



Bethlehem Lutheran Church



Bethlehem News



Dear Friends in Christ,

With the events that have unfolded recently, this Fourth of July is most likely on everyone's mind. The Fourth of July commemorates the passage of the Declaration of Independence by Congress in 1776. This officially declared that the 13 established colonies were now legally separate from Great Britain, one of the motivating factors of the first Pilgrims who first arrived in 1620 to pursue religious freedom.

There are some similarities we share as Lutherans with the birth of our country on July 4th. Here is an article by Rev. Robert E. Smith Pastor Emeritus Fort Wayne, Indiana. Originally posted at *What does this Mean?* Blog: <https://whatdoesthismean.blog>

"Most people think of October 31st, 1517, as the date of the Lutheran Church. However, Martin Luther and most Lutheran historians disagree. On the day that Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses, he was very much a Catholic. In fact, Luther on this day was upset that people did not have to suffer enough for their sins and were being let off the hook way too easily. You could say he was more Catholic than the Pope. Considering the nature of Pope Leo X, he was.

On the first Reformation Day, the Reformation was just beginning. We only first begin to recognize Luther's complete theology in his writings in 1520. And it really wasn't until 1529 that the reformers and their princes thought of the Lutheran tradition as a separate faith.

Emperor Charles V had many problems in 1529. The Turkish Empire of Suleiman the Great had invaded Austria and laid siege to Vienna. France and the Pope were constantly challenging his authority in southern Europe. He badly wanted to unify his German territories under Roman Catholic control. So, he called all the territories together at Augsburg for a meeting of the Holy Roman Empire.

Elector John of Saxony, Luther's Prince, commissioned Luther and his friends to create a unified statement of the disputes between the Pope and the Lutheran territories. The result was a document called the Augsburg confession. All the Lutheran princes who attended the diet of Augsburg sign the document as their own faith.

On June 25th, 1530, the Augsburg confession was presented to Charles V by the Lutheran princes. To this day, June 25th is known as the birthday of the Lutheran Church.

As Time passed, the Augsburg Confession gained acceptance by Lutheran territories and theologians. It became the standard for what we believe and confess and remained so. Today, every Lutheran Pastor pledges to teach according to the Augsburg Confession and the other documents in the Book of Concord of 1580."

As we celebrate our nation's birth let us also celebrate the birth of our Lutheran faith as we do according to the Augsburg Confession and other documents in the Book of Concord.

All God's Blessings

Pastor Karl P. Glander



News and Updates



We continue to prepare for VBS which is planned for July 28 - August

1 from 9-Noon. What can you do to help? You can tell neighbors, friends or family members about it. If they know any families who may be interested, they can call the church at 239-694-6878 or come to the VBS Rally on Sunday July 20th from 4PM-6PM for hotdogs, snacks and drinks, along with a preview of the VBS activities.

Sunday Bible study with Pastor Karl immediately following service and Sunday Bible school with Linda for the children. Wed. Bible study is at 10:30 weekly. Please consider joining in these very informative and lively discussions of God's lessons for us all.

Happy 4th of July to all
Mickie



The theme for the 2026 calendar is "Moments of Grace", and photos will illustrate the simple, grace-filled gifts woven into each day. If you received a calendar last year, we'll automatically send you one this year. If you're a new Thrivent client or haven't ordered a calendar since 2022, simply visit thrivent.com/calendar and complete the order form by July 31, 2025. There is no cost.

Betty Willis

Elders Monthly Devotion

Dear Heavenly Father,
We come before you and lift up Israel in prayer.
We ask for your peace to dwell within Israel's borders,
within Jerusalem, and all who live there.
Let your peace reign in every household and community.
And may your people find true shalom in you.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.

"As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the Lord surrounds his people
both now and forevermore."

Psalm 125:2 NIV

From Abraham to the present day,
Israel holds a special place in God's heart.

In our prayers and deeds,
we can express our love for Israel,
recognizing that our support is a reflection
of God's love for His people.

Lord, would you bless and keep us,
Lord, please make your face
shine upon us.

Amen

Klaus Naumann



Cheryl Nelson was recognized on her last Sunday at Bethlehem.

INDEPENDENCE DAY!



"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and success of liberty."

President John F. Kennedy
(35th President of the United States of America)



