Because of the early delivery date of this issue: Another reminder of our Christmas Services...

Bethany Lutheran Church
Invites you to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ!

Advent Worship Services
Wednesday, December 20th - Noon & 7 pm

Sunday Morning Worship Service
December 24th - 10 am

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship - 8 pm
Experience the magic of candlelight and worship

Christmas Day Worship
December 25th - 10 am

621 S. Orchard Ave. Vacaville, CA
707-451-6675
www.GoBethany.com

Semiannual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, January 28 11:30pm

Worship Service @ 10am ONLY

Information will be posted in the Narthex
2 weeks prior to meeting.
Greetings to you in the Name of Our Lord, Jesus, as we enter this New Year of 2018.

As we open the door and step into the new year, we are not sure what will meet us during these future months. Some things will be wonderful and exciting. Other things will be mundane and “the usual”, and still other circumstances may be very difficult and even “down right” scary to us as human beings to face. That is the way it always is for us, as humans, who live in a fallen world that has many unpredictable turns and twists. We try to predict the future and plan for it, but we just do not know exactly what the future may bring to us. So, we wait and hope and plan.

That is our human experience.

But as Christians, we know we have some promises from God, Himself, that gives us an “anchor” for our lives. These promises give us stability and a sure foundation as we move “step by step” into the future with its unchartered waters. These promises are sure and present, whether we are in the joyful part of our journey, or when we are going through a more difficult “climb” in our journey.

We know that Our God is Faithful to us. He promises to always be with us and reminds us that nothing will separate us from His Love and Presence. This is a great comfort, especially, when things are difficult or challenging in our lives.

In Romans 8: 35-39, Apostle Paul, reminds us all that nothing can nor will separate us from God’s Love in Christ, Jesus. Boy, is that comforting when our lives get “rocky” and we are feeling very challenged and perhaps overwhelmed with what life is throwing our way. It gives us great strength to know that God will not let go of us. In fact, He even holds on to us more tightly. That is how great His love is for us!

God reminds us in Hebrews 13: 5-6, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” Wow, another great promise, when we are stepping into the unknowns of a new year.

We know that Our God is in Control of all things and has a plan for us. Jeremiah 29: 11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

What wonderful promises for us to stand upon and to hold us fast to, both in the calm waters and in the stormy waters of life!

And when we get anxious, and we all get there at one time or another, Saint Peter reminds us in I Peter 5: 7, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

It is good to know that the God who made the universe, knows us by name and cares for us in this way.

May these promises bring peace to our hearts, minds and souls, both as individuals and as a Body of Believers gathered here at Bethany, as we enter this new year in the Grace of Our Lord, Jesus.
Praising God for Your Faithfulness and Preparing for Commitment
Sunday on January 28, 2018

I would like to thank all the many people who have faithfully worshipped, supported, and served the Lord, Jesus, in and through our congregation. Each of you have been a blessing for the ministry we are doing together here at Bethany. It is a joy to see the Body of Believers caring for each other and sharing the Good News of Our Savior Jesus in Word and deed.

With that in mind, both I and our Church Council, requests all our members to take some time to prayerfully consider how God has blessed them over the past year. We then encourage you to prayerfully consider how you can use your talents, time, skills, abilities, spiritual gifts and financial resources to support God’s Work in and through Bethany Lutheran Church and Schools for the year of 2018. It is always good to ponder these things, so we see and recognize our blessings from God. It is also proper to take some time and prayerfully determine how we might specifically serve, partner with, and support our Christian Congregation’s ministry into the next year.

Please take the time to have conversations within your family as to how each person may support God’s Work among us. We will be giving our members an opportunity to make a commitment to God and our congregation’s work for Him on January 28, 2018. At this service, we will all have an opportunity to place our commitment for the coming year before the Lord during this service. More information will be forthcoming, but I, along with our leadership, wanted all of us to begin this prayerful process. May the Lord, bless us in this endeavor.

In His Service,
Pastor Greg Stringer

Attention Bethany Women

Do you know your spiritual gift(s)? If so, are you using them? Please join us at the Sunday Women’s Bible Class at 10am in Room B8, starting January 21st, for a new study on Spiritual Gifts. Cost of study = $2. Questions? Call Trudi Stringer at 707-803-6591

Thank you!

