

Bethany Christian Church (DOC)  
601 E. Mill Rd  
Evansville, IN 47711

Check out Bethany Christian Church  
[www.bethanychristianevansville.com](http://www.bethanychristianevansville.com)



Support Bethany Ministries  
on **venmo**



Worship with Bethany on  YouTube

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCFGE5r0vqpSyL\\_KpphPjgYw/live](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFGE5r0vqpSyL_KpphPjgYw/live)

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**BethanyChristianEvv**



learn the **word**  
live the **grace**  
share the **love**

## *Bethany Newscast—December 2025*

**Bethany Christian Church is an Open & Affirming Congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

We at Bethany Christian Church are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ seeking to learn the word, live the grace, and share the love, we welcome ALL to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us with grace and unconditional love and acceptance. So, with open hearts, open minds, and open doors Bethany Christian Church acknowledges, accepts, and affirms ALL people as equal children of God and affirms OUR commitment to welcome and accept ALL people. Therefore, **regardless of race, nationality, culture, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic status, physical and mental ability, marital standing, or any other designation of individuals who have known the pain of exclusion and discrimination by the church and society, ALL are welcome to participate fully in the life, leadership, ministry, and mission of our church.**

Check out Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance ([www.disciplesallianceq.org](http://www.disciplesallianceq.org)) to learn more!

**AllianceQ**  
Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance



**Sundays  
@ 10:30am**

December 7

Liturgist: Ann Buckert

Elder: John Rich

December 14

Liturgist: Nancy Boner

Elder: TBA

December 21

Liturgist: Vanessa Wagler

Elder: Nancy Boner

December 28

Liturgist: John Rich

Elder: Chris Gibson

December Deacons

Meichelle Paulson & JoAnn Mitchell

Backup: Ryan & Whitney Wagler



**December**

**Birthdays**

2nd	Hadley Buckert
4th	Jeff Main
5th	Karen Chinn
9th	Reo Goodwin
14th	Leo Russell
15th	Rev. Katie Griffin
18th	Raistlin Wood
18th	Greg Buckert
20th	Rev. Bob Brite
21st	Don Cox
21st	Lily Goodwin
22nd	Karen Heard
26th	Marcee Griffin
27th	Jennifer Thomason
28th	Chuck Doughty
29th	Linda Lovelace
31st	Kathy Homburg

**Anniversaries**

14th	John & Linda Moore
18th	Matt & Michelle Rundle
24th	Jordan & Melanie Rundle



If you have changes for to the prayer list, please call the church office Mon-Fri from 8:30a to 12:30p (812-422-5439) or email the church office at: [ahbethanycc@sigecom.net](mailto:ahbethanycc@sigecom.net)

Linda Appel, Steve Appel, Caroline Ashby, Stacy Baier, Steve Buckert, John Bunner, Stevie Chivlare, Dave Cox, Nita Cox, Ron Dennis, Cale Harper, Mary Jane Hunt, Katie Kelly, Lisa King, Debby Miller, JoAnn Mitchell, Mary & Mike Pruiett, Shelia Smith, Julia Wood Myra Woolsey



**Weekly Events:**

Sundays 9a.....Sunday Social

Tuesdays, 4p.....Tai Chi

*(Tai Chi will not meet on 12/30)*

Wednesdays, 6:30p.....Choir Practice

*(Choir will meet EARLY on 12/17 at 6:00 and will NOT meet 12/24 or 12/31)*

Thursdays, 6p.....Art Journeys

*(Art Journeys will not meet 12/25 or 1/1)*

December 2, 6:00p.....Book Study "The Upswing"

December 7, after worship.....Elders Meeting

December 8, 5:00-8:00p.....GEY RPG Club

December 8, 6:00p.....GEY Dinner

December 12, 6-10p.....Board Game Night

December 15, 6:30p.....GEY Crochet Club

December 21, 9:00a.....Christmas Breakfast (provided by Elders)

December 21, during worship.....Choir singing

December 24th, 5:30p.....Christmas Eve Service

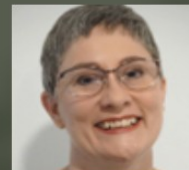
**Church Office will be CLOSED**

**December 24, 25, 26, 31, and January 1**

*Connect*  
**WITH PASTOR  
MICHELLE**

Arrange a visit with Pastor Michelle by phone, email, or scanning this QR code.

(please refer to the calendar for her "drop-in" office hours for this month)





**THURSDAYS, 6PM**

Bethany Basement  
Wellness Space

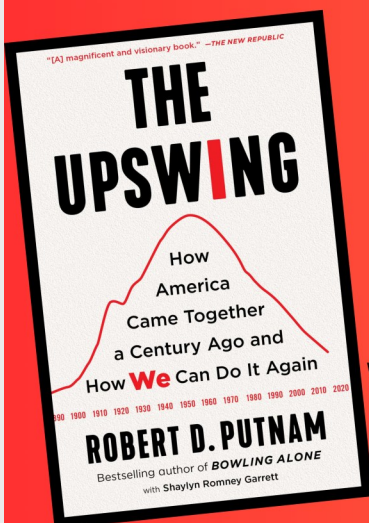
Join us as we continue to explore how acts of creation can calm the body and mind and fill the spirit. All ages and abilities are welcome.

## The Open Table Alternative Worship Service

Not everyone who wants to be involved in a community of faith can come to church on Sunday morning, and Bethany wants to include everyone! Beginning on January 8, at 5:30pm, Bethany will begin The Open Table, a monthly alternative worship service held in the Fellowship Hall. Worshippers will gather for a pitch-in meal to discuss topics related to the service theme and then engage with a short, interactive message given by Pastor Michelle. The service will also include music and communion. Are you interested in helping to create this new way of worship? Do you have music to share? Do you have a topic or scripture you'd like to explore? Do you know of any hungry people who want to be fed in body and in spirit? The Open Table is for you!



*Advent - Preparing Our Hearts*



## Book Study

**Next Meeting December 2, 6:00pm**

Do you find yourself asking, "How did we get here?"

In his book *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again*, Robert Putnam looks at the forces that have shaped America for over a century.

Without sentimentalizing the progressive reforms of mid-twentieth century America, Putnam's long perspective provides a hope for our future and a roadmap we can follow to get there.

It's not too late to join our friendly discussion. Grab a book, read chapters 4-6 and we'll see you on the 2nd!



## Mental Health Initiative Grant - 2025 Annual Report

In 2024, Bethany received a Mental Health Initiative Lilly grant through the Center for Congregations. The church received \$40,000 to educate, increase empathy for those with neurodivergence and/or are struggling with mental illness, reduce stigma associated with mental illness/differences, and provide programming to support mental wellness. Bethany has used the grant funds in combination with more than \$14,000 in monetary and in-kind donations to establish Bethany's growing Mental Wellness Ministry. Below you will find a description of this ministry and the impact it has made in 2025. The MHI grant project proposal included a combination of one-time events/experiences and transformations/additions that will remain available to support the mental wellness of Bethany and its community after the grant's period of performance ends on January 15, 2026.



### Advertising



Throughout the year, Bethany has promoted its mental wellness programming by advertising on Facebook; expanding Bethany's website; conducting two campaigns on WNIN, the local NPR radio station; being an exhibitor during the National Alliance on Mental Illness Walk; communicating via email, phone calls, texts, and word of mouth; and attending Zoom meetings of the Mental Health Matters community organization. In addition, Pastor Michelle was given the opportunity to appear on the Lifestyles TV program to discuss Bethany's Mental Wellness Ministry and promote the Mental Health and the Church Event.

### Art Ministry – “Art Journeys”

Jean Page is a former art teacher (among *many* other things) with a passion for leading people to peace and enrichment through art. She designed Bethany's art ministry, “Art Journeys,” for people of many ages and abilities to work with a wide variety of media, including (but not limited to) clay, paper, drawing and coloring utensils, paint, and fiber.



While many of the supplies have been purchased using MHI grant funds, Art Journeys has received several generous donations including a kiln, the labor to convert a daycare potty training bathroom into a vented and fire-resistant room for the kiln, tables and storage furniture, and money for building improvement materials and a pottery wheel. Between five and eight people attend Art Journeys regularly and report feeling less stressed and more peaceful after participating. This group has become a supportive community that values curiosity, kindness, diversity, empathy, and connection.



### Events

Leader Retreat – On March 15, Bethany leaders met to discuss the need to address mental health in the church, review Bethany's MHI project, and experience a taste of the programming that was available at that time. Each attendee received a gift bag containing self-care items, like fidgets, snacks, noise attenuating earplugs, and insulated cup; practiced mindfulness meditation and became familiar with the sensory support “equipment” in worship with Pastor Michelle; practiced *lectio divina* meditation with John Rich; participated in a short Tai Chi session with Matt Rundle; and had an art session with Jean Page.

**Mental Health & the Church** – On August 30, Bethany hosted a Mental Health and the Church Event open to the community. Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund, author of several books about the intersection of the church and mental health, pastor, and United Church of Christ denominational leader, was the event's keynote speaker and panelist convener. Her interactive and personal witness was meaningful and inspiring. The discussion panel was another highlight, covering the topics of church trauma, stigma, support networks, and theology, among others. The event also included a resource fair with five



exhibitors and catered meals which enabled everyone to interact, share stories, and make connections. Thirty-two people attended in person and four participated remotely. Of these 36 attendees, 25 came from outside the Bethany Christian Church Community. Everyone who offered feedback stated that the event was more than meaningful, it was *important*, and many asked when we would have the event again.



**Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) Training** – On June 27 & 28, Jean Page and Pastor Michelle took the parent and caregiver TBRI virtual training and learned a great deal about how trauma affects a child's mind and body; why it is necessary to use non-traditional methods to teach, support, and care for children and youth who have experienced trauma; and different techniques and interventions that allow traumatized youth and children to heal and thrive.

### ***Group Space(s)***



**Quiet Space** – The church repurposed the room adjacent to the sanctuary (formerly called the “cry room”) as a comfortable sensory space including a new sofa, rocking chairs, a bean bag, a spinning chair, colorful rug, sensory tent, sensory swing (not yet assembled), sensory toys, and books. Innerspace Center for Emotional Health donated \$200 worth of sensory equipment in appreciation of Bethany making it possible for several of its clients to stay in care (see Therapy Fund below).

**Small Group Space** – Bethany set aside space in the basement for small groups to meet with comfortable seating, television, blu ray player, rug, pillows, small tables, and lamps. The furniture, including two sofas and a La-Z-boy power lift recliner, and décor were donated.



### ***Support Groups***

While Bethany hasn't begun hosting support groups yet, it has laid the foundation for doing so by creating the small group space (see above), exploring different program materials, and consulting with NAMI/FaithNet which envisions a network of faith communities hosting support groups so someone could find a meeting to attend regardless of the day (or time of day).

### ***Therapy Fund***

So far, Bethany has used MHI grant funds to enable 17 clients of Innerspace Center for Emotional Health to continue their therapy by covering costs not covered by insurance or Medicaid or for those experiencing financial difficulties.





## ***Pastor Self-Care***

The Mental Health Initiative grant program emphasized supporting the mental wellbeing of each recipient congregation's pastoral leadership. Bethany's MHI Team included significant programming to care for Pastor Michelle, improve her resilience, and increase her mental and spiritual resources. She reports that the experiences she has had and the care she has received as a result of the church's Mental Health Initiative grant have been transformative.

Three-Day Retreat – From April 9-11, Pastor Michelle participated in a renewal retreat in Brown County State Park, which included hiking, playing, and resting.

Spiritual Retreat – From May 5-10, Pastor Michelle attended a private spiritual retreat at Dancing Spirit Equine Facilitated Learning and Coaching Center in Lyons, Colorado. Programming included intense spiritual direction, equine therapy, several forms of meditation, a sound bath, horseback riding, and hiking.



Other Self-Care Support – Bethany's MHI grant included covering Pastor Michelle's therapy and spiritual direction sessions, psychiatric medications, horse lessons, and gym membership.

## ***Tai Chi, Yoga, & Meditation***

Mental wellbeing requires care of a person's body, mind, and spirit. To offer this support, Bethany included practices of movement and stillness in its MHI grant project. One-third of the basement wellness space is dedicated to this programming, including new flooring (most donated), yoga and meditation equipment (some donated), and mirrors.

Tai Chi – Matt Rundle leads weekly Tai Chi sessions during the academic year for a free-will offering. Participants have learned (are learning) to move in slow synchrony through different forms, breathing meditatively, and feeling the Chi – the tingling life energy that flows through everyone. Participants include church members and non-church members alike and each class is attended by as many as six people.



Yoga – Bethany's grant covered yoga instructor training for Shawn Sterne who will lead classes beginning in 2026.

Mindfulness Meditation – Pastor Michelle led weekly 30-minute mindfulness meditation sessions beginning in May. Due to lack of participation, this program was suspended in September.

## ***Worship***



To support adults and children in worship, Bethany used MHI grant funds to purchase sensory toys, weighted blankets, noise canceling headphones and earmuffs, and supplies for bags that children can use during worship that include fidgets, art supplies, lacing cards, and other activities. Members of Keenagers, Bethany's fellowship group for adults available during the day, painted the bags with handprints and the words "Bethany Busy Bags".

## ***New and Upcoming...***

1. During the annual meeting, the congregation voted to approve Deena Gibson, Adrienne Jones, Jean Page, Shawn Sterne, Ryan Wagler, and Vanessa Wagler as members of the new Mental Wellness Ministry (MWM) Committee. This team will plan and coordinate future MWM programming.
2. Yoga classes
3. Support groups: Divorce Care and Parent Support
4. Childcare during worship and church activities.

# December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Notes
	1	2 Tai Chi 4pm Upswing Study 6pm Pastor Office Hours 1-4pm	3 Choir 6:30pm Pastor Office Hours 8-11am	4 Art Journeys 6pm Pastor Office Hours 1-4pm	5 Pastor Office Hours 8-11am	6	<p>We will possibly be doing caroling to visit homebound members and friends of Bethany ...</p> <p>Stay tuned for more information!</p>
7 Sunday Social 9am Worship 10:30am Elders Meeting after worship	8 G&Y RPG 5-8pm Dinner 6pm	9 Tai Chi 4pm Pastor Office Hours 1-4pm	10 Choir 6:30pm Pastor Office Hours 8-11am	11 Art Journeys 6pm Pastor Office Hours 1-4pm	12 Board Game Night 6-10pm Pastor Office Hours 8-11am	13	
14 Sunday Social 9am Worship 10:30am	15 G&Y Crochet Club 6:30pm	16 Tai Chi 4pm Pastor Office Hours 1-4pm	17 Choir 6:00pm Pastor Office Hours 8-11am	18 Art Journeys 6pm Pastor Office Hours 1-4pm	19 Pastor Office Hours 8-11am	20	
21 Christmas Breakfast 9am Worship 10:30am (choir singing)	22	23 Tai Chi 4pm Pastor Office Hours 1-4pm	24 Christmas Eve Service 5:30pm Church Office CLOSED	25 Pastor Michelle VACATION Church Office CLOSED	26 Pastor Michelle VACATION Church Office CLOSED	27 Pastor Michelle VACATION	
28 Pastor Michelle VACATION Sunday Social 9am Worship 10:30am	29 Pastor Michelle VACATION	30 Pastor Michelle VACATION	31 Pastor Michelle VACATION Church Office CLOSED				

# Advent & Christmas 2025

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DONKEY  
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JOSEPH  
MERRY  
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BETHLEHEM  
CELEBRATE  
ELIZABETH  
FRANKINCENSE  
HOLIDAY  
JOY  
MIRACLE  
REJOICE  
SPIRIT  
THREE WISE MEN  
ZECHARIAH

ANGELS  
BIRTH  
CHRISTMAS  
EMMANUEL  
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HOLLY  
LITTLE DRUMMER BOY  
MYRRH  
SAVIOR  
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BLESSING  
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GOD  
HOPE  
MANGER  
NATIVITY  
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STAR  
WAITING