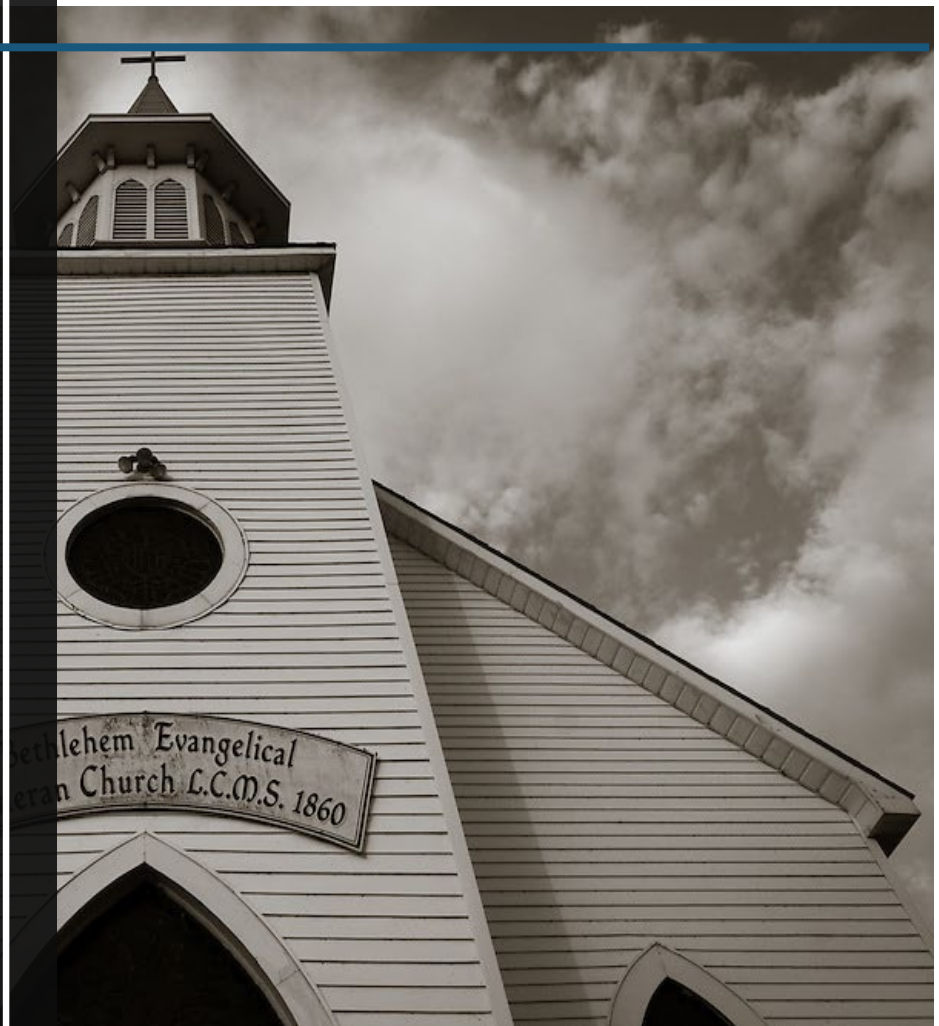


Ghost Town Gazette

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
William Penn, Texas

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“Glory to God in
highest heaven, Who
unto man His Son
hath given; While
angels sing with
tender mirth, A glad
new year to all the
earth.”

- Martin Luther

WAITING IN HOPE, REJOICING IN CHRIST

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we enter December, we step again into one of the Church's most precious rhythms: the seasons of Advent and Christmas. In an age that rushes from Thanksgiving straight into festive lights and frantic schedules, the Church gently calls us to slow down, to watch, to wait, and to repent with hope.

Advent is not merely a "pre-Christmas" season. It is a season of preparation, shaped by the preaching of John the Baptist and the promises of the prophets. Advent teaches us to lift our eyes above the noise and remember that our Lord comes to us in three ways: He came in the flesh at Bethlehem, He comes to us now through His Word and Sacraments, and He will come again in glory. Advent forms our hearts to long for Christ, not sentimentally, but faithfully, knowing our real need for rescue.

