

the Wellspring

Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water
John 7:38

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2023
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Bethesda Lutheran Church
GATHER...GROW...GO

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Let Love Be Genuine

~ Pastor Bryan Simmons

“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.” Instead, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink, for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

- Romans 12:9-21

Dear Beloved in Christ,

If you're like me, you see the quotation at the top of the page and tend to skip it to read the “real” article. Well, this time, I encourage you to go back up and read it. Really read it, because what Paul has to say in Romans 12 is so crucial to the Christian way of life. You know it's true because it is virtually impossible to put into practice.

Like most things in the Christian life, how to be Christ to others flies in the face of the way this world operates. We want to build that multi-corded whip and gleefully chase the evil moneychangers around the temple square, beating them silly for all the pain and oppression they wreak on this fallen world. We tend not, however, to look inward at the moneychanger in ourselves, and we certainly don't want to go to that cross and die on their behalf.

Paul spells it out fairly plainly. Let love be genuine and hate evil. That part, at least, seems easy enough. The tricky thing is how we go about hating evil. Unfortunately for the Christian, we can't go around beating evil senseless until there is only good. It has this funny way of creating more evil, particularly within ourselves. But the lure of good triumphing over evil with

decisive victory, by scoring victory through evil's defeat, is so alluring. How can we not take up our arms and wage war against it for the sake of good?

In America, this is a presidential election year. Our country is at its most divisive, if not ever, at least in recent history. Over 84% of Americans polled feel that political discourse is more disrespectful now and over 61% say that political conversations with people they disagree with are “stressful and frustrating.”¹ We all know it. We are entering a season of vitriol. What is the Christian to do?

Feed your enemies. Give them something to drink. Live peaceably with all. Overcome evil with good. This cannot be outsourced to a political power. It starts with you, and me, and all who confess Jesus as Lord, to love as Jesus loves. The whip is temporal. The Cross is forever.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Bryan Simmons

¹Pew Research Center. (2023, September 19). “Americans’ feelings about politics, polarization and the tone of political discourse.”



Bethesda Council Update

~ **Steve Peters**, Council President

Dear Friends,

It has been a privilege to serve as your council president this past year. As we close out the year, it is worth noting some of the milestones of 2023.

We continue to sponsor two young families with children to resettle here in Ames as they fled war and political persecution with little more than the clothes on their backs.

We welcomed Prairie Flowers Children Center as a tenant in our education wing under the terms of a lease approved by your church council.

We made important revisions and updates to our congregational bylaws and approved continuing resolutions that keep the organization up to date and relevant in today's ever-changing environment. We also brought new attention to and set new policies for the administration of our Bethesda endowment. Special thanks to immediate past council president Larry Otteman for his diligent work in these complicated matters.

We continued our very important community centered ministries with the Food Pantry, Clothing Room, and Saving Suds, setting new annual records for the number of people served. Special thanks go out to Daryle Vegge and the Stewardship Committee for the campaign they mounted through temple talks to remind all of us of the important community services Bethesda provides thousands of local community members each year. Then they capped that effort off with another wonderful stewardship kickoff event.

Through your generosity Bethesda was able to end the year in the black. Giving during the holiday period more than made up for the slippage we had experienced earlier in the year.

The council has been involved in researching the potential for two new capital items suggested by members – a digital outdoor sign on Northwestern Avenue to replace the current sign, and the installation of solar panels on the church roof or lawn. At present the funds are not available for replacing the sign. Our task force continues to research the long-term cost benefit of investing in solar panels.

For this new year of 2024 I am happy to announce that Mif Grotnes will serve as Congregational Council president-elect. Larry Otteman has accepted the Congregational Council Secretary position. Lise McKillop will serve as the Board Chair for the Worship, Music, and Arts Board. And Trace Houge Brakke has accepted the Congregational Council seat on the council. At this writing, we are still looking for people to chair the Stewardship Committee and the Administration/Finance Board.

As we review this past year, it rapidly becomes obvious that nothing would happen at Bethesda without all of you. Thank you for so generously giving of your time, talents, and finances to support our Bethesda community. And thank you for so graciously allowing me to serve as your council president. It has been an honor and a privilege. Together, we gather, grow and go!

Steve Peters



Food Pantry Update

~ **Donna Grooms**, Food Pantry Chair

Visitors to the food pantry have continued to be on the rise since the end of the covid incentives. The good news is that inventory at the Food Bank of Iowa has improved so we are able to obtain most of our inventory through the Food Bank at very low cost.