Trudi
Why Assessments and What Can We Learn from Them?

By Dr. Chris Smith, Principal
Bethany Lutheran School

A few months ago, Bethany Lutheran Schools took part in the annual ITBS testing. The Iowa Assessments (previously the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and originally Iowa Every Pupil Test of Basic Skills) also known informally as the Iowa Tests or colloquially as ITBS tests, are standardized tests provided as a service to schools by the College of Education of the University of Iowa and developed in conjunction with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publishing. These tests are given nationally to many private schools who are affiliated with Lutheran synods or religious groups. Students in grades 2 through 8 were given the standard assessment, and students in grades 3,5, and 7 where also given the CogAt which is (Cognitive Abilities Test) a reasoning and problem-solving test commonly used by educators for qualifying kindergarten through 12th grade students for gifted and talented programs; however, many schools use the test to provide insight into students current and projected abilities in ELA, Math, and Science.

The questions as to the importance of taking assessments continue to be a hot topic of discussion across the country and worldwide. Many view the taking of standardized assessments as a waste of instructional time. Others view assessments as an inaccurate tool because a student may just be a poor test taker, or they could be dealing with other outside factors which cause some distraction, limiting him or her in their ability to think clearly. It has also been noted that many standard assessments are not demographically specific and could be biased based on the type of school a student attends or where that school may be located.

I see assessments for what they are: a tool to measure what has been taught and how well students retain and process that information, and as a tool to help drive future academic instruction. Asking students to demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter is critical to the learning process; it is essential to evaluate whether the educational goals and standards of the lessons are being met. A well-designed assessment has numerous benefits aside from the obvious one of providing a measure of students’ progress as it can be a means to engage students with their learning. Well-designed assessments can encourage active learning especially when the assessment delivery is innovative and engaging. Peer and self-assessment, for instance, can foster a number of skills, such as reflection, critical thinking and self-awareness – as well as giving students insight into the assessment process. Frankly, when used properly, assessment drives learning in the classroom.

Classroom assessments are among an instructor’s most essential educational tools. When properly developed and interpreted, assessments can help teachers better understand what their students are learning. Classroom assessments do more than just measure learning. What we assess, how we assess, and how we communicate the results send a clear message to students about what is worth learning, how it should be learned, and how well we expect them to perform. So, while the debates continue, BLS will look to both standardized assessments and classroom assessments as means to help and support our students academically. We will strive to provide the most diverse and dynamic academic experience of each student, while providing the love, care, and support of the Bethany community.
Ticket Prices:

**Early Bird until 2/9/18**

- $55 Individual (Open Seating)
- $105 per couple (Open Seating)
- $440 per table (Includes reserved table with 8 tickets and 2 bottles of wine)

**After 2/9/18**

- $60 Individual (Open Seating)
- $120 per couple (Open Seating)
- $480 per table (Includes reserved table with 8 tickets and 2 bottles of wine)

**Menu:**
- Garlic Bread
- Caesar Salad
- Pasta
- Crab

*Chicken Option Available for those who do not eat crab. This must be communicated when you purchase the tickets*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORSHIP ASSISTANT SCHEDULE JANUARY 2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday Services</strong></td>
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<td><strong>MAT Worship Assistant</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sunday Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>(Trudi Stringer)</strong></td>
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Looking Forward

As the year begins, the world continues to be full of distractions and strife and we need more than positive thinking to survive. God uses everything in our lives, both good and bad, to refine us with our trials and tribulations, our successes and blessings, to help prepare us for eternity with him. We look to our Savior to give us strength to face our challenges and be with us as we use our gifts to faithfully seek and serve God as we prepare for the New Year.

1 Peter 1:6-7

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

When we experience problems, we should remember that they’re happening to help refine and prepare us for our future. Each of our trials are different in size and intensity but they won’t last forever. They test our faith by developing our spiritual muscles and our motives and character. But they don’t compare to the rewards of eternal life and Heaven that God is preparing us for.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
FROM THE MAT  continued...

