LCMS Seminaries:

- Concordia Theological Seminary – Fort Wayne, Indiana
- Concordia Seminary – St. Louis, Missouri

Please keep this work in your prayers as we seek to support Christ-centered Lutheran education for present and future generations.

Adopting a Seminarian

The Board of Missions is excited to share that Bethlehem will be *adopting a Seminarian*. Through this program, our congregation will be connected with a student currently attending an LCMS seminary. The funds we raise will be sent directly to the Seminarian from time to time and can be used by him as he sees fit to help with school, living expenses, or other needs.

This is a wonderful way for our congregation to support the training of future pastors and to encourage those preparing for ministry. It's a simple but meaningful reminder to the Seminarian that he is not alone, but supported by fellow Christians who are praying for him and cheering him on.

Once we receive the name of the Seminarian we have been paired with, we will share that information with the congregation, along with details on how you can help support this mission.

Thank you for keeping this effort, and future pastors, in your prayers.

**“For us baptized, for us He bore
His holy fast and hungered sore; For
us temptation sharp He knew; For
us the tempter overthrew.”
O Love, How Deep (LSB 544)**



LENT MIDWEEK SERVICES

This year, our Lenten midweek services will take the theme of “For Us.” “For us” is not simply a pithy line to use because it is easy to repeat. It is a confession of who God is and what He brings in giving us His Son. It helps us understand why God would send His Son to die for us.

The phrase “for us” also captures much of the Reformation’s theological emphasis, and Luther’s understanding of Scripture in particular. Luther went from searching for a righteous God and finding only stern rebuke to seeing God in the form of a little baby and as the one who became one of us for us so that we might become like Him.

So, join us on Wednesdays in Lent for a meal at 6:00 PM and service at 7:00 PM.

Feb. 18, 25

Mar. 4, 11, 18, 25

LEARN WITH OUR CONFIRMANDS

Memorization is a key component of Confirmation and of being a lifelong learner of Scripture. I ask that you keep our confirmands in your prayers and encourage them in their studies. To that end, I have placed all the memory work they will be learning this month below, and I challenge you to dust off your Small Catechism and relearn the treasures we hold so dear alongside them. The Small Catechism is not just for the young or those going through Confirmation; it is for us all. When you see them, recite the memory with them, encourage them in their studies, and let them know you support them and are praying for them.

February	Catechism Memorization (Wednesdays)	Scripture Memorization (recited on Sundays)
4-Feb		Galatians 3:27
11-Feb	1 st and 2 nd Parts of Holy Baptism	2 Corinthians 5:17
18-Feb	3 rd and 4 th Parts of Holy Baptism	Matthew 18:20
25-Feb	Three Questions over Confession & Absolution	James 5:16

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Henry Schroeder 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 9:00 – 10:00 AM Youth League Mtg 10:15 – 11:15 AM Worship w/ Communion	2 Diane Boggan, Adeline Platt	3 Laramie Kettler, Lindsay Kimmel 7:00 – 7:30 PM LWML Social 7:30 – 8:30 PM LWML Meeting	4 Melvin Ashorn 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation	5 Kathy Molitor, Sherry Watson 6:00 – 7:00 PM Elders' Meeting 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	6	7 Daryl Dahman 7:30 – 8:30 AM Men's Club Breakfast, Bible Study, & Meeting
8 Westin Ashorn 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Worship	9 Maddison Molitor	10	11 8:30 – 9:30 AM Sonshine 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation	12 Tucker Crabb 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	13 Allan Jaehne	14 Chad Schramme
15 Hanna Glenz 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Worship w/ Communion	16	17 Dillon Nowicki, Trenton Schwartz	18 Lydia Guthrie 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation 5:30 – 6:30 PM Lent Meal 6:30 – 7:30 PM Ash Wednesday Service	19 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	20 5:30 – 9:00 PM Quiz Night	21 Tina Ahasan, Waylon Whittaker
22 Christen Malone 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Worship	23 Benjamin Holtkamp	24	25 Wayne Klussmann 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation 5:30 – 6:30 PM Lent Meal 6:30 – 7:30 PM Midweek Lent Service	26 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study 7:00 – 8:00 PM Men's Club Meeting	27	28 Karin Dahmann, Jerry Kohring 8:00 – 9:00 AM Sisters in Christ

February 2026

Birthdays

1 Henry Schroeder
 2 Diane Boggan
 Adeline Platt
 3 Laramie Kettler
 Lindsay Kimmel
 4 Melvin Ashorn
 5 Kathy Molitor
 Sherry L. Watson
 7 Daryl Dahman
 8 Westin Ashorn
 9 Maddison Molitor
 12 Tucker Crabb
 13 Allan Jaehne
 14 Chad Schramme
 15 Hanna R. Glenz
 17 Dillon Nowicki
 Trenton Schwartz
 18 Lydia Guthrie
 21 Tina Ahasan
 Waylon Whittaker
 22 Christen Malone
 23 Benjamin Holtkamp
 25 Wayne Klussmann
 28 Karin Dahmann
 Jerry Kohring

Baptismal Birthdays

1 Waldo Holle
 3 Kaci Luera
 4 Naomi Brocksmith
 Geraldine Pohlmeyer
 5 Elizabeth E. Kettler
 Colleen Latham
 6 Ashley Kettler
 Samuel Smitherman
 10 Kristen Berglund
 Kathy Molitor
 11 Blake Powers
 Dawson Powers
 Maylee Powers
 12 Valgene Kohring
 Mike Schroeder
 13 Cody Carroll
 Alexis Maya
 Christopher Teague
 14 Marc Maya
 15 Charles Meyer
 17 Braylee Schomburg
 21 Sandra Schwartz
 22 Lucas Searle
 23 Theodore Kettler
 24 Landon Duckett
 Dorcas Schroeder
 25 Diane Boggan

Wedding Anniversaries

Dennis & Pat Meyer
 Feb 15, 1957
 Tom & Lillian Hayden
 Feb 14, 1976
 Randy & Sharon Gaddy
 Feb 1, 1986
 Valgene & Diana Kohring
 Feb 22, 1992
 David & Pat Boenker
 Feb 3, 1995
 Corey & Amy Klussmann
 Feb 22, 1997
 Scott & Kandace Schroeder
 Feb 22, 2003
 Brad & Tricia Molitor
 Feb 5, 2005
 Cody & Raellen Carroll
 Feb 8, 2014
 Brian & Leslie Crabb
 Feb 15, 2014



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH-
WILLIAM PENN

10202 FM 1935
BRENHAM, TX 77833
(979) 836-7303

WWW.BETHLEHEMWMPENN.ORG
OFFICE@BETHLEHEMWMPENN.ORG

PASTOR KRIEG
PASTORKRIEG@BETHLEHEMWMPENN.ORG

OFFICE HOURS: M-TH; 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

