



## 2025 Group Registration Packet

Dear Group Leader,

Greetings from Bethlehem Farm and thank you for expressing interest in us! Bethlehem Farm is a Catholic community in Appalachia that transforms lives through service with the local community and the teaching of sustainable practices. We invite volunteers to join us in living the Gospel cornerstones of community, service, prayer, and simplicity.

Volunteers at the Farm can expect to live a week of simplicity, free from the distractions of cell phones, television, radios, watches, or other luxuries. During this week, they also have the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people, and grow in faith through prayer and reflection of their experiences. We hope that volunteers will leave Bethlehem Farm with a greater understanding of the people of Appalachia, a foundation of faith, and a desire to continue serving others within their home communities.

Our registration packet contains a group reservation form, a schedule of available group weeks, our registration policy and Bethlehem Farm "Week at a Glance." This packet is available to print on-line. Please print out the entire registration packet and read all the information carefully. Feel free to contact us with any questions and please note that if you have email, it will be the primary form of communication.

Our participation fee for volunteer groups is **\$400.00** per person for High School groups and College groups. In addition, **we rely on the vehicles that volunteers arrive in for transporting groups to worksites.** We greatly appreciate your assistance with this and ask that you please keep this expense in mind as you plan the total cost of your trip.

**Here are a few important notes to keep in mind:**

1. **Effective October 1, 2024** the Farm is not requiring a Covid-19 test but is recommending a pre-trip test with no test results required and strongly recommend if a participant is exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms they should not attend the group week. This policy is updated when appropriate.
2. Your deposit of **\$50.00 per person** (volunteers and chaperones) must be included with the reservation form to reserve space for your group. We cannot accept phone, fax, or email reservations. High school week reservations must be **postmarked by September 30<sup>th</sup>**, college week reservations must be **postmarked by August 15<sup>th</sup>** to be placed in the lottery. Reservations for fall, family and adult weeks must be **postmarked by February 1<sup>st</sup>**. Four business days after the deadline, we will conduct the lottery assuming all timely reservations have arrived.
3. Please send a deposit for the number of volunteers you hope to bring. After the lottery, we will let you know how many people from your group we are able to host on the week(s) you requested. **You may request to bring from 5 to 34 people on any given week.** Volunteers must be 16 years or older, or entering their junior year of high school (except on family week). As part of a high school volunteer group, you must include **one adult chaperone for every seven youth.** We recommend that one of the chaperones be a youth/campus minister or someone involved in youth/campus ministry and at least 25 years of age. The other chaperones must be 21 years of age or older.
4. **High school groups are required to bring at least 1 chaperone per 7 students.** If you are bringing a co-ed group of students, you **must** bring one female and one male chaperone. If you are bringing an all boys group, you must bring at least one male chaperone. If you are bringing an all girls group, you must bring at least one female chaperone.
5. **For high school and family weeks, all participants 18 and over** are required to complete an **Adult Background Form.** This form should be mailed to us with your volunteer contracts, medical forms, and hold-harmless agreements, at least thirty days prior to your scheduled week or by April 1<sup>st</sup>, whichever arrives first. When you have reserved a week at the Farm, we will direct you to these forms on our website.
6. You are responsible to pay the full balance due on all spots awarded unless you cancel extra spots prior to the cancellation/final payment date for your group week (Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> for Jan groups, Jan 10<sup>th</sup> for March groups, Jan 31<sup>st</sup> for April groups, February 28<sup>th</sup> for May college weeks, March 31<sup>st</sup> for June and July high school weeks, May 31<sup>st</sup> for Adult and Family Weeks, July 15<sup>th</sup> for Adult Week, and August 15<sup>th</sup> for October college weeks). After that date, cancellations cannot be refunded unless Bethlehem Farm is able to replace the spots. If Bethlehem Farm can fill the spot(s), you will be refunded for every person we replace. The deposit of \$50 per person is non-refundable unless your group is not selected in the lottery.
7. We rely on groups to transport students to and from worksites throughout the week in your vehicles. Bethlehem Farm, in compliance with Wheeling-Charleston Diocese regulations, **does not permit the use of 11 - 15 passenger vans** (E-350, E-250, 3500, or 2500 chassis, etc.) to transport minors while at Bethlehem Farm. Groups that arrive with improper vehicles will be **required** to rent appropriate vehicles for use during the week from rental facilities.
8. Groups that fail to comply with the above policies may be withheld from participating in the following year's lottery.

Again, thank you for your interest in bringing a group to Bethlehem Farm. If you have any questions, please call or email us at (304)-445-7143, [volunteer@bethlehemfarm.net](mailto:volunteer@bethlehemfarm.net). God bless you and your ministry!

