

Bethel United Methodist Church

Pastor Kathy Reid † 10509 Meggers Road † New Holstein, WI



The Bethel Beacon
January AND February 2024
Believe/Reach/Serve



Office: 920.467.6244 † crossandflameumc@gmail.com † www.churchofbethelumc.com
For the link to the live streaming of worship, visit our website.



January Meowsings" By Pastor Kathy

The Crocus: A Message of Hope in 2024

Growing up in Georgia, I knew spring was around the corner when the purple crocus would push up its tiny flowering head through the earth announcing change, transformation, new life. I see the same sign in Wisconsin yards as we transition from winter to spring.

This last year has been a hard year for many of us for many reasons. Personal losses, political chaos, horrendous war and injustice in Israel, Gaza, and Ukraine. Where do we find hope for 2024? The Old Testament prophet Isaiah gives us a bouquet of images to describe the indescribable joy that comes when you know that despite the horrors around us, God is still paying attention. God has never stopped caring. God continues to be at work in ways we cannot always see – unless we're paying attention. Paying close enough attention to find flowers in the desert.

This love and care of God is what Isaiah describes in this passage for a people who have suffered through exile, enslavement, children dying, women raped, the land burnt raw and poisoned. Using poetry and metaphor, he describes streams flowing in a parched land, dangerous places becoming safe, and the predators banished forever.

This is not some pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by empty words we're talking about here. Jesus quotes Isaiah 35:5-6 for John in response to his question, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" The one we have been waiting for during the season of Advent has been born. He is "God-with-us" – our source of hope. Isaiah 35:5-6 contains one of the most hopeful and poetic verses in that prophetic book: *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert."* Isaiah's poetry is about justice for the oppressed, rescue for those who cannot rescue themselves. It is about seeing God at work in ways that are surprising and beautiful in order to create a different and better world in the midst of the one of that is crumbling down around us.

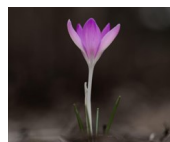
Our job as Christians is to recall and repeat these words of Jesus. Our job as people of faith is to point out those signs of God's presence and action in the world, especially when the prison doors have slammed shut and the cold dirt floor makes you shiver to the bone. Especially when you're in the midst of the "bleak midwinter" where the earth stands "hard as iron, water like a stone." When you're trudging through the grey frozen slush, "snow on snow on snow," and you see no sign of life ("In the Bleak Midwinter," Christina G. Rosseti). But then, there, you do see it! **Reaching out of the snow with delicate hands cupped in prayer is the tiny purple crocus.** "It came, a flow'r so bright, amid the cold of winter, when half-spent was the night." ("Lo, How a Rose").

You see, Creation – mirroring the Creator – has its own rhythms; it will happen when it's going to happen. We cannot control it. But our job is to point to it. To speak poetry in the desert. To declare that the flowers are blooming, the streams are flowing, and hope is not lost.

So, for you: where do crocuses need to bloom? Where are the crocuses blooming right now? Where is the water flowing in the desert? Where is the highway, the Holy Way, that is for God's people? My prayer for all of us is that we find space for God's working in our lives and in the world in 2024. I pray for peace on earth, and good will to all.

Blessings to you and all those you love in 2024,

Pastor Kathy



For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

Isaiah 35



February Meowsings"
By Pastor Kathy



Why is Lent centered around the number 40? In the Bible, 40 often symbolizes a period of journey, training, or testing. God's chosen people journeyed in the desert for 40 years after Moses led them out of Egypt. After His baptism, Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness fasting and praying. (Can you think of other stories in the Bible that focus on the number 40?)