Here are Food Pantry statistics for the period July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023:

- 14,042 individuals visited the pantry
- 100,313 pounds of food was distributed
- 24% of families visiting the pantry have 5 or more individuals in their household.
- 64% of households visiting the food pantry are from Ames
- 80% of households were from Story County, 6% from Boone County and 7.5% from Marshall County and 3% from Hamilton County, the remaining came from other counties in Iowa
- 62% of households visited only one or two times during the year, 5% visited once per month, 4% visited once per week, 29% visited 3-10 times during the year
- Average amount of food distributed per individual per visit was 7.2 pounds

The annual holiday distribution consisted of distributing 400 Fareway gift cards at \$30 each during the months of November and December. These cards could not be used to purchase alcohol, tobacco or lottery tickets. In addition, the pantry distributed 100 age-appropriate stockings to children in December. The Bethesda many hands sewed the stockings and stuffed them with items purchased by the food pantry.

The food pantry is 100% operated by volunteers ordering, stocking, distributing, checking temperatures, keeping statistics, and writing thank you notes.

- Food Pantry committee members:
- Rod Fischer and Donna Grooms, co-chairs
- Joyce O'Donnell
- Scott Hansen
- Laura Mogler
- Randi Peters
- Susan Ramfjord





Bethesda Community Clothing Closet Update

~ **Kathy Harris**, Clothing Closet Chair

The Clothing Closet completed its 50th year in operation in 2023. Having started in the basement of the church in 1973, in 2017, we moved to the second floor, where we operated for four years until May of 2021; we moved to the first floor and are located right beside the food pantry, meaning we can now assist more people because of the convenient location and hours, which mirror those of The Food Pantry.

On February 5th, St. Cecilia Catholic Church brought in over 50 coats for those who utilize the clothing closet.

While we receive numerous donations, we only keep clothing that is in season and the out-of-season items are taken to Goodwill every week by Phil Harris or Russell Henry. There are guidelines for shoppers to use when at The Clothing Closet, the main guidelines being individuals are only allowed to shop for those in their household and may only utilize The Clothing Closet once a month.

In 2023, we have assisted over 3,000 family households, with families consisting of two to 12 per household. Being located on the first floor in the main hallway has been beneficial as we see an increase in shoppers each month. People appreciate the service we provide. All volunteers are knowledgeable, helpful, and enjoy giving their time. We have a lot of fun working together.

Thank you to everyone who serves as a volunteer and those who donate to the clothing room. If you have yet to go in the clothing room, stop in anytime and look around. It is a very nice place to shop.



Music at Bethesda - Winter 2024

~Randy Ewing, Co-Director of Music

Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter are busy times for everyone, and church musicians are no exception. As we prepared and awaited the birth of Jesus, we also prepared for the return of the Bethesda Christmas Festival. Thank you to everyone who helped, participated, and attended the wonderful afternoon of music, crafts, photos, treats, and fellowship! The 2023 Bethesda Christmas Festival was a huge success that was enjoyed by many.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season. The mid-week worship services and soup suppers will be here before we know it! The weekly suppers will begin at 6 pm on Wednesdays in the Commons, with the Holden Evening Prayer Service following at 7 pm in the Sanctuary.

Bethesda Adult and Carillon Choirs are preparing anthems for the Lenten journey and the Easter Sunday celebration. If you've ever thought about joining either (or both!) of these groups, now would be a great time to give it a try! Beginning Ash Wednesday, the Bethesda Choir will be rehearsing in the Sanctuary immediately following the Wednesday evening service until 8:30 pm, and the Carillon Choir will continue rehearsing on Thursdays from 6:00 to 7:00 pm in the Music Room.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend this year's Good Friday Tenebrae: A Musical Service of Darkness. This service's structure and music will be similar to last year's, but expect some changes that will further enhance this moving experience. We hope to see you all on Friday, March 29, beginning at 7:00 pm.



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Register for the ELCA National Youth Gathering

~ Pastor Jonathan Dolan, Associate Pastor of Youth and Family Ministries

Are you looking to get your 8th-12th grader further involved in fellowship activities? Register them to attend the 2024 ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans from July 16-20th with Bethesda Lutheran Church! The national youth gathering occurs once every three years and brings together over 30,000 youth for four days of worship, service and activities that build life-long friendships.

You can find more information about the 2024 ELCA National Youth Gathering on their website <https://www.elca.church/gathering>.

Volunteers and chaperones alike are encouraged to register to attend the gathering as well.

If you, or an eligible youth, wants to register for the gathering, contact Pastor Jonathan Dolan at jdolan@bethesdaames.org or by calling the church office at 515-232-6256.





