

The Bethlehem Star

A PUBLICATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER



Volume 70, Issue 6

June 2020

From Pastor Bill

Are you able to participate in Worship online? I hope you have the access to watch the BLC Service prepared on YouTube. (see below)

One thing I am trying to present is the opportunity to receive Holy Communion. We all have different experiences of the sacrament including the experience of being in church together as a community one with another sharing space at a communion rail and the person to person experience of receiving it from our siblings in Christ. Communion also contains individual experiences of connection with God, a sense of the forgiveness of sin, the connection with the incarnate God, our own faith story.



These experiences are as individual as we are and as potent as God's love for us. During these days of social distancing the most effective care we may have for one another is not to be physically together, yet spiritual through Christ together.

You may certainly participate in the sacrament as part of your worship. You may provide your own bread, wine, grape juice and setting of plate and glass. It may be fancy, special or ordinary, God will make it holy. As I bless the bread and wine in the video I also make the sign of the cross to the camera, you too may make the sign of the cross over the elements in you home.

Just as Jesus makes his presence known to the disciples in the house in Emmaus: Luke 24:13-35 (Our Gospel from the Third Sunday of Easter 3 – April 26 this year) – he reveals himself in the breaking of the bread at a distance in time and place from the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday and his presence, his real presence, is made known across all time and distance, uniting us all in one mystical body.

If you choose to fast from communion until we may gather in our sanctuary and safely practice again, that may very well become part of your faith story and witness.

As Lutherans we believe the care for the needs of each and the nourishment of faith take their place as our first concerns. I encourage you to practice your faith in a holy way.

Peace,
Pastor Bill

The links are listed on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa>

and in a weekly email from our office: BLC@sonic.net, also searchable on YouTube: Pastor Bill Bethlehem Santa Rosa.

Remember to like, share, follow, comment and subscribe!

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



Congratulations 2020 Graduates!

Bethlehem is pleased to congratulate and honor our 2020 Graduates.

Jena Preston is graduating from Sonoma State with her degree in Sociology.

Melissa Preston has passed her Board Certification in Music Therapy.

Emili Marlar is graduating from Maria Carillo High School and will be attending Chico State. Emili is the recipient of the LUTHER Scholarship from BLC