What is God’s plan for our life? What would Jesus do? What should I do today and tomorrow? How should I use my time, talents and treasures? These are the constant questions we should earnestly seek in order to live out our lives in this world as we contemplate our eternal future in Heaven.

**Proverbs 24:14**

*Know also that wisdom is like honey for you: If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.*

As we begin the New Year and reflect on our experiences from the last, the challenges and the blessings, the passing and coming of life, the suffering and the joy, let us give praise for what God has provided us in the eternal gift of his Son, our Savior Jesus Christ as we look to a future of hope and eternal life and a home with our Father in heaven.

**Psalm 37:37**

*Consider the blameless, observe the upright; a future awaits those who seek peace.*

God’s Peace Be With Each of You In the New Year

The MAT
Bethany Youth Group Update – Merriment on Main

On November 28th, 2017 from 3:30 – 9:30 pm the youth group helped pass out cookies, serve hot chocolate and set- up and clean up the booth. It was a very cold night and we were kept very busy.

Thanks to Bethany members, we served over 2,000 home baked cookies but it seemed like we saw a lot more people. We had a system going on how we put the cookies out. Both the boys and the girls helped out. James was a cookie machine in getting out the cookies. It was very rewarding to help out the community on a fun-filled night. We saw a lot of Bethany Members who stopped by and visited the booth. Thanks for your support!

At the end of the night many of us were tired of looking at cookies. The kids would like to thank the many adults that helped organize the event - Gwyn Poock, Kathy Hesterman, Hew Hesterman, Kevin Shaw, Tami Filbert-Williams, George Williams and Carol Schmidt. Thank you everyone that helped out!

Next Youth Group Event - Sunday, January 14th at 6:00 pm to 6:00 am

The kids are very excited in doing our next event called the Lock –In. We will be meeting at the Fellowship Hall at church at 6 pm and we get locked into the building where we will be having some dinner, fun games, snacks and Bible study. We will be ending at 2:00 am and the chaperone’s can bring the kids home early in the morning.

Please Note: The Youth Group (Grades 7th – 12th) is doing a weekly Bible Study in the Youth Group Room in the Fellowship Hall from 10:00 am – 11:00 am. We are doing a DVD Bible study called “The Bible on Trial” which looks at the historical accuracy of the Bible. We are also doing a “Mock Trial” at the end of the study. We will be doing a new study at the end of January that will be picked by the youth. Feel free to join us. Also the youth group room will be open at 9:30 am for all youth to enjoy and meet doing fellowship hour.

Bethany Youth Group Event Calendar

February 11th – Help the Body Event – Help out Pre-school / Church – (Times 1 – 4 pm)
March 11th – Honor God Event – Games and Bible Event (Times 1 – 4 pm) Event specifics TBD.
April 1st – Easter Breakfast – Youth Group will make Easter Breakfast for the Congregation. Times approximately 6:30 am – 11 am. Planning TBD.
April 8th – Fellowship Event – Movie Night or Volleyball (Event Specifics, date and times TBD).
May 5th, 6th, 7th – Youth Camping / Fishing Retreat (End of Year Event) – Looking at going to Lake Oroville to floating Cabins, Campground. Specifics TBD
# 2017 Statistical Report
## November 16, 2017 to December 15, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Worship Attendance</th>
<th>Communion</th>
<th>Sunday School</th>
<th>Weekly Totals—Adult Bible Class</th>
<th>Offerings of Hours</th>
<th>Weekly Giving (General Offering)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>11/19</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>12/3</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>N.A</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$11,183</td>
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** Not all Bible Study Classes take attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Membership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>302 Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>349 Baptized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196 Households</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Numbers indicate totals for the year. Names refer to recent additions during the past month.

2 Children Baptisms
0 Received from Other Lutheran Churches
0 Released to Other Lutheran Church

0 Adult Baptisms
2 Jr Confirmation of Members
0 Moved without Transfer

3 Adult Confirmations
0 Jr Confirmation of Non-Members
0 Joined Non-Lutheran Church

0 Profession of Faith (Reaffirmation)
1 Funeral of Members
20 Removed from Roster at Own Request

1 Transfers In

1 Transfers Out
0 Funeral of Family or Friends of Members
1 Marriages

0 Deceased; Svc not Conducted by Bethany
0 Funeral for non-member
God assures us in —Psalm 73:23–24
Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.