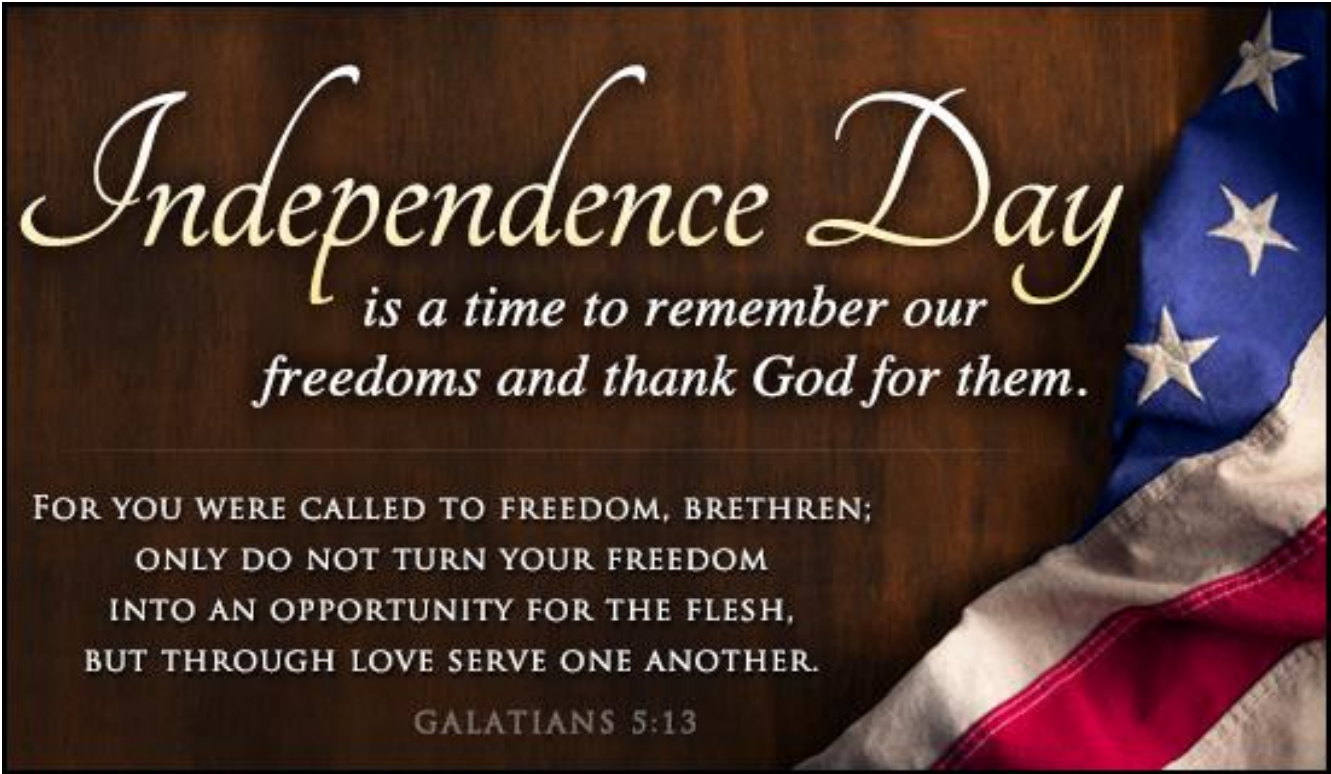
JULY 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 10:30 Bible Study	3	4 	5
6 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School	7	8	9 10:30 Bible Study	10	11	12
13 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School	14	15	16 10:30 Bible Study	17	18	19
20 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School	21	22	23 10:30 Bible Study	24	25	26
27 10:30 Worship 11:30 Bible Study; Sunday School	28 VBS 9-12	29 VBS 9-12	30 VBS 9-12	31 VBS 9-12	1 VBS 9-12	2

	JULY ANNIVERSARIES
4	Sandy & Doug Grage
15	Judy & Jack Young
25	Ruthann & Don Thorton
26	Betty & Ralph Willis

May God Bless Each One of You As
We Celebrate Your Special Day!

	JULY BIRTHDAYS
5	William Adams
8	Geoff Glander
9	Lori Jensen
16	Gary Fernberg
23	Lou Schafer
26	Joanne Holt





Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Phone: 239-694-3878

Website: www.bethlehemplutheranfortmyers.org

Email: bethlehemlc@gmail.com

Prayer Chain Needs

Do you know that Bethlehem has a prayer chain that prays for the sick, dying and hurting needs of our church family?

Call or email Linda at (239) 693-5026 or

jlkirsch3@comcast.net

Your needs will be taken to the Lord!

Sunday Worship

10:30 AM Worship Service

Rev. Karl Glander

pastorkarlglander@gmail.com

239-293-1489

Organist: Holly Bell

Church Secretary: Linda Kirsch

Fourth of July: Remembering America as a Nation Under God

America became a free country on July 4, 1776, however, what many may not know - or forget - is that America is also a nation under God founded on Christian principles.

54 of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were Christians, 27 held theology degrees. Many went on to form Bible societies.

The signers intended the document to officiate the separation between America and Great Britain. However, they based the Declaration which has served as a foundation to the beginnings of the American nation upon a greater foundational belief that God, or as written in the Declaration "Creator", was the source for men's irrevocable rights.

Samuel Adams, who signed the historic document and writer of the Rights of the Colonists (November 1772), once said, "Just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty, in matters spiritual and temporal is a thing that all men are clearly entitled to by the eternal and immutable laws of God and nature, as well as by the laws of nations and all well-grounded and municipal laws, which must have their foundation in the former."

Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration, also believed "God who gave us life gave us liberty."

Two of the Continental Congress' first actions were to hire military chaplains and to purchase 20,000 Bibles to remedy a national shortage.

Although America was already a free nation during the presidency of George Washington, the first president of the United States, he suggested that only religion could uphold its morality. During his farewell address he said, "And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

Even if America's roots were traced back to its primitive stages, the marriage between the early inhabitants of the land and Christianity are inseparable. The Pilgrims clearly stated the purpose for their voyage even before stepping off the Mayflower: "...undertaken for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith..."

The U.S. Supreme Court also identified America as a Christian nation in 1892, after 10 years of examining hundreds of documents on the foundation of the country. The justices came to the unanimous conclusion that the documents undeniably "add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a religious people, a Christian nation."

John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States, summed up the historic event that led to America's independence best when he said, "The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: that it connected in one indissoluble bond the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity."

The conviction that God cannot, and should not be moved from the social and governmental construct of America continues to echo in the voice of the USA's more recent leaders.

According to the late Ronald W. Reagan, the 40th President of the United States, "Without God there is no virtue because there is no prompting of the conscience....without God there is a coarsening of the society; without God democracy will not and cannot long endure....If we ever forget that we are one Nation Under God, then we will be a Nation gone under."

Katherine T. Phan
Ecumenical Press