Peace and blessings,

Steve Rassa  
Volunteer Coordinator

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## Registration Policy

Our Board has set the following registration policy for the present time. Policies evolve over time as the needs of the Farm change, so please review it carefully as you complete the registration application for yourself or your group.

**Priority Registration** In an effort to build relationships with the surrounding community and to foster relationships with schools and parishes, Bethlehem Farm gives first priority to those groups (and individuals for adult and family weeks) that have attended the most previous years. Returning groups are not guaranteed to receive the same number of spots as in past years, in an effort to accommodate as many parish and school groups as possible. Group weeks will be filled first by all applying returning groups. In the case of a tie, a lottery will be conducted.

In order to develop new relationships with parish and school communities and reward persistence, Bethlehem Farm gives second priority to groups that submitted their deposit and registration by the previous year's priority registration deadline and did not receive any spots (hereafter referred to as "wait-listed" groups) and also submit their registration and deposit by this year's registration deadline. Once the returning groups are placed into the schedule, these wait-listed groups will be accommodated next (in order of most years on waiting list to least).

Bethlehem Farm gives third priority to groups that submit their registration and deposit by the registration deadline, but are not returning or wait-listed (hereafter referred to as "new" groups). Once the returning and wait-listed groups are placed, the remaining spots will be awarded to new groups. If there are more new groups applying than there are spots available, then the spots will be awarded through a lottery process, giving equal consideration to each group. The lottery will take place approximately one week after the deadline, to allow for the mail to travel here.

Groups with priority have until the priority registration deadline to reserve their week by sending in their deposit and registration form. Any group not selected by the lottery system will be put on a waiting list and will be contacted if any spots open up. Any applications postmarked after the appropriate priority registration deadline will be put on the 'late' waiting list and will be offered spots, if any are available, in order of postmark dates. Express mail returns hold the same stipulations as First Class mail. Registration packets are available online.

**Priority Registration Dates** In order to receive a priority status, returning/waitlisted groups must have their group reservation form and the deposit postmarked by the following dates:

College Group Weeks	August 15 <sup>th</sup>
High School Group Week	September 30 <sup>th</sup>
Adult/Family/Fall College Weeks	February 1 <sup>st</sup>

We will accept, mailed, fax, email, or other electronic (Facebook, etc.) reservations. A completed reservation is defined as: a received completed and signed registration form and a received deposit payment of \$50 per registered participant. After the lottery, we will let you know which week and how many volunteers we are able to host on the week(s) you requested. You may request to bring from 5 to 34 people on any given week.

**Notification of Registration** Groups will be notified by email when the final 2025 group week calendar is completed. It is a group's responsibility to confirm receipt of their registration.

# Bethlehem Farm Policies

**Deposits** Your deposit of \$50.00 per person (for volunteers and chaperones) must be included with the reservation form to reserve space for your group. The deposits are generally paid by check, but we can accept credit cards (2% processing fees will be added). Deposits are non-refundable unless cancelled spots are awarded to another group.

**Cancellation Policy** You are responsible to pay the full balance due on all spots awarded unless you cancel extra spots prior to the cancellation/final payment date for your group week (Oct. 31st for Jan groups, Jan 10<sup>th</sup> for March spring break groups, Jan 31<sup>st</sup> for April spring break groups, February 28<sup>th</sup> for May college weeks, March 31<sup>st</sup> for June and July high school weeks, May 31<sup>st</sup> for August Adult and Family Weeks, July 15<sup>th</sup> for September Adult Week, and August 15<sup>th</sup> for October college weeks). After that date, cancellations cannot be refunded unless Bethlehem Farm is able to replace the spots. If Bethlehem Farm can fill the spot(s), you will be refunded for every person we replace. The deposit of \$50 per person is non-refundable unless your group is not selected in the lottery system. Your non-refundable deposit reserves your spots until the cancellation/final payment date. After that date, Bethlehem Farm may award your spots to another group if final payment has not been received.

**Age Limits** High School group week volunteers must be 16 years or older, or entering their junior year of high school (except on family weeks). During college and adult weeks, volunteers must be at least 18 years old.

**Chaperones** (*High School Groups Only*) For high school weeks, you are required to bring an adequate number of chaperones. There must be one adult chaperone for every seven youth. We recommend that one of the chaperones be a youth/campus minister or someone involved in youth/campus ministry and at least 25 years of age. The other chaperones must be 21 years of age or older. If you are bringing a co-ed group of students, you must bring one female and one male chaperone. If you are bringing an all boys group, you must bring at least one male chaperone. If you are bringing an all girls group, you must bring at least one female chaperone.

**Adult Participants** (*High School & Family Weeks Only*) For high school and family weeks, all participants/chaperones who are 18 and over are required to complete an Adult Background Form. This form should be mailed to us with your volunteer contracts, medical forms, and hold-harmless agreements, at least thirty days prior to your scheduled week or by April 1st, whichever date arrives first. When you have reserved a week at the Farm, we will direct you to these forms on our website.