All About O.W.L.s

~ Marnette Warth

O.W.L.s (Older Wiser Lutherans) is a group for those 60 and over. We meet monthly on the second Thursday of the month from 2:00 to 3:30 pm. Each month we have different activities: Speakers from local organizations, days where we play games and swap puzzles, sing-alongs, and social time. And, of course, each meeting we always have coffee, water, and snacks to enjoy.

Although O.W.L.s will not meet in March, Rod Fischer will talk about his rare/historical newspaper collection on April 11. Rod will also have a few of these newspapers for you to look at.

On May 9th O.W.L.s is holding a hymn sing led by Nancy Ewing. Come to sing some of your favorite hymns.

Let us know if there are other activities/speakers you would like to see at future O.W.L.s meetings by contacting Dennis (dwarth51@gmail.com) and Marnette Warth (mwarth51@icloud.com).

We'd love to have you join us for O.W.L.s. Sign-up sheets are available at the welcome center or you can sign up through the church office. (Signing up helps us plan for snacks.) All are welcome even if you don't sign up. Hope to see you in April.



Chili Cook-off for a Cause

On the evening of February 4th, Bethesda Lutheran Church held their long-standing annual chili cook-off in the Commons. Seven chili dishes made up the competition, and attendees voted for their favorite dish by leaving a cash donation of any amount in a donation bucket on the table of the stew they liked the best. Although the competition was close, Carl Pederson came out on top with his chili, with Pastor Bryan Simmons in second place and Nancy Ewing rounding out the top three.

The cash used to determine the winner of the competition was donated to the Ames Community School District's Lunch Hero Program, an effort to assist in paying down negative lunch balances across the district, a cause congregation members supported. While donations were accepted in person at the event, individuals also had the opportunity to donate online via the chili cook-off sign-up form.

After all the competitors and event attendees had had their fill, Bethesda Lutheran Church raised over \$900.00 for the Ames Community School District's Lunch Hero Program.

To learn more about, or donate to, the Ames Community School District's Lunch Hero program, visit <https://amescsd.org/parents-students/school-nutrition/>.



Sara Nelson is a 2024 ISU Calandar Honoree

~ Tess Hanson, Director of Marketing and Communications

Our own Sara Nelson has been selected as one of 12 women whose leadership has made a difference at Iowa State University and will be honored on the 2024 Women Impacting ISU Calendar. Each year, a committee of students, faculty and staff – including past calendar honorees – evaluates the nomination packets to select the final honorees. The committee chose the 12 honorees based on their impacts in service, teaching, research, administration, scholarship and involvement in campus activities, depending on each nominee's role on campus.

Sara, director of the NASA Iowa Space Grant Consortium at Iowa State University, has worked at Iowa State for over a decade and has held her current position for just over a year. With many exceptional candidates this year, the decision-making process was tough one for committee members.

Copies of the calendar are available now at various campus locations, including the Catt Center, Sloss House, Beardshear Hall and the Memorial Union. If you would like calendars for distribution at your office, email the Catt Center at cattcntr@iastate.edu.



WORSHIP

WEDNESDAY 7:00 pm
Lenten
 SATURDAY 5:30 pm
Modern
 SUNDAY 9:30 am
Traditional

All are welcome!



Tues, Feb. 13 6:30pm
Mardi Gras Beer & Hymns @ Torrent Brewing
 Wed, Feb. 14 **Ash Wednesday Worship**
Soup Supper 6:00pm
Worship 7:00pm
 Wed, Feb. 21–Mar. 20 **Lenten Services**
Soup Supper 6:00pm
Worship 7:00pm
 Sat, Mar. 23 10:00am–11:30pm
Community Easter Egg Hunt
 Mar. 23/24 5:30pm/9:30am
Palm Weekend
 Thurs, Mar. 28 7:00pm
Maudy Thursday Worship
 Fri, Mar. 29 7:00pm
Good Friday Worship
 Sat, Mar. 30 5:30pm
Easter Vigil Worship
 Sun, Mar. 31 **Easter Sunday**
Brunch 9:00am
Worship 10:00am





Saving Suds continues to be prosperous in their efforts to assist families in need, providing opportunities every first and third Thursday of the month for community members to wash their bedding, blankets, and clothing. Starting February off strong, Saving Suds served 26 families with 71 people the first of the month and distributed \$629.25 in quarters.

Kim and Lynn check each persons' washers to see that they are loaded with laundry before they supply them with quarters. Kim and Lynn say it is incredible how fast the soap pods, snacks, and money go!

We thank volunteers Chelsey Aisenberry, Kristin Pates and Conner, and Kim and Lynn Burnett.