Christmas, then, becomes even sweeter. When the bells ring and the candles glow, we are not celebrating a vague feeling of goodwill but the true miracle of God in the flesh. The Child in the manger is the Lamb who will go to the cross. His birth already points to His redeeming work for us. Christmas declares that God has not abandoned His world or His people. He stepped into our darkness to be our Light, our Savior, and our peace.

My prayer is that this Advent and Christmas, we as a congregation pause to marvel, not at the season, but at the Savior. Come, Lord Jesus. And He does. Every week. For you.

In Christ's Service and Yours,

Pastor Krieg



“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.”

Luke 2:4-5



What is the story of the Holy Innocents?

As God's Word tells us in Matthew 2:1-18, King Herod didn't like the idea that another King was born in Bethlehem. He thought that if he killed baby Jesus, his worries would be gone. In order to accomplish this, he gave orders to have all of the boys in Bethlehem two years old and under killed. Herod's soldiers marched into Bethlehem and did just that! What Herod and his soldiers didn't know was that an angel had come to Joseph in a dream, telling him to take Jesus and Mary and escape before the soldiers arrived. So Joseph did what the angel had said. When the soldiers stormed into Bethlehem, baby Jesus was safe and sound in Egypt, many miles away. If you think about it, Jesus was saved from death as a baby so that God's plan for salvation of the world would be carried out when He was a man. What a great and glorious God we have!

THROUGH THE CHURCH YEAR: THE FESTIVAL OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

What is "The Festival of the Holy Innocents"?

The Festival of the Holy Innocents is the day that we remember the children who were murdered in Bethlehem. These children are considered by some to be the first Christian martyrs. The word "martyr" comes from a Greek word that means "witness." Traditionally, martyrs are people who have died because of their faith in Jesus.



“And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

Acts 7:59-60



HEROES OF FAITH: ST. STEPHEN, MARTYR

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 December 26th, the Church rejoices in the Festival of St. Stephen, Martyr.

St. Stephen is remembered as the first martyr of Christ. The fact that we celebrate his day the day after the birth of our Savior often shocks those whose minds are still focused on mangers and angelic choirs. But our attention is invited to dwell on this truth, “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (Jn 1:11-12). Stoned by a mob in which Saul, later to become Paul, took part, St. Stephen laid down His life for the truth of the Gospel. Ironically, Stephen means “crown,” and one can’t help but recall the words of Jesus in Revelation 2:10, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” And so, St. Stephen became the first in a long line of martyrs to receive their crown.



YOUNG AT HEART DINNER

The Youth League will be hosting the Young At Heart dinner on December 14th, after the worship service. All church members over 65 are invited to attend the meal.



CHRISTMAS CAROLING



On December 19th, the Youth League will be lending their voices to sing for our special members of the congregation.

If you are going to attend **Higher Things** this summer in St. Louis, you need to let Pastor Krieg know by **January 18th** so we can get the early-bird registration price.



YOUTH LEAGUE UPDATE

Ring in the New Year with the Youth League!

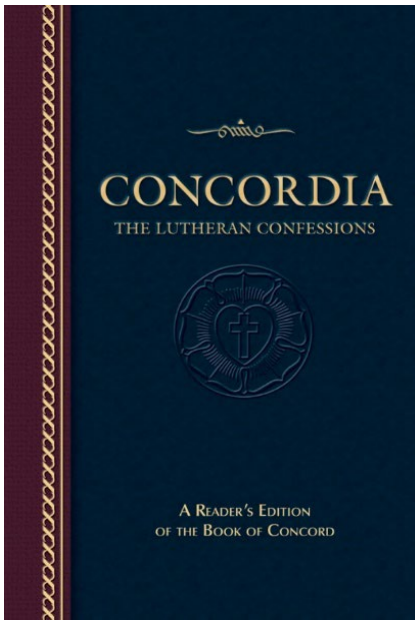
As we look forward to 2026, our Youth League is hosting its New Year's Eve Party on Wednesday, December 31, following the evening service. This will be a time of fellowship, fun, and food for them as they celebrate the blessings of the past year and the promises of the year to come.

