

## A Note From Pastor Kelly

Let's talk about Funerals!

Funerals? Really? Yes, we're going to talk about funerals for a few minutes.

A 2023 survey showed that less than 47% of people would like a funeral service after they die (conducted by an organization called Theos: Love, Grief, and Hope). This is a sharp drop from previous years. Some reasons given were: the decreasing number of people with any religious affiliation, and the increasing costs related to a funeral – people don't want to leave financial burden and stress for their loved ones.

Besides these, there is a bigger reason for the decreasing number of funeral services - we prefer to keep death and anything associated with death out of sight and out of mind. While we are living, we don't want to think about our death, or funeral service, or casket vs cremation, or any of those things. However, from my experience in helping families plan funeral services for loved ones, it always goes so much better when the deceased person has left instructions and communicated them ahead of time. Funerals are valuable and helpful in bringing closure, comfort, and healing to those who are grieving.

Whenever a loved one passes away, family members enter into an intense time of stress, grief, and disorientation. There are a lot of details to care for and decisions to make - and most of them are unfamiliar and tension-filled.



It can be a real gift to family members, when a loved one leaves instructions to those who will be caring for these complex details (and better yet, has discussed them with their loved ones). It is good to plan ahead:

- Where would you like to be buried? Is this paid for already or not?
- Do you prefer to be cremated or buried in a casket? Is this paid for already or not?
- Do you have a preference with the funeral service company to use? Have you met with them yet or not?

When planning a funeral service...

- Where will it be held?
- Are there any special songs or Scripture passages you'd like included?
- Are there any family members or friends that you want to share memories or tributes? Have you asked them yet or not?
- Do you have a specific pastor or officiant in mind to lead the service and/ or share a message? Have you discussed this with them yet or not?

Continued next page ...



**SUNDAY MORNING  
WORSHIP  
10:30am  
All are Welcome!**

### CONTACT US!

Bethel Church Office (Krysta)  
Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday  
office@bethelemc.org  
403-337-2355

Pastor Kelly Sikstrom  
pastorkelly@bethelemc.org

Pastor Chris Neufeld  
pastorchris@bethelemc.org

Childrens Ministries (Natalie)  
Tuesdays, Thursday & Friday  
childrensministry@bethelemc.org

Finance (Karen)  
Tuesdays  
finance@bethelemc.org

### EVENTS CALENDAR

To view the most up to date  
"Calendar of Events"



[Bethel's  
Monthly Calendar](#)

**BETHEL EMC  
WEBSITE**

[WWW.BETHELEMC.ORG](http://WWW.BETHELEMC.ORG)

If these items are in place and have been discussed with family members ahead of time, the easier things will be. It is helpful and good to think about your funeral service and to make these plans now, while you are able to, as a gift to your loved ones. You don't have to wait until you reach a certain age or are facing declining health, these plans can be made and discussed anytime. We don't know when others may be planning our funeral service, so caring for these details sooner than later is always wise.

If you are on the fence about having a funeral service, can I suggest a few reasons why I encourage people to hold a funeral or memorial service for their loved ones?

- As believers and followers of Jesus, we do not need to fear death. We shouldn't keep death at arm's distance, because we know that Christ has overcome and defeated death. Denying our mortality or avoiding thoughts of death isn't a helpful or faith-filled response to the Gospel work of Jesus in our lives – 'even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.' (Psalm 23:4). Christ has given us the ability to look at death, even our own, without fear.
- In many ways, your funeral is not for you – it is for the people who care for you and love you. Where else can you bring all the different people in your life together in one place: family, co-workers, neighbors, church, friends, etc? For many of these people an opportunity to gather together, share memories, celebrate and honor your life, and to recognize your impact is a very meaningful and important part of the healing and grieving process. The absence of a funeral service can prolong and complicate grief, loss, mourning, and sadness for your loved ones.
- Funerals are one of the best opportunities to share the Good News of Christ and His salvation with the people you care for. When people attend a funeral service, they expect to hear words of comfort and hope – and what greater comfort and hope can we offer than Jesus. As people reflect on their own death and eternal future, there is a powerful opportunity to respond to Christ and the Gospel.
- Funerals can provide a powerful reminder of the victory, celebration, and freedom Jesus has earned on the Cross. Not only through the words, message, and Scripture that is shared – but simply the act of gathering together, enjoying good food, serving those who are grieving, singing songs of worship, sharing fellowship and stories, hugs and handshakes, tears and laughter... all of these stare death in the face and proclaim that Christ has won, death has been defeated, and your eternal home in heaven is assured through Him.
- In times of grief, we need to lean on others. Grief becomes so much more difficult when you are experiencing it in isolation. Funerals show us that there is a community of people who are experiencing this grief together – even when we may have varying degrees of relationship with the deceased. One of the best ways to comfort those who are grieving is simply through your presence at a funeral service – showing up, being there, physically present. There is a special ministry to family members and those grieving the loss of a loved one, just by attending and being present at a funeral service. When Jesus physically arrived at the tomb of Lazarus, we are told that He wept – He wept with those who were weeping, He stood among the grieving, His presence brought comfort. In His strength, we can also do the same.
- Your life matters to God and to others. You might hear someone say they don't want to have a funeral, because they don't want to be a burden or don't want people to make a fuss about them. The truth is that you are a blessing to many and you are precious to God. You were made in His image and His divine love has been offered to you before you were even born. There is a reason why Scripture is filled with lists of names of people that we don't remember or know much about – they all mattered to God. He knew them. It is a blessing to plan, attend, and participate in a funeral service, not a burden. Every life is precious to God – including yours. A funeral doesn't have to be extravagant or expensive to be meaningful.
- Your funeral service is a significant book-end to a life that should be honored, celebrated, and remembered – and an opportunity to give thanks and glory to the God who created you, cared for you, guided you, blessed you, provided for you, and saved you through Christ.