The Holy Spirit led Reverend Steven Weispfennig to continue in his call to St. John Lutheran in Yangton, South Dakota. We are prayerfully considering our next steps. Pastor Greg Stringer will talk to our LCMS CNH District president to determine whether (soon to be retired) Air Force Chaplain Patrick Poock is a good fit to be added to our list of candidates. If so, they will determine whether he could possibly serve as interim assistant pastor until the position is filled permanently. See the job description for assistant pastor posted in the Narthex.

Hew Hesterman, Diane Irby, & Pastor Greg are leading efforts to work with staff to plan how Bethany congregation can be more proactive in reaching young families for Christ. One of the first steps they are working on is to place a consolidated calendar for all of Bethany Ministries on GoBethany.com website so everyone can know what is happening in all phases of ministry. Please contact them to offer help.

Bethany’s semiannual congregation meeting will be January 28 at 11:30am. Plan to be there to help choose an assistant pastor candidate to call, help elect our delegate to the LCMS CNH district convention in May, & hear Bethany ministry updates.

Praise the Lord for His many blessings, especially at this Thanksgiving & Christmas season! A Bethany member family anonymously set aside a fund of $5000 to match other member’s donations to help support Bethany ministries & the assistant pastor. The matching fund was added to by 2 other member families ($5000 each) to bring the total matching fund to $15000. As of December 4, $6300 of member donations have been matched! Further designated offerings above tithe will be matched from the fund. Gifts may be designated “Growing to Serve” which is our savings account (as needed) to help pay for the assistant pastor. It behooves all of us to think of ways we can stretch our dollars further & think of new ways of generating income to continue Bethany Ministries work. God works in amazing ways to bless Bethany congregation & keep His work going forward. When missionaries are sent out, the people sending the missionary pay for the ministry provided until the people ministered to are willing & able.

Property maintenance continues. Volunteers with donated materials work hard & are appreciated. Thanks to Mike McCall, Shawn Sanborn, & Ron Shively for pressure washing & staining the repaired preschool playgrounds fence on the Orchard east property line. Thanks to Hew Hesterman for repairing the fellowship hall door. Thanks to Darrol Wilson, Doug Connor, Shawn Sanborn & Ron Shively for removing accumulated leaves from roofs of Orchard property. Replaced burned out fluorescent bulbs for entry way sconces at Ulatis school. Thanks to Mike McCall for repair of fence at Ulatis. Thanks to Pat Green for assisting in the church office.

For your information:
As of week 46 of 2017: Bethany general offerings are on target to add up to 152% of the monetary pledges made in January 2017 not including anonymous donations for ministry & repair materials. Thanks for putting the work of Christ first in your finances. Read GoBethany.com, Sunday bulletins, Breeze, & Eagle to learn what’s happening in Bethany Ministries & plan your participation.

Reporting for your Church Council,
Ron Shively – Congregation President
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Birthdate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Marjorie</td>
<td>Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leta</td>
<td>Kanagaki</td>
<td>01/02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julianne</td>
<td>Jiminez</td>
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<td>Lamphear</td>
<td>01/07</td>
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<td>01/08</td>
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<td>Burkett</td>
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<td>Andrsh</td>
<td>01/13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brieanna</td>
<td>Tarango</td>
<td>01/14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Kennon</td>
<td>01/14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Provencher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Helton</td>
<td>01/16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Molina</td>
<td>01/18</td>
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<td>Kolton</td>
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<td>01/19</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Fortin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>Mendonsa</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Fields</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>Ganaway</td>
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<td>DiMichele</td>
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<td>Gail</td>
<td>Wingard</td>
<td>01/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirsten</td>
<td>Vitrikas</td>
<td>01/31</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHRISTMAS FUND RAISER

The WCAL Down Home Christmas was a great success! Thank you to all who attended and supported us. Bethany has truly been blessed with wonderful talent. WCAL DVD's are now available. A suggested donation is $10 or two for $15. They will be available at the church service on Sunday, or you can contact Carole Wilson at thewilsons1976@gmail.com.