**Vehicles** We rely on groups to transport students to and from worksites throughout the week in your vehicles. Please communicate any limitations regarding use of your vehicles to us ahead of time. If your students need to be transported in Farm vehicles to get to their worksites, then we may add a fuel surcharge to your fees. We will need to know who is approved to drive each of your vehicles, so that we can assign work crews in such a way that all crews can get to their sites.

Road conditions in the vicinity of Bethlehem Farm include narrow gravel roads with hills and sharp turns. Such conditions pose increased risk of rollover accidents for 11 to 15 passenger vans. Therefore, out of concern for the safety of Bethlehem Farm Caretakers

and volunteers, and consistent with applicable law, Bethlehem Farm has adopted the following van policy.

**11 to 15-passenger vans shall not be used for the transportation of minor children to or from Bethlehem Farm or any activities in connection Bethlehem Farm.** A 11 to 15 passenger van is defined as a van designed to safely transport between 11 and 15 passengers, plus the driver, for a total up to 16 people, regardless of the actual number of seats or passengers.

11 to 15-passenger vans may be used for transportation of passengers who are 18 years of age or older. **Seats may not be removed from vans to reduce capacity and therefore to transport minor children.**

10-passenger vans (or smaller) may continue to be used for activities at and in connection with Bethlehem Farm. A 10-passenger van is defined as a van designed to transport nine passengers, plus the driver, for a total of ten people, regardless of the actual number of seats or passengers.

***Groups that fail to comply with the above policies may be withheld from participating in the following year's registration process.***

# Check List for Group Leaders

## All group leaders are responsible for:

- Payment (\$400 per person) due by:
  - Oct. 31st for Jan groups
  - Jan 10<sup>th</sup> for March groups
  - Jan 31<sup>st</sup> for April groups
  - February 28<sup>th</sup> for May College Groups
  - March 31<sup>st</sup> for June and July high school weeks
  - May 31<sup>st</sup> for August Adult and Family Weeks
  - July 15<sup>th</sup> for September Adult Week
  - August 15<sup>th</sup> for October college weeks
- Gathering forms and sending them to us –30 days before
  - Forms can be found at: <http://www.bethlehemfarm.net/participantforms>
  - Covid-19 Test Kits: We encourage participants to each bring a COVID-19 home test kit with them to test themselves in case of COVID symptoms develop during their week at Bethlehem Farm
  - Forms needed:
    - Hold Harmless
    - Volunteer Contract
    - Health Form
    - Group Leader/Chaperone Covid-19 Confirmation of Bethlehem Farm Required Documents form (no individual test results are required)
    - Adult Background Form (*High School Groups Only*)
    - Chaperone / Leader Expectations Form
    - Volunteer Sign-Up Sheet (to be completed by group leader / chaperone).
    - Group Leader Pre-Trip Insight Form

## All Group Leaders should be reminded:

- Arrival is between 6:30 pm & 7:00 pm Sunday (*Monday for Easter Week, Saturday for Adult Week*)
  - Please eat dinner prior to arrival
  - Upon arrival at the Farm, we greet participants with “Welcome Home” and a hug. If a participant prefers not to be hugged, giving a peace sign will communicate that.
  - *All participants, including leaders (except in case of emergency)*, are asked to fast from phone usage for the week. Participants should call or text safe arrival from the last town you pass through. Alternatively, you may use the landline to begin a phone tree once you arrive here. Parents are welcome to call our landline if there are any family emergencies during the week and should be assured that they will be contacted if any emergencies arise here, so no news is good news!
- Departure is at 10 am Saturday, Thursday for Adult Week
- Bethlehem Farm Payment & Cancellation policy
- Students/participants read BF at a glance <https://bethlehemfarm.net/service-week-volunteers>
- Age limits (16 or heading into junior year for HS, 18 for college/adult weeks)
- Remember to check the weather (Alderson, WV, 24910) and remind your group to pack accordingly.

## High School Groups should be reminded:

- No 11-15 passenger vans (*Wheeling-Charleston Diocesan Policy*)
- 1 chaperone per 7 students is required. At least 1 female chaperone if there are girls; at least 1 male chaperone if there are boys.



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# Week at a Glance

## The Overview

At Bethlehem Farm, we are more than a “work camp” for volunteers. We invite volunteers to be a part of our mission and our home. We build community with each other by working, praying, laughing, and loving together. We live simply to appreciate the gifts that God has given us. We pray together to grow closer to God and to one another. We serve the local people, we serve each other, and we also open ourselves to be served by others. By living out the Gospel cornerstones of prayer, simplicity, service and community each day of our lives, we offer volunteers not just the opportunity for service, but the opportunity to experience another way of life.