There are many helpful resources in planning a funeral service. There are several funeral home services in our local area who do very good work, meeting with individuals, couples, or families to pre-plan a lot of these details (you don't have to do everything they suggest). There are guides and checklists online that you can use. You can meet with me or any other pastor who you would like to be involved as well.

# BETHEL SENIORS' PRAYER FELLOWSHIP



## Bethel Seniors' Prayer Fellowship

Wednesday February 21, 2:30 – 4:00 at the Church

We will focus on prayer for the Elias family,  
and their ministry among First Nations people.

We'll also have a short time of singing, and fellowship with refreshments.  
For any questions, contact John Silcox, Bruce Lynn or Neil Carleton.

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES



### SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFERING UPDATE!

Thank you for your generous giving to the Mountainview Food Bank in 2023. We were able to send them a cheque for \$490! What a wonderful way to love our neighbours!



We are so excited to be able to support our local missionaries, **the Elias Family**, with your Sunday school offering from January—June 2024. Each week the Sunday school classes will be collecting their offering to support the Elias Family Ministry. With every \$1 brought in, we will add **COLOR** to our motorhome.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

### 3rd ANNUAL BETHEL FAMILY



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:  
SUNDAY MARCH 10TH

Join us after the church service for lunch and a family scavenger hunt.

More details to come!



## VBS 2024

JULY 8-12, 2024 at West Zion Mennonite Church

We are happy to announce our 2024 VBS program 'Zoomerang'. As we have done in the past, we will be alternating years of hosting our summer VBS program and this year West Zion Mennonite Church will be hosting.

Stay tuned for more details on registration and opportunities to serve with our brothers and sisters at West Zion.



# Church Information

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

February 27, 7:00pm at Bethel Church

All are welcome and encouraged to attend!

The meeting will also be available via livestream.

Annual Reports Booklets will be emailed to the congregation by February 11th. Hardcopy booklets will be available in the foyer.

If you have any questions please contact Krysta (Church Office), or Pastor Kelly. Thank you so much! See you there!



## BETHEL YOUTH GROUP

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 6:30pm-9:30pm - BYG NIGHT  
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 12:30pm - BYG SENIOR HIGH  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 6:30pm-9:30pm - BYG NIGHT  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 4:30pm - BYG JAM  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 6:30pm-9:30pm - BYG NIGHT  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23 - BYG SKI TRIP Canyon Ski Resort

### QUESTIONS?

Email Pastor Chris at: [pastorchris@bethelemc.org](mailto:pastorchris@bethelemc.org)

Call during office hours: 403-337-2355 or text: 403-796-8890



## FACILITY BOOKINGS

We are incredibly blessed that Bethel Church is such a beautiful and functional facility for us to use day to day! The facility is used for many different functions & events throughout the week! If you would like to reserve a specific room or date to use the facility, please contact Krysta at the Church Office via email or phone. We do need to check to make sure that the date/time and area that you would like to use is available - to prevent any overlap or double bookings. As well, there is a "Facilities Use Form" that must be completed for all private bookings. Thank you!



## MISSIONS EVENT

JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL MISSIONS EVENT

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4th, 6:00pm at Bethel Church

Featuring a special presentation and discussion with Erin Delamont, International Justice Mission.

*"International Justice Mission partners with local justice systems around the world to build safe communities, where all are protected from violence and slavery. We are the largest anti-slavery organization in the world. Together, we can end slavery in our lifetime."*

Join us for an evening to learn more about this vital missionfield! (Mature subject content.)

# FINANCIAL GIVING

## Want to give a financial donation to Bethel Ministry?

► **OFFERING BOX:**

Located at the back of the sanctuary are 2 locked boxes. Place your cheque or cash in an offering envelope and drop it into one of the boxes. Our ushers collect donations at the end of each service.

► **MAIL CHEQUES TO:**

BethelEMC  
Box 4, Site 11, RR 2  
Carstairs AB, T0M0N0

► **E-TRANSFER:**

Send to [finance@bethelemc.org](mailto:finance@bethelemc.org) , no security question needed.

If it is your first time giving please ensure your address is emailed to our finance team to ensure you receive your charitable tax receipt.

\*\*All giving will go to the general fund unless designated otherwise.

# LADIES BIBLE STUDY



## 8 WEEK LADIES BIBLE STUDY

Studying the book of Matthew using Christine Hoover's "Seek First the Kingdom" with 30 minute teaching video followed by discussion.

For those who would like more in-depth study or at-home work, study books are available to order.

Session dates: February 8, 15, 22, 29, March 14, 21, 28, and April 11

Although no childcare is available, please feel free to bring your children.

Email Janice at [janice.a.franzen@gmail.com](mailto:janice.a.franzen@gmail.com) with questions or to register to attend.

Ladies coffee & conversation

Next date February 1  
9:30-11:30 Bethel Cafe

Come for coffee or free childcare, stay for the fellowship!

For questions contact  
Rachel Reid  
403-312-9360

# RIVERS EDGE CAMP



**BE MY VALENTINE:  
EQUINE EDITION**

**FEBRUARY 1-14**

The Rivers Edge Equine Department fundraiser is back!

- “MEET OUR HORSES” DAY
- KING AND QUEEN OF THE HERD
- HORSE SPONSORSHIPS
- BE ENTERED TO WIN IN A DRAW
- SURPRISE GRAND PRIZE!

FOLLOW US AT “RIVERS EDGE CAMP & RETREAT CENTER” ON FACEBOOK OR INSTAGRAM FOR ALL THE LATEST UPDATES!



You are invited to

**Come Meet the Horses**

Rivers Edge Camp  
February 10, 2024, starting at 2:00 PM

**RSVP by Feb. 7**

Equine Themed Activities  
Learn More About the Program  
Stay for Dinner

RSVP to [info@riversedgecamp.org](mailto:info@riversedgecamp.org)

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**


**RIVERS EDGE AGM  
APRIL 6TH**

**WORK PARTY  
AT THE CAMP  
JUNE 8TH**



**MORE DETAILS  
TO COME!**

**DONATION INSTRUCTIONS**



**Credit Card link on the website.**  
**E-transfer to: [reca@riversedgecamp.org](mailto:reca@riversedgecamp.org).**  
**Or cash in person at "Meet the Horses" Feb. 10**

\*Examples of what to write in the Memo:  
1) Valentine Fundraiser. For vet bills  
2) Valentine Fundraiser. Six Votes for Star

**Donations of \$20+ are eligible for a tax receipt. Donations do not need to be for a specific horse.**

Have any physical items that you would like to donate? We do accept physical donations as well. Ex. Hay, tack, feed.



Have a favourite memory or picture with the camp horses? Bring them in or email them to [equine@riversedgecamp.org](mailto:equine@riversedgecamp.org).



COMMUNITY ...



10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
In Olds

Olds Fundraising Banquet  
Thursday, March 7, 2024

Beacons of  
HOPE

RSVP by February 22, 2024

Pomeroy Inn and Suites at Olds College  
Doors Open at 5:30 PM | Main Event Begins at 6:00 PM  
Semi-Formal Event | Silent & Live Auctions | Testimonials

This event is FREE to attend, however, registration is required.  
Register by calling 587-796-1611 or visit [pregnancycare.ca/annual-olds-fundraiser](http://pregnancycare.ca/annual-olds-fundraiser)

CARSTAIRS



DERBY

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

THE ROCK  
COMMUNITY CHURCH



SUNDAY  
FEBRUARY 25  
2:00 PM

CAR KITS  
\$10 CASH  
ORDER ONLINE  
AT >>>

CARSTAIRS COMMUNITY HALL  
\$1 CONCESSION - POP, CHIPS, CANDY  
HOT DOG SUPPER PROVIDED

[THEROCKALBERTA.CA](http://THEROCKALBERTA.CA)

CROSSFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH



AWANA LEADERS NEEDED

Crossfield Baptist is excited at the possibility of restarting its AWANA program! We have the space and the passion, now we just need the volunteers!