MONDAY NIGHT WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

We meet each Monday at 7:00 pm. Terri Denton hosts it in her home at 521 Walnut Avenue, Vacaville. We are starting a new study in January. Come! Join the group, we always have room for more.

MITE CHALLENGE – 2016-2017

Our MITES are sent to the LWML CNH District. Total grants for 2016-2018 are $115000. The challenge to Bethany is $3500. The current total is over $2000! The LWML has voted to extend the MITE challenge to align with the district deadline, so it has been extended to March 2018. The current Mites have helped fund 10 of the 16 projects in the CNH District! Let’s keep up the great work! You can see the list of remaining grants on the LWML bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall entry.

CHRISTMAS COOKIE EXCHANGE AND TOY BAGS

On December 9th, Kay Locatelli, Kaye Grundmann, Machiko Celli, Barbara Hallow, Pat Green, Georgia De-Barr and Carole Wilson attended our annual cookie exchange. We put together over 30 boxes of cookies for our shut-ins and stuffed about 80 toy bags for children of prisoners at CMF. Thank you to everyone who brought cookies and contributed to the toy collection! When all the work was finished, we had a little social time including a nice lunch.

January 2018

A New Year with The Lord

A new year is about to unfold
With new opportunities to explore
Doors will open for new experiences,
New adventures with the Lord

Remember not the former things,
The things of this past year,
The Lord will do new things in us,
Much more than we are aware

For He will make a way for us
As we put our trust in Him

And He will guide our every step
By His presence we have within

What God has placed within our hearts,
We find we'll be able to do
If we look for the opportunities,
We'll see the door to go through

We mustn't let anything hold us back
But rise up and take our place
And be all that God wants us to be
With a fresh touch of His grace

© By M.S. Lownde

Continue on to Next Page
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

January 4  LWML meeting, 10:30 in room B-8.

If you have an idea for a mission project, please come to one of the LWML meetings. Many joyful hands are an asset and doing the Lord’s work is rewarding. Praise God daily. Encourage a fellow sister in Christ through the spoken word, cards, emails and prayers!

Carole Wilson – LWML President

Everyone has God given talents and treasures. God wants to fill us with His Spirit so we will use them for His glory. Think about your special talents and abilities and the ways you could use them for God’s work in the world.

Here are a couple opportunities you might consider:

**Children’s Ministry** is looking for someone to coordinate and energize our Sunday School Program. We need someone who would embrace the privilege of seeing kids, parents, and entire families grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

**Merciful Ministries** is looking for a team leader to actively engage the congregation in meeting Bethany’s Mission of “Living God’s Word through Caring, Sharing and Teaching”. Below are a few of their ongoing projects:

- Collect toiletries and donate to Opportunity House one time a month
- Collect used devotion and Bible study material handed out to homeless
- Festival of trees donation. The team is in the process of deciding on a theme for next year’s tree.
- Some team members are meeting to identify how to help in feeding the homeless.

We encourage you to prayerfully consider becoming part of a team. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Greg at 707-451-6675.
Sunday Services:
- 8:30 am: Variety of Traditional and Contemporary (Communion 1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays)
- 11:15 am: Variety of Traditional and Contemporary (Communion 1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays)

Sunday School:
- 10:00 am: Sunday School—Classes for Everyone
  Adult Bible Studies: “Psalms”, Bethany Women; Men’s Bible Study - “Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School – Letters to the Church“ - facilitated by: the MAT

Bible Studies at Bethany

Monday
- 7:00 pm: “Be Still and Know that I Am God” by Carole Wilson

Wednesday
- 5:00 pm: “Ephesians” by Pastor Rittenbach
Bethany Lutheran Church

Church Office Closed .......................... January 1
Happy New Year!

MAT Meeting ...................................... January 2
Pastor Out of Office ............................. Jan. 7—Jan. 14
Youth Group “Lock In” ......................... January 14

Church Office Closed (Holiday) ............. January 15

Kindergarten Readiness .......................... January 18

Sunday Worship 10am ONLY ............... January 28
Voter’s Assembly Mtg. 11:30am .......... January 28

January 2018