Continued thanks to Pam Sargent, who generously supplies the Tide pods. Please continue to donate to this ministry, as these people are so patient and grateful!

Donations to \$aving Suds can be made online or by making a check out to Bethesda Lutheran Church, designating it for Saving Suds on the memo line, and dropping it off in the church office.

Donate today!



The Wellspring magazine is published quarterly by Bethesda Lutheran Church, a Congregation of the Southeastern Iowa Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

1517 Northwestern Avenue | Ames, IA 50010-5299 | 515.232.6256
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WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Saturdays @ 5:30 pm | Sundays @ 9:30 am
 Livestreamed at www.bethesdaames.org
 and Facebook [BethesdaAmes](https://www.facebook.com/BethesdaAmes)

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Curtis Malone



We invite you to join our community, which is committed to inclusion, racial equity and anti-racism. We share in God's abundant grace knowing that we cannot be separated from the love of God by our age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, marital status, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, physical or mental abilities or faith background.

For more information on our inclusivity visit:
<https://www.reconcilingworks.org/RIC/>

NOTE: please contact Tess Hanson at 232-6256 or contact@BethesdaAmes.org with requests / comments, or to submit an article for the Spring issue (deadline TBD).

All submissions to Bethesda Lutheran Church's *The Wellspring* magazine are subject to editing for clarity, space, and content.

Artwork credit for this month's *Wellspring* cover photo:
 Adobe Stock: 1000_F_298973756_04hnNaLqZiBBxAWB7FtwPGSsUf60DM0



Splash Children's Church Needs Volunteers

Children's Church is in need of individuals to educate the next generation on the Word of God. Children's Church is after the Children's Message during Worship service and is for Pre-K through 5th Grade. If you would like to volunteer to teach Children's Church, contact Pastor Jonathan Dolan (jdolan@bethesdaames.org) or call the church office at 515-232-6256.



Upcoming Book Discussions

Book Club meetings in the Crossroads are as follows:

The Life We Bury by Allen Eskens, Thursday, February 29, 7:00 pm

The Good Life: Lessons from the World's Longest Scientific Study of Happiness by Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz, Thursday, April 4, 7:00 pm



Save the Date for VBS

Parents: Mark your calendars for **June 24 – June 27** to send your kids to Vacation Bible School at Bethesda! More information will be available over the coming weeks so keep an eye on The Current and The Living Current for updates and registration as we continue to plan for this summer.

March 2024, LSI Bulletin/Newsletter

March is National Professional Social Work Month, a time to recognize social workers and thank them for all they do. At Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI), we are grateful for the many social workers who have dedicated their lives to serving our communities across the state!



At LSI, we believe every Iowan deserves the independence they need to thrive. LSI's Host Homes is an innovative way LSI is serving adults with disabilities. Through this program, an individual moves from Supported Community Living into a private family home with a carefully selected mentor. This program is built entirely around an individual's goals and interests, and LSI's extensive matching process ensures the mentor and mentee are a great fit.

Take a moment to read the following story from a Host Homes mentee:

"My journey with LSI's Host Homes started in early 2023. I've known my mentor for a few years while he provided hourly services to me. We learned about Host Homes and thought it would be a good fit for us. I moved into my mentor's home where he helps me maintain a daily routine with schoolwork, household tasks, daily living skills, improving independence, and more.

I attend a college nearby and go to classes a few days a week. I am able to navigate the local bus system to access my community to attend classes and visit friends. My mentor is always available to transport me into the community as needed.

This summer, I went on a trip across the country with one of my classes. While on this trip, I was able to maintain my independence with limited support, but I knew my mentor would be available by phone to assist me with my coping skills and problem solving. This trip was a big success for me knowing I had support only a phone call away.

I like LSI's Host Homes Program because my mentor supports me in the way I want to be supported, assists me with some daily tasks I struggle with, and understands me."

If you are interested in becoming a Host Homes mentor and helping a fellow Iowan achieve independence, please visit LSIowa.org/HostHomes for more information.

Our Mission:

Lutheran Services in Iowa responds to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at LSIowa.org and Facebook.com/LSI.Iowa.

Bethesda Lutheran Church

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2023 BEST OF STORY COUNTY
The Official Community Choice Awards
Ames Tribune
WINNER

Community Easter Egg Hunt!

Saturday, March 23
10:00 – 11:30 am

@ Bethesda Lutheran . . 1517 Northwestern Ave.

- Photo booth fun
- Crafting projects
- EASTER EGG HUNT
(outside—weather permitting; inside if not!)
- Spring games
- And more!

www.bethesdaames.org

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