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:14

Location: Crossfield Baptist Church (285176 Highway 2A, Crossfield, Alberta)

Time: Wednesday Evenings 6:30 - 8:00 pm (Volunteers will need to arrive at 6 pm)

Potential Start Date: September 2024



please email [larissa.making@gmail.com](mailto:larissa.making@gmail.com) for more information!

B  
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2024



For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord.  
2 Timothy 1:7-8a



2024 SUMMER CAMPING SEASON  
Registration Open.

<https://riversedgecamp.org/summer-camps/>

See the website for prices.

## COMMUNITY ...

### GRIEF SHARE<sup>®</sup> Grief Recovery Support Group

Find comfort and care to help you heal from your loss.

GriefShare is a special weekly seminar/support group for people grieving a loss of someone close. It's a place where you will have opportunity to be around people who understand how you feel and the pain of your loss. At GriefShare you'll learn valuable information that will help you through this difficult time.

GriefShare Group sessions begin Monday, February 5th from 1:00 to 3:00pm  
Sessions held at Olds First Baptist Church  
Registration Fee \$25 (covers all 13 sessions)

If you or someone that you know would benefit from this seminar please contact:  
Fist Baptist Church at 403-556-3219 or  
info@firstbaptistolds.ca



## Rocky Mountain College

### INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE FOR FREE

The BBL100 course is offered to help you explore your faith more and understand the background and inspiration of the Bible, its history and composition, the overarching themes and message. You explore all 66 books of the Bible and understand the context and the purpose for which they were written.

You also gain an understanding of how the various types of literary forms in which the Bible was written can legitimately be interpreted so you can better understand the message of all parts of the Bible.

#### Course Details:

This is a non-credit course offered for free. A new course starts on the first Tuesday of each month.

#### Course Duration:

Eight weeks (one lesson per week; approximately 2-4 hrs to complete each lesson)

Want to find out more ... click the link below or go to:

[www.rockymountaincollege.ca/academics/courses](http://www.rockymountaincollege.ca/academics/courses)

[Introduction to the Bible - FREE - Rocky Mountain College](http://www.rockymountaincollege.ca/academics/courses)



## RIGHT NOW MEDIA

RightNow Media is a FREE online video resource available to our entire church body. You can find small group bible study material, video devotionals, leadership conferences, and much more!



Contact the Bethel office to receive your invitation to get started! How does it work? We send you the invitation via email, then all you have to do is accept the invitation and you're good to go ahead and set up your personal account and preferences!



**Bethel Church**  
A COMMUNITY OF GRACE

### BETHEL EMC WEBSITE

- Sundays Livestream Link
- Sermon Archives
- Calendar of Events
- Ministries
- Giving Information
- Weekly Bulletins
- Resources & Schedules

[www.bethelmc.org](http://www.bethelmc.org)



# VISITORS & NEWCOMERS

## WELCOME TO BETHEL CHURCH!

Are you new to Bethel, just visiting, or new to the community?

Here are a few Bethel areas that may be of interest and information for you!

**Children's SUNDAY SCHOOL** ... if you would like more information on our Childrens Sunday School classes, please let us know! Natalie Killam heads up our Children's Ministry and she'd love to chat with you!

**There are "VISITOR CARDS"** in the pockets of the sanctuary chairs. Please feel free to fill one out when you're at the church and place it in the VISITOR BOX (on the foyer table). We'd love to know more about you!

**There are also teal colored "VISITOR FOLDERS"** on the front table in the foyer. Please help yourself to one! The folder is filled with information about Bethel, to help you get to know us!

**COFFEE FELLOWSHIP** time follows every service in the café area! Feel free to wander over to the area (East side), and enjoy a cup of coffee and a time of fellowship with new faces!

If you are a new, regular attender to Bethel and would like to be included on Bethel's "Prayer and Information" email list; the Congregation Phone List; Right Now Media; and have a mailbox in the foyer – please let Krysta at the Church Office know, and she would be happy to arrange all of that for you!



# EMCC TOGETHER

The Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada Family Stories  
2024

## GROWING IN CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER

Walking the talk

Searching for Joy  
in the Midst of Grief  
Janice Franzen  
P. 10

6 Ways We Collaborate  
with Others for the  
Kingdom  
Tim Bryson  
P. 16

Character Over  
the Long Haul  
Durwin & Angel Gray  
Keith & Ruth Ann Elliott  
P. 28



## Growing in Christ-Like Character (2024)

In 2023, our leadership believed that God was leading the EMCC to focus on developing "Christ-like Character." So, in this issue of the EMCC Together magazine, we asked our pastors, leaders and global workers to share what God is doing in their ministries, churches, communities, or personal lives relating to "Christ-like Character."

**Limited available copies in the  
Bethel Church foyer.**

Current (and past) magazines can  
also be viewed online at:

<https://www.emcc.ca/emcctogether>