Many Christians see Lent as a time for self-examination and self-denial. Some practice fasting from something; from sweet treats to soda to the use of social media. Instead of fasting, others add a spiritual practice during Lent. It is important to remember that Lent is not a self-improvement program. The goal of Lent is to help us grow in our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. These moments and days of Lent **point us beyond our own everyday agendas and connect us with our place in a bigger, more beautiful story.**

Below are some suggestions:

- Ask three people you know how you can pray for them and commit to praying for them every day.
- Spend five minutes each day in silence, listening to God.
- Take a walk and pray for the people in the homes you pass.
- Ask God to provide new opportunities for helping others, and then give generously.
- Instead of checking Facebook or the news each day on your phone or computer, find an online daily devotional to have sent to you and read it each day.
- Keep a gratitude journal noting 3 things each day that you are grateful for.
- Pray for your enemies.
- Give \$20 to a mission/outreach/non-profit of your choice.
- Give five items of clothing to a thrift store.
- Light a real or virtual candle and pray for peace in the world once a day.
- Pick two Psalms to read once a week, and read them several times, slowly.
- Contribute to the free lunch program at a local school.
- Check out the online link to **Freecycle**.
- Write an email or a card or note to someone with words of encouragement or appreciation. Be sure to send it!

At some point during the day go outside and take a walk around the block. If you normally walk the dog, don't count that. If you normally walk around the block with someone, go by yourself. If you always walk around the block then take a new route or go at a different time of day. Ask God to teach you something.

Please join us at Faith United Methodist Church on Wednesday, February 14, at 6:30 p.m. for a service of worship and the imposition of ashes as we enter the season of Lent.

Peace and grace,
Pastor Kathy



J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) In Action! / Scout Sunday / Confirmation /
Happy January and February Happy Birthdays!

J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) in A.C.T.I.O.N.



October pumpkin carving event



SCOUT SUNDAY will be celebrated on Sunday, February 11, during worship.
All are welcome to attend.



Jesus and Me (J. A. M.)

JESUS AND ME – All school-age children from elementary through middle school are welcome to join the Jesus and Me (J.A.M.) group. The 2024 schedule is still in the works. Stay tuned for more information. Thank you for your patience.



STICKY FAITH CONFIRMATION: Session #9 is February 11, and #10 is February 25, all from 4-5 p.m. at Faith UMC from 4-5 p.m. Please let Pastor Kathy know if you will be unable to attend. No Lake Lucerne retreat on March 1 and 2, but plans are in the works for doing our own Confirmation Retreat. Pastor Kathy is in the process of checking dates with families. More information will be forthcoming. **The Rite of Confirmation will take place on Sunday, May 19, 2024.**



Happy **January** birthday!

Abigail Bonde	January 3
Kory Schoen	January 8
Galen Flanigan	January 20
Barbara Schultz	January 23

Happy **February** birthday!

Nathan Bonde	February 9
Paul Leverenz	February 11
Trisha Flanigan	February 12
Keith Hassinger	February 13

God's blessings to you. as you celebrate your **January** and **February** birthdays!

Christmas Poinsettias / Upcoming January and February Events /
Worship Volunteers / Holy Week Worship Schedule / Office Hours



Sue Duenk
In celebration of our children and grandchildren

Jill Fritsch
In memory of my father, Ivan Johnson

Kathy Lefeber
In memory of Thomas Lefeber

Thank you to all poinsettia donors for the beautification of the Sanctuary for Christmas Eve services.

UPCOMING EVENTS. Mark your calendars!

- **STICKY FAITH CONFIRMATION AT FAITH UMC:** In planning ahead, Sundays, February 11 and 25 (Sessions #9 and #10.) A potential day long, in-house confirmation retreat is in the works. Watch for more details.
- **ASP (Appalachia Service Project 2024) Chili Cook-off and Auction:** Sunday, February 18, 2024 from 12 noon to 2:30 p.m. at St. Luke UMC, 623 Ontario Ave., Sheboygan. Tickets are \$10/adult; \$5 child/student; and 4 and under are free. Enter a chili recipe and win a prize!
- **Leadership Board Meeting:** Thursday, February 29 (Leap Day!) at 6:30 p.m. at church. Ted Bonde will lead devotions.
- **BETHEL BABES/BFFS:** All ladies are invited to the Ladies of Faith 'Plus' February Luncheon on Shrove/Fat Tuesday, February 13 for a Mardi Gras theme Cajun cooking party luncheon in the Fellowship Hall at Faith UMC at 11:30 a.m. No shellfish will be used in any of the dishes. The cost is \$10 per person, payable at the luncheon. Please RSVP to the church office no later than Sunday, February 11. We hope to see you there!
- **J.A.M. (JESUS & ME):** No updated information has been received by the office.
- **ASP SPAGHETTI DINNER FUNDRAISER AT FAITH UMC:** Sunday, March 10, 2024 from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. \$10 per adult/ \$5 per child/youth. All proceeds go toward the Appalachia Service Project, as we have Sammy g. attending from Bethel, and Sophia K. and Aiden R. attending from Faith.