The evening will be filled with exciting games and delicious snacks, offering the youth a wonderful opportunity to enjoy time together in a Christ-centered atmosphere.

At the stroke of midnight, the youth will ring in the New Year, literally! They'll head to the bell tower to ring the church bells as a joyful proclamation of God's faithfulness and our hope in Him.

They would like to invite the whole congregation to join them at midnight to take part in this special moment. Whether you'd like to ring the bell yourself or simply enjoy the sound, we'd love to share this tradition with you.

Let's begin the New Year with a joyful noise to the Lord (Psalm 98:4) and celebrate the many blessings He has in store!



THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS: ARTICLE XVII THE RETURN OF CHRIST FOR JUDGEMENT

Article XVII was one article where the Lutherans and the Roman Catholic church were in agreement. There was nothing which was in dispute in this article. So why was this article necessary? The reason is that errors concerning the Lord's return were once again becoming prevalent, and the Lutherans were being blamed for them. We wanted to make clear we were not the source of these false beliefs. With ACXVII, the Lutherans distinguished themselves from the other so-called

"Reformed" churches by condemning their teaching as heretical.

Article XVII states: *Our churches teach that at the end of the world Christ will appear for judgment and will raise all the dead [1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:2]. He will give the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but He will condemn ungodly people and the devils to be tormented without end [Matthew 25:31–46].*

Our churches condemn the Anabaptists, who think that there will be an end to the punishments of condemned men and devils.

Our churches also condemn those who are spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed.

Errors concerning Christ's return show themselves primarily in two ways, as noted here in the Augsburg Confession. The first is known as annihilationism, and the other is millennialism. Both are very dangerous teachings that lead to a false view of Christ's work. Annihilationism destroys the importance of Christ's work, while millennialism changes Christ's purpose into something it is not.

Annihilationism teaches either that hell does not exist or that those who go to hell will only suffer for a short time. This term comes from the teaching that unbelievers will be annihilated on the last day and will cease to exist. Annihilationism is based on the idea that God is a God of love and could never condemn any of His own creatures to hell.

This teaching demeans the very real judgment of hell to make people feel more comfortable with living a life of sin while here on earth. Many passages in the Bible clearly show that the punishment in hell will be without end for those who do

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS: ARTICLE XVII THE RETURN OF CHRIST FOR JUDGEMENT

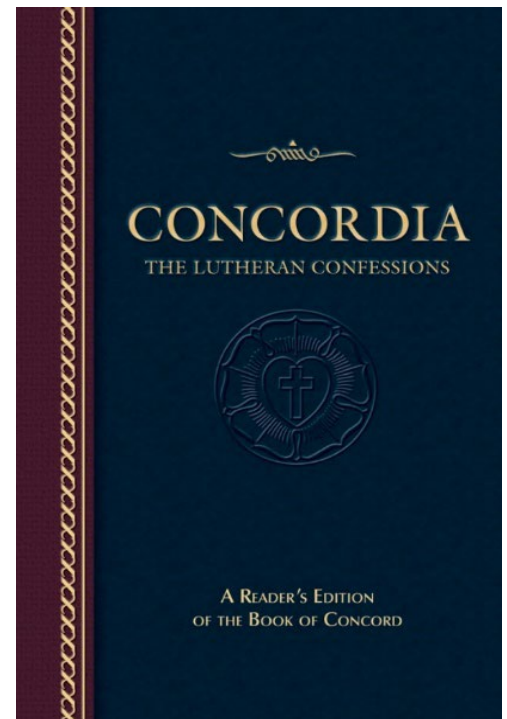
not trust in Jesus as their Savior from sin. (Mark 3:29, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, Matthew 25:46, Daniel 12:1-2, Isaiah 66:24, Revelation 14:10-11).

Throughout Scripture, the eternal punishment of hell is contrasted with the eternal joy of heaven. After the resurrection, the reunited body and soul will go to one of two places, either heaven or hell, for eternity! This is what makes Christ's work for us so important!

Millennialism takes its name from the "thousand years" of Revelation 20:1-10 and teaches that Christ will establish an earthly kingdom for 1,000 years at His return. The reason the Lutherans call this teaching a "Jewish opinion" is that millennialism originated in the prevalent Jewish belief that the Messiah would return to establish a kingdom here on earth (this pre-dates the time of Christ). Today, millennialism rejects the idea that Old Testament prophecies about the Kingdom of Christ refer to the New Testament Church and reinterprets these passages to refer to the reestablishment of a worldly kingdom of Israel, thereby explaining the preoccupation with the State of Israel in our world today, with many who hold this belief.

We must constantly be on guard from this belief. Millennialism is found permeating "secular" books like the "Left Behind" series, but is also common in most of the "Study Bibles" on the shelves of Christian Bible Bookstores today. If you want a Study Bible, get the Lutheran Study Bible.

As we have seen time and time again, the truths expressed in these articles are just as beneficial and relevant now as the day they were first written. ACXVII attests to this once again. Not only was this topic misunderstood by many in Luther's time, but it is increasingly confused by many more in our own time. From annihilationism to millennialism, the errors of the past continue to be perpetuated even today. May the LORD continue to preserve the truth of His Word in our midst and in our teaching! Amen.



WEDNESDAY ADVENT SERVICE



Often, during this time of the year, we focus on the trappings of the Christmas season, both secular and divine. The tree with gifts underneath, lights on the roof, stockings over the chimney, the nativity sets and angels, carols, and hot cocoa.

And amongst all the holiday parties and frantic shopping, we often forget that Christmas isn't even here yet.

The first season of the Church year is Advent. A time in which we look back at Christ's first coming in a Bethlehem manger, rejoice that he still comes to us through Word and Sacraments, and look forward to His second coming in clouds of glory.

So, I would like to invite you and your family, in the middle of your busy week, to pause and reflect on the season of Advent, and to join us for a meal and worship on Wednesday nights.

Let us take care of feeding the kids and feeding your souls.

Wednesday Advent Dinner & Services:

Meal at 6:00 PM: 3rd – Sausage; 10th – Chicken Spaghetti; 17th – Pulled Pork

Worship at 7:00 PM.

COMING UP IN DECEMBER

Tuesday, Dec. 2nd – Dinner and Ornament Exchange – 6:30 pm. RSVP – Vickie Ashorn (979) 277-4393.

Friday, Dec. 12th – Christmas Open House at the parsonage. Stop by anytime from 5-7 pm. Pastor Krieg and Jennifer would like to invite you over for some festive Christmas cheer. Enjoy light snacks and drinks as we celebrate the holiday season together.

Monday, Dec. 18th – Men's Club/LWML Christmas Party Dinner – 6:30 pm. Please bring a wrapped \$5 gift for a fun game.



CHRISTMAS EVE CHILDREN'S PROGRAM PRACTICES

The Board of Education is preparing for the Christmas Eve children's program. The service will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the church on Wednesday, December 24th.

Practices will be held on Nov. 30, Dec. 7, 14, and 21 from 8:00 to 9:00 AM, with a small breakfast being served after for the kids. If you have any questions, please contact the Board of Education.



“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

Isaiah 43:18-19

NEW YEAR'S EVE SERVICE

It's hard to believe, but 2025 is almost over. And though many of you no doubt have New Year's Eve parties to ring in the new year, we would still like to invite you to worship with us. The New Year's Eve service is a time to reflect on all the blessings God has given us this past year and to look ahead to the many blessings still to come. So please join us on New Year's Eve at 7 pm as we gather to hear God's Word and receive His blessings in Word and Sacrament.

FLOWERS FOR THE ALTAR



The ladies of LWML would like to invite all church members to sign up to place flowers on the altar for Sunday worship services. There is a flower chart on the bulletin board in the parish hall. You may have a special anniversary, birthday, or another event you would like to recognize. Sign up, and the church secretary will email you when it is your Sunday. The flowers may be placed on Saturday and removed

after the service unless we have a midweek service, such as Advent or Lent. The LWML would like to thank you for providing a flower arrangement for our worship services.

LEARN WITH OUR CONFIRMANDS

December	Catechism Memorization (Wednesdays)	Scripture Memorization (recited on Sundays)
3-Dec		1 Corinthians 3:16
10-Dec	Lord's Prayer – Intro. w/meaning	John 15:7
17-Dec	1 st – 3 rd Petitions w/meanings	Psalms 124:8
24-Dec		Luke 2:7
31-Dec	4 th Petition w/meaning	Psalms 103:19

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 above, and I challenge you to dust off your Small Catechism and, alongside them, relearn the treasures we hold so dear. 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.

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 6:30 – 8:30 PM LWML Dinner and Ornament Exchange	3 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation 6:00 – 7:00 PM Advent Meal 7:00 – 8:00 PM Advent Service	4 Stephanie Dahamn 6:00 – 7:00 PM Elders' Meeting 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	5 Ashley Kettler	6 Ryan Bentke, Hattie Lampe 7:30 – 8:30 AM Men's Club Breakfast, Bible Study, & Meeting
7 Brian Ashorn, Peggy McDonald 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Worship w/ Communion	8	9	10 8:30 – 9:30 AM Sonshine 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation 6:00 – 7:00 PM Advent Meal 7:00 – 8:00 PM Advent Service 7:45 – 8:45 PM Budget and Election Voters' Meeting	11 Tripp Medve 6:30 – 8:00 PM Ladies Bible Study	12 5:00 – 7:00 PM Christmas Open House at the Parsonage	13 Gene Weidemann
14 Pat Meyer, Lorena Schroeder 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Worship 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM Young at Heart Luncheon	15 Jennifer Luera	16 Benson Rodriguez	17 Theodore Kettler 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation 6:00 – 7:00 PM Advent Meal 7:00 – 8:00 PM Advent Service	18 Jessy Schroeder 6:30 – 8:00 PM Men's Club/LWML Christmas Party Dinner	19	20 8:30 – 9:30 AM Sisters in Christ
21 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Worship w/ Communion	22 Jackson Guthrie	23 Adrienne Guthrie, Corey Klussmann	24 Carin Landeck, Arturo Maya 6:30 – 7:30 PM Children's Christmas Eve Program	25 Christmas Day 9:00 – 10:00 AM Christmas Day Worship	26	27
28 Cody Carroll 9:00 – 10:00 AM Sunday School & Adult Bible Class 10:15 – 11:15 AM Worship	29 Michael Hinze	30	31 Harlee Duckett, Alexis Maya 4:30 – 6:00 PM Confirmation 7:00 – 8:00 PM New Year's Eve Service w/ Communion			

December 2025

Birthdays

4 Stephanie Dahman

5 Ashley Kettler

6 Hattie Lampe

7 Brian Ashorn
Peggy McDonald

11 Tripp Medve

13 Gene Weidemann

14 Pat Meyer
Lorena Schroeder

15 Jennifer Luera

16 Benson Rodriguez

17 Theodore Kettler

18 Jessy Schroeder

22 Jackson Guthrie

23 Adrienne Guthrie
Corey Klussmann

24 Carin Landeck
Arturo Maya

28 Cody Carroll

29 Michael Hinze

31 Harlee Duckett
Alexis Maya

Baptismal Birthdays

2 Donna Hinze
Amelia Kettler
Michael Kettler

3 Shane Schroeder

9 Randy Gaddy

11 Erik Berglund
Travis Medve

12 Lane Janner
Reid Janner
Wyatt Janner

16 Beverly Richter

18 Addison Schramme

19 Dennis Meyer

22 Sandra Searle

23 Pat Boenker
Brody Guthrie
Mildred Holle

26 Emilie Dieterich
Leona Dieterich

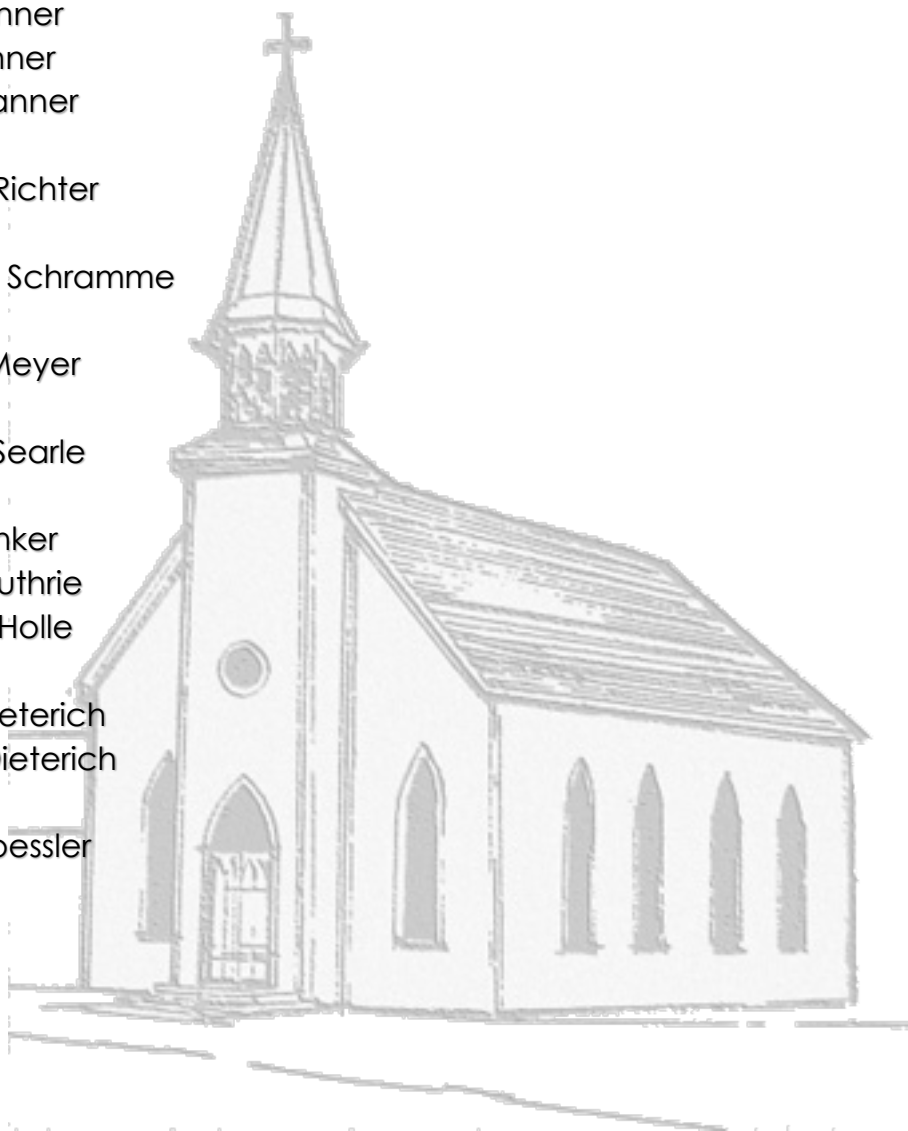
29 Kellie Goessler

Wedding Anniversaries

Tyler & Haley Gandy
Dec 7, 2019

Shane & Jessy Schroeder
Dec 7, 2019

Landon & Hannah Kohring
Dec 10, 2022



**BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH-
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OFFICE HOURS: M-TH; 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

