

The Bethlehem Star

A PUBLICATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER



Volume 70, Issue 4

April 2020

From Pastor Bill

"How are you?"

We all have short answers to this question especially when it is asked as a simple greeting instead of genuine concern. But these are different days. Our answers may change faster than the stock market. I am collecting answers: "So far so good" "healthy" "fine for now" "could be better" "adjusting" "doing well...." Do you have a response I can add to my collection?



Sunday, in our "virtual" worship service I asked for us to be in touch with each other. During the sharing of the peace I asked each of you to name two people you would be in touch with Sunday or Monday. By now you have been reached and reached out. How are you? Really how are you? Whatever it takes to break through the courteous answer for a genuine connection.

"How are you?" I have a new answer these days when asked by the neighbors out walking, the clerk at the store, during phone calls. My new answer is "hopeful." It almost always brings contemplation.

Another question we have been asking:

Is Easter going to be cancelled this year? This question started coming up when the very first Bay Area counties began a two-week shelter in place and social distancing. My answer is that the Resurrection of Our Lord is an event that started thousands of years ago and continues without end. It takes shape in our lives in ways we see, and don't see. We celebrate it in countless ways. And every year we adapt our celebrations for the circumstances and this worldly moment. We believe God breaks into the world with God's love and through the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension binds to us this promise of love. I do not know what shape our Easter celebration will have, but I do know it will be meet the times we are in, with the hope we live in the Resurrection of our Lord.

Join us and each other on Facebook, YouTube, by email, phone text and all the other ways we are staying Bethlehem, and being Bethlehem in the world.

Year for
2020
Vision

Peace,

Pastor Bill

Keep in Touch with Bethlehem

Be sure to add us on Facebook and YouTube to watch the latest worship videos. Our Facebook page is [facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa](https://www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa) Our YouTube Channel is Pastor Bill Bethlehem Santa Rosa, don't forget to like and subscribe!

*Gathered to worship,
Equipped by the Holy Spirit,
Strengthened through community,
Sent in peace to serve the Lord.*

April's Star

This month's newsletter will look a little different from previous editions. Because of the Corona Virus Pandemic, our usually advertised activities are suspended.

This month's Star features bible studies and articles from Lutheran publications to keep us worshipping from our homes. Please send in articles, book reviews, poems, jokes-anything you've found insightful, helpful or comforting during our Shelter-in-Place directive. We look forward to reading your submissions.



Newsletter

Please note the deadline for next month's Star is April 22nd.

Be well,
Michelle Frabotta

A word from Martin

"Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.

-Martin Luther



Second Mile Sunday

On April 12th, Bethlehem Lutheran, along with the other churches in the Sierra Pacific Synod, will gather contributions to support Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS). Please mail your donations to the Church office.

PLTS equips faithful leaders who enliven the church and care for the world. Today is a new day for theological education in the West. With expanded residential and online learning options, new faculty, shared teaching resources within Cal Lutheran and the Graduate Theological Union, our students learn, live, and serve in a place that is multi-cultural, economically diverse, and invigorating.

PLTS is one of eight seminaries of the ELCA, a founding member of the Graduate Theological Union, and a graduate school of California Lutheran University. PLTS was the first ELCA seminary to become Reconciling in Christ (RIC).

Theological education at PLTS is done in the context of people who are rich and poor, liberal and conservative, and a wide array of human race, religion, sexuality, education, experience, and background. If our theology did not take all people into account, it would be deficient.

Follow us on social media: <https://www.facebook.com/pltsofclu/>.

Please keep the seminary in your prayers this month and consider an additional offering toward their ministries. The Sierra Pacific Synod is blessed to accompany this organization in mutual ministry as we proclaim God's creative, redeeming and sanctifying love in our synod.



Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Children's Center

1300 St. Francis Road, Santa Rosa, California 95409

Sunday worship services: 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

Church Office: 707/539-5252, Hours: 9-3, M-F

Church Website: www.blc-bcc.com

Church Email: blc@sonic.net

Children's Center: 707/538-2266

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa

YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UC5xTmtCjUddP81wRiTd2C8w

Pastor:

Bill Wessner

707-782-8703 (Pastor's cell)

Email: PastorBill.BLC@gmail.com

Congregational Officers:

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Staff:

Michelle Frabotta, Parish Administrator

Deborah McNally, Tiffany Perry-Co-Directors
Bethlehem Children's Center 538-2266

Janet Bertoli, Adult & Youth Choirs

Barbara Laferriere, Organist, Adult Choir,

Melissa Kuhn, Bell Choir

Laura Lightfoot, Youth Choirs

Debbie Knudtson, Parish Nurse 537-7450

Got Peace?