Here’s what a typical week\* may look like at the farm:

### **Sunday:** *Arrival*

Arrival (between 6:30 pm & 7:00 pm), Tour around the house and possibly the farm (depending on light), Intro to Bethlehem Farm, Cornerstone Prayer Service, Group Leader Meeting, Free time, & Lights out.

### **Monday:** *Day at the Farm*

Wake Up, Morning Prayer, Chores, Breakfast, Dishes, Farm Chores, Mass, Lunch, History & Mission of Bethlehem Farm, Farm Hike, Free Time, Dinner, Dishes, Free Time, & Lights out.

### **Tuesday – Friday:** *Days at the Worksites*

Wake Up, Prayer, Chores, Breakfast, Dishes, Head off to worksites (except home crew), Lunch on site, Return to the Farm, Dinner, Dishes, Evening Prayer, Free Time, & Lights out.

### **Saturday:** *Departure*

Wake Up, Prayer, Breakfast, Dishes, House Clean-Up, Head home (around 10 am)

### **Special programs:**

- *Monday:* A local parish priest will celebrate Mass at the Farm. On the rare occasion a priest is not available, the community will have a Eucharistic Service.
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- *Tuesday:* Community Night – we invite local community members up to the farm for a potluck dinner & occasionally they’ll bring a musical instrument or two
- *Wednesday:* Speaker from the local community to share their experiences and provide further insights into the communities we work with. Each school will engage in an encounter session, led by the schools leader/chaperone as a mid-week check in for that school’s students.
- *Thursday:* The Farm will have an Electricity Fast after evening prayer as a Care for Creation practice.
- *Friday:* (Summer Months Only) We end the work week with a dip in the Greenbrier River

*\* This is the schedule for a typical week (Sun-Sat), the schedule adjusts for weeks that are shorter (Easter Week) or longer.*



# GROUP RESERVATION FORM 2025

We would like to make a group reservation for a week at Bethlehem Farm:

Name of Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\*\* Email will be our primary form of communication unless you request otherwise

We will make every attempt to accommodate as many groups as possible. It is extremely helpful to us if groups list more than one potential week, since your group's first choice may not be available. We thank you for your flexibility. (Please see [www.bethlehemfarm.net/calendar](http://www.bethlehemfarm.net/calendar) for the complete 2025 calendar).

➤ Our first choice is the week from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

➤ Our second choice is the week from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

➤ Our third choice is the week from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

➤ Requested number of participants (including chaperones): \_\_\_\_\_ X \$50/person = \_\_\_\_\_ (total deposit)

▪ If Bethlehem Farm cannot accommodate this number on our requested week(s), then we need to have at least \_\_\_\_\_ participants for the trip to be feasible for us.

**Please note:** This form must be accompanied with your deposit of \$50.00 per person in your group, including chaperones. An email will be sent to you when your group's deposit has been received. If your group is able to reserve a week at the farm, the deposit is non-refundable. Total cost for the week is \$400.00 per person for High School and College group weeks. The \$50.00 deposit counts toward the total participation fee. The remaining balance is due Oct 31<sup>st</sup> for Jan weeks, Jan 10<sup>th</sup> for March weeks, Jan 31<sup>st</sup> for April weeks, \_\_\_\_\_ weeks, March 31<sup>st</sup> for June and July high school weeks, May 31<sup>st</sup> for August Adult and Family Weeks, July 15<sup>th</sup> for September Adult Week, and August 15<sup>th</sup> for October weeks. Fees must be received on time in order to keep your group's reservation. Make all checks payable to Bethlehem Farm.

1) I understand I must pay in full for all awarded spots unless I cancel any unneeded spots before the remaining balance due date (Bethlehem Farm relies on participation fees to operate). Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

2) I understand that chaperones are included in the total amount of spots received. Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

3) I understand that minors cannot be transported in 11-15 passenger vans, while at Bethlehem Farm. Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

**Effective October 1, 2024**, the Farm is not requiring a Covid-19 test but is recommending a pre-trip test with no test results required and strongly recommend if a participant is exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms they should not attend the group week. This policy is updated when appropriate.

I have reviewed the 2025 Registration Packet and understand the 2025 policies.

(Found online: [www.bethlehemfarm.net/registration](http://www.bethlehemfarm.net/registration))

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Scholarships:** a participation fee of \$250/person is available for groups who would not otherwise be able to afford the full fee. Please include a written statement demonstrating financial need with this form. If you have any questions, please visit our website: [www.bethlehemfarm.net](http://www.bethlehemfarm.net), email: [volunteer@bethlehemfarm.net](mailto:volunteer@bethlehemfarm.net), or call 304.445.7143. Thank you!

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