January Volunteers

Acolyte	John Mitchell
Custodian	Julie Leverenz
Greeter	Nancy Rheingans
Holy Grounds	Rosie Mitchell
Usher	
Liturgist	Rosie Mitchell



February Volunteers

Acolytes	Genna Bonde
Custodian	Jill Fritsch
Greeter	Fred Leverenz
Holy Grounds	Jill Fritsch
Ushers	Julie L. and Nancy R.
Liturgist	Fred Leverenz

HOLY WEEK SPECIAL WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:

- ♦ **ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP:** Wednesday, February 14 at 6:30 p.m. at Faith UMC in Sheboygan Falls, with imposition of ashes.
- ♦ **MAUNDY THURSDAY WORSHIP:** Thursday, March 28, at 6:30 p.m. at Bethel UMC in New Holstein. The Choir will be singing.
- ♦ **EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE:** Sunday, March 31 at 8:30 a.m.

CHANGE IN FEBRUARY OFFICE HOURS: The office will be closed on Thursday, February 8 and Thursday, February 15. Office hours for those two weeks will be on Monday through Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please make a note of this on your calendars. Thank you.

**Tickets available through Emily and Sammy G.
or at the church office!**

⚡ **ASP 2024 PRESENTS** ⚡

CHILI

COOK-OFF & AUCTION

**Feb 18 2024 BRING THE HEAT! 12 pm to
2:30 pm**

Hot Prizes for the best chili!

St. Luke United Methodist Church
623 Ontario Avenue, Sheboygan, WI
920-458-3461 or
emily.gilbertson@gmail.com

**\$10 PER ADULT
\$5 PER
CHILD/STUDENT
AGES 4 & UNDER
FREE**

**Tickets on Sale Jan 28 through Feb 18
Auction Items due Feb 11 & Sign up for Chili
Competition**



2024 Chili Cook-off

Competitor Sign Up Form

Welcome to the ASP 2024 Chili Cook-off! Thank you for your support and for entering a chili to compete! Please turn in your competition form marked ASP Chili Cook-off to the St. Luke UMC office no later than Sunday, February 11. Please have your chili to the St. Luke Fellowship Hall no later than 11:30 am with a power strip and cord. The event begins promptly at 12 noon.

St. Luke UMC Office hours vary.

Please call 920-458-3461 or mail/email your form:

623 Ontario Avenue, Sheboygan, WI 53081

Questions?

Please contact Emily Gilbertson, ASP Trip Co-Leader

920-379-5965 or emily.gilbertson@gmail.com

ASP 2024 Chili Cook-off Entry Form due Feb. 11 via email or drop off to St. Luke Office

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Chili Name: _____



2024 Chili Cook-off

Auction Item Donation Form

Welcome to the ASP 2024 Chili Cook-off and Auction! Thank you for your support and for entering a chili to compete! Please turn in your auction form marked ASP Chili Cook-off to the St. Luke UMC office no later than **Sunday, February 11**. Please have your auction item to the St. Luke Fellowship Hall no later than 2:30 pm on Sat, Feb. 17, This is the event set-up time. If you need to arrange a drop off, please contact Emily

St. Luke UMC Office hours vary.

Please call 920-458-3461 or mail/email your form:

623 Ontario Avenue, Sheboygan, WI 53081

Questions?

Please contact Emily Gilbertson, ASP Trip Co-Leader

920-379-5965 or emily.gilbertson@gmail.com

ASP 2024 Chili Cook-off Auction Form due Feb. 11 via email or drop off to St. Luke Office

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Auction Item & Value: _____

Appalachia
Service
Project

Sunday March 10

11:45

AM TO

1 PM

Spaghetti Dinner



Tickets on Sale Feb 25 - March 10

Faith United Methodist Church
633 Detroit Avenue
Sheboygan Falls

\$10 per adult \$5 per child/youth

Questions?

Emily Gilbertson

920-379-5965

emily.gilbertson@gmail.com