By: Tammy Darling

(The Lutheran Message, 2019-2020)

When Peter was in an uncomfortable, heavily guarded prison awaiting a next-day trial... he slept (*Acts 12:4-7*). In fact, Peter was sleeping so soundly he had to be awakened by an angel.

Peter's secret? He had Peace. Peter understood that peace isn't dependent upon external circumstances, but rather it transcends them. Real peace, peace that endures, is found in Jesus Christ.

If you've ever been lost in the woods, you know how easy it is to become disoriented, confused, and perhaps even fearful. But having a compass in your pocket would bring a measure of peace. The world can be confusing and scary place, but we have a compass-the Prince of Peace-to point us in the right direction, to comfort us, to sustain us.

There's no end to the chaos and heartache in this world; we live in a broken reality. Jesus says that in this world we will have tribulation (*John 16:33*). Perhaps we should stop trying to get rid of everything that bothers us and learn to embrace peace instead.

While it sounds crazy, peace comes when we recognize and understand that we are not in control and that we are desperately dependent on the One who is. We don't have to bench-press the world; God's got it under control. An attitude of peace is a great witness in a world of stress and chaos. Peace says, "I'm trusting God; He's in control."

We do have the peace of Christ within us, but we still have a choice to make: will we let that peace rule? *Colossians 3:15* gives us the correct answer. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts."

Life isn't fair. Temptations come. Things don't always work out the way we plan. (*Continued pg. 4*)

What did the Risen Christ look like?

By: M.E. Stortz

(Gather Magazine, April 2020)

Would we recognize our Lord?

Do you ever wonder what the risen Christ looked like? No one knows. There are no selfies, no video or audio recordings. The Gospels attest to a series of post-resurrection appearances because someone returning from the dead was remarkable. But even more remarkably, no one seemed to recognize the earthly Jesus in the risen Christ—most notably the people who'd known him best.

EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE

John's Gospel tells of a sighting by Mary Magdalene, who found the stone rolled away (*John 20:1-18*). She left to tell Peter and John, who returned with her to find linen wrappings where Jesus' body had been. Deeply troubled, Mary entered the tomb and found it occupied by angels. After talking with these divine beings, she turned around and saw the risen Christ, but she "did not know that it was Jesus" (*20:14*). Mary presumed him to be a gardener and demanded he hand over Jesus' body. Only when he spoke her name did Mary identify the gardener as her Lord.

Later that same day, Jesus appeared to all the disciples except Thomas, making it through locked doors to bless them with his peace (*John 20:19-23*), even through all, except John, "the beloved disciple," had deserted him at the crucifixion. Christ displayed his wounded hands and side to the feckless and frightened disciples. Maybe he had to give them some evidence because they would not have recognized him otherwise. When Thomas joined the group for a second post-resurrection appearance a week later, he not only wanted to see Jesus' hands and side, he demanded hands-on proof (*20:25*).

John's Gospel concludes with an even more puzzling sighting of the risen Christ—this time with Jesus appearing at the Sea of Tiberias. The disciples had gone back to their old lives of fishing. At first light, they set out. As the sun rose, they noticed someone watching them, "but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus" (*John 21:4*). As with Mary Magdalene at the tomb, the risen Christ again talks to them. Here, too, conversation fails to provoke recognition. Only when the catch yielded more than they could handle did the disciples recognize Jesus. John shouted out: "It is the Lord!" His cry prompted Peter to swim to shore (*21:7*).

A NEW, RESURRECTED STATE

Luke's Gospel carries its own stories of the disciples' failure to recognize the risen Christ. After the confounding discovery of the empty tomb, two of Jesus' followers made their way to Emmaus, a town safely outside Jerusalem's systems of surveillance. Along the way, they were joined by a stranger, who asked them for the latest news. The stranger interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures to them, demonstrating how the events they were discussing had been foreshadowed. When the two followers reached their destination at dusk, they urged the rabbi to join them for dinner. It was only when he blessed the meal that they recognized this itinerant rabbi as Jesus (*Luke 24:31*). As if he felt obliged to explain the followers' cluelessness, Luke proposed that they didn't see Jesus "because their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (*24:16*). Yet how could the two followers walk all afternoon with their master and fail to recognize him? The encounter disturbed the two enough that they returned to Jerusalem that very night to find the other disciples. Suddenly Jesus was in their midst. Instead of greeting him with joy, the people were "startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost" (*24:37*).

No one immediately recognized the earthly Jesus in the risen Christ. Indeed, the people who should have known him best consistently mistook him for a ghost, a gardener, a harbormaster and an itinerant rabbi. Whether from faithlessness or temporary myopia or some divinely-induced blindness, the disciples could not see the risen Christ in their midst. Their eyes needed time to adjust.

Happily, they were given that time. The risen Christ returned: to forgive the disciples their betrayals, great and small (*John 20, 21*); to show them that there is life beyond fishing and tax collecting, charging them to "go make disciples of all nations" (*Matthew 28:19*); to repeat the call that orients their ministries— (*continued pg. 8*)



April

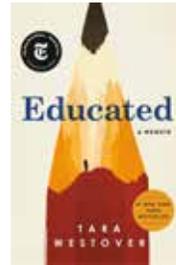
- 1 Sandra Bader, Sharon Boschen
- 2 Rick & Linda Knapp (43)
- 3 Megan McConnell
- 5 Katie McCullough
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- 7 Lisa McIntyre, Louann Ekren
- 8 Katie Tiedeman, Richard Schumann
- 9 Barbara Bertoli, Zack Thomson, Elaine Gutsch, Yasha Mokaram
- 11 Donna Jeye, Erica Meyer, Joni Schmidt
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- 20 Carolyn Cole-Schweizer, Katrina Petty, Laura Apostle
- 21 Caecilie Von Perbandt
- 22 Sam Claasen, Corrine Knudtzon
- 23 Mikayla Mokaram
- 26 Dan Thomson
- 28 Bridget Duffy
- 29 Richard Vogel
- 30 Peter Walls, Caitlyn Kelly

**We Celebrate
YOU!**

BLC Book Club pick for April

Educated: A Memoir By: *Tara Westover*

Tara Westover wasn't your garden variety college student. When the Holocaust was mentioned in a history class, she didn't know what it was. That's because she didn't see the inside of a classroom until the age of seventeen. She tells a miraculous story of the level of grit—not to mention intellect—required to pull off what Westover did, eventually earning a PhD from Cambridge.



Garden Help!

Harvest for the Hungry Community Garden

If you are under 65 and like to play in the dirt, please consider going to the garden any weekday from 9-12 to help prepare and plant so that we will have produce to give away this summer. They have stopped all volunteers over 65 from working there at this time so only a couple of volunteers are available each day so that means that we may not have much food to give away. Each year we give away to the food pantries in town over 20,000 pounds of food and would like to do so again this year. But we need help now. Thank you.

The garden is located behind Christ Church United Methodist at 1717 Yulupa Avenue.

For more information, call Beverly Schaap 527-2872

Got Peace?

(Continued from pg.2) But if we accept that troubles are a part of life, peace will rule. There are a few ways we can let peace rule:

Keep a steadfast mind.

Zeroing in on our circumstances is like hitting a bullseye-on the wrong target. "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you" (Isaiah 26:3).

Relax.

Jesus invites us to come to Him and He will give us rest (Matthew 11:28). Take time throughout your day to get face-to-face with Jesus. Make it a daily habit and the practice will continue even when circumstances bite.

Get some perspective.

Things are rarely as bad as we make them out to be. And if they are, God is always bigger than our problems. Don't tell God how big your problem is. Tell your problem how big God is.

Trust in the Lord.

Get to know God's character and "remember the deeds of the Lord" (Psalms 77:11). God is faithful, His character is impeccable. He can be trusted, and trust brings peace.

Christ in Our Home

The April-May-June edition of Christ in Our Home is now available. Please send an email or contact the Church office for a copy to be mailed to your home. Please specify if you would like a large print edition.



These daily devotionals are another great way to worship while we Shelter-in-Place.

Book Review:

A Beginner's Guide to the End: Practical Advice for Living Life and Facing Death

A Beginner's Guide to the End: Practical Advice for Living Life and Facing Death by noted hospice and palliative medicine doctor BJ Miller, MD and journalist Shoshana Berger call itself "the first and only all-encompassing action plan for the end of life" designed for individuals, family members and caretakers.

The Guide's section headings offer the reader a quick but comprehensive overview of its contents: Planning Ahead, Dealing with Illness, Help Along the Way, When Death is Close, and After. Expect to find clear, well written information on topics such as "Yes, There's Paperwork" (page 62), Chapter 13's "Hospital Hacks" (navigating the hospital), and "Celebrating a Life" (Chapter 23) among others. Information specific to caretakers is woven throughout the text. The book closes with an extensive Resources Directory keyed to each chapter topic.

Why read A Beginner's Guide to the End? In a quote from the associated website (<https://www.abgtte.com/>):

When it comes to death, we are all beginners. What we could use is a clear-eyed, big-hearted friend to hold our hand and walk us through not just the practical decisions we'll have to make in the coming months and years, but also how to engage with loved ones and face our fears.

The Health Ministries Committee has purchased two copies of A Beginner's Guide to the End for BLC's resource library. I encourage you to take some time to explore this thoughtful, compassionate book.

Liz Ferrari
Health Ministries Committee

NOTE: Dr. BJ Miller is currently affiliated with the USCF Helen Diller Comprehensive Cancer Center.

To learn more Dr. Miller's remarkable journey, visit <https://www.abgtte.com/> to view Dr. Miller's TED talk, "What Really Matters at the End of Life."

The sanctuary will once again be brought back to life Easter morning with a display of our traditional lilies and azaleas.

If you wish to buy a plant for \$12, please make checks payable to "Bethlehem Lutheran Church" with "flowers" on the memo line, and return with your order by Sunday, April 5th.

Name _____

Please choose an option below:

I prefer (enter quantity):

_____ x azalea plant _____ x Easter lily

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Please plan to take your flowers home after Easter Services.



News from BLC's Women of ELCA

At the BLC WELCA February board meeting, we thankfully accepted Lisa McIntyre's offer to take on the job as Secretary of Education. We could not be happier to have you as part of the board, Lisa.

Lisa says that "the main job of the WELCA Secretary of Education is to plan the Women's Spring Retreat". Usually this retreat is in May or June, but because we are living in a time of uncertainty, the event has been put on hold. When the board meets again, we will keep you informed. Recently, I have been reading a book about Mary and Martha; perhaps to use as a theme for our retreat. I find that right now is a perfect time to practice our Mary-ness! Right now, we do have the time and opportunity to "sit at the Lord's feet and listen."

The newly formed REBEKAH Circle had its first gathering on March 12. Ten of the fifteen members enjoyed introducing themselves to each other over a cup of coffee and then partaking in the "Gather" Bible Study, "We Are Called", led by Sharon Boschen. The April gathering will, most likely, not be taking place. And neither will the Ruth Circle gathering scheduled for April 7th, reports leader Leslee Cramer.

Linda Widdifield, our 2nd VP, shares this message: A Call to Prayer in the Time of a Pandemic. You may be thinking: "What can I do? I'm home participating in curbing the spread of the virus". How different is this time of physical isolation and Jesus going to the desert to talk with His Father? You are invited to join Lutheran women (and men) throughout the church every Tuesday (or every day) at noon (PST) in prayer. Attached is a structure you can follow as you participate in a Prayer Wave, spreading across the country, requesting God's help for ourselves and our neighbors.

Siri Fenson, WELCA President

BLC High School and College Scholarships

The Education Commission administers the L.U.T.H.E.R. scholarship, a one time \$500 scholarship for high school graduating members (of at least 1 year) who will be attending a college or trade school. Due May 1, 2020.



The Education Commission administers the congregational Lutheran Education Scholarship, an ongoing \$500 scholarship for those members (of at least 1 year) attending a Lutheran College, university or seminary. Due May 1, 2020.

Eligible students will be contacted by Linda Knapp, 539-8901.

The Endowment Committee has funds available this year for Endowment Scholarships in varying amounts for applicants who will be fulltime sophomores, juniors, or seniors at an accredited college or university for the 2020-2021 school year. Preference will be given to a student who shows financial need. The application is now available through the Church office 539-5252 or Church email blc@sonic.net.

All applicants should send their applications to lak9383@hotmail.com in PDF format.

Questions - contact Laura Knapp at 761-4160.

Concrete acts of love-for all

From *Christ in Our Home* (April 2020)

When [Jesus] had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas. (John 13:26)

The time has come-the time Jesus tried again and again to tell the disciples about. Perhaps most heartbreaking, the betrayal is coming from within, by one of these friends. So what does Jesus do? He feeds his future adversary. Jesus dips bread into the common bowl and hands it to Judas-the very one setting out on a path of hurt and violence. What do we make of Jesus' act?

We don't know if Judas ate the food. Did he have the stomach for it, given what he was about to do? But we know Jesus offered it. And we know that earlier, Jesus washed Judas's feet along with the other disciples'. Even though Jesus knows Judas will hand him over to the authorities, he shows Judas concrete actions of love. Why?

No doubt Jesus wanted to show us how to practice real love: how to love our children when they fuss or disobey; to love friends and partners even when they annoy or disappoint; to love those who practice and empower injustice, for Jesus loves them too.

God of love, help me to show love with words and actions modeled after those of Jesus. Amen.



A call to prayer in the time of a pandemic

This is a call to prayer, to be practiced every Tuesday at noon, in your time zone. (Use it daily, if you wish.)

Read: Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Pray: follow each petition by naming specific individuals or needs; add additional petitions as needed

For those who are ill

For those with little access to healthcare

For healthcare workers

For those who feel isolated

For those who are in unsafe places

For those who are anxious or worried

For leaders facing difficult decisions

For those who continue to work in challenging settings

For those driven by greed or careless disregard

Reflect: Reflect on these questions. You may even be inspired to journal daily with these questions. Consider our resource *Journaling: Create your own sacred writings.*

Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves (*Matthew 22:39*).

How are you loving yourself today? What is your self-care strategy?

How are you loving your neighbor today?

For we will rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances.

(*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*).

Risen Christ Continued from pg. 7

"follow me" (*John 21:19, 22*); and touchingly, to cook them breakfast, because they will need food for the journey (*John 21:12*). Disciples today should celebrate the First Breakfast alongside the Last Supper!

Instead of ascending directly to his Father, the risen Christ stuck around and let people get used to seeing him in his new, resurrected state. The time between the resurrection and the ascension also gave their hearts time to adjust to the journeys that now lay before them.

TIPS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

In similar fashion, the Easter season gives disciples today a chance to re-orient their own ministries for the road ahead. From this earliest community of followers, latter-day disciples receive two important travel tips: the promise of a resurrection that exceeds our wildest imaginings and some concrete counsel on where we might find the risen Christ today.

TRAVEL TIP #1: The followers of Jesus wanted nothing more than to have the old Jesus, the resuscitated Jesus, back again. Instead they got the resurrected Christ. Resurrection is not resuscitation.

Let me give a pedestrian example of the difference. My aging mother had such bad feet that it was hard to buy her new shoes. By the time she'd finally gotten the uppers worn in around her bunions, the soles were wrecked. While we were shoe-shopping, she'd wail: "I don't want new shoes; I want my old shoes back again." But resurrection is not about finding the perfect fit for gnarled feet; resurrection means getting new feet. Resurrection signals life on new terms entirely. No wonder the disciples couldn't recognize the risen Christ. They were too busy looking for the old Jesus. Resurrection doesn't give us the old Jesus back again; resurrection gives us grace beyond imagining, the risen Christ.

TRAVEL TIP #2: That community of followers left some concrete counsel for where we might find the risen Christ today. First, Jesus promised to be amid people gathering in his name, breaking through locked doors, barred hearts, despair and persecution: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (*Matthew 18:20*). The promise does not mention prayer; it's enough to gather in Jesus' name, nothing more-and nothing less. There's power in that name; there's power in "two or three" invoking it. Sometimes that's all a group of beleaguered disciples can muster.

Treasurer's Report

Beverly Schaap

February 2020

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$21,772	\$22,850	-\$1,078
Expenses	\$24,531	\$29,948	-\$5,417
Net	-\$2,759	-\$7,098	\$4,339

YTD 2020

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$54,321	\$45,700	\$8,621
Expenses	\$55,015	\$60,462	-\$5,447
Net	-\$694	-\$14,762	\$14,068

Amount needed to meet the budget \$7,625 per week
February \$5,443

Second, the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist brings the risen Christ into the midst of his disciples. As they eat and drink the consecrated bread and wine, they literally become what they eat: the body of Christ in the world. Once fed, they and we go out as God's hands to serve a struggling world.

Finally, in sharing the Lord's Supper, disciples join that wild and crazy table fellowship that Jesus created-and he had eclectic taste in dining partners!

Jesus ate with the religious elite, and with his wealthy friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus. But he also ate with the marginalized of his time. In the table etiquette of the ancient world, the people you sat with at a table were your friends, and your friends were the people you sat at the table with. Disciples today are called to sit at the table with the full range of Jesus' dining partners-people who aren't used to dining with one another. What does that table fellowship look like in your life?

Prepare the table and see who shows up.

The deadline for the next issue of The Bethlehem Star is April 22, 2020.

Please submit information and story ideas to the church office or email blc@sonic.net

Should you have any comments or suggestions that will help improve The Star, we will be pleased to receive them.

Should you wish to discontinue your subscription to The Star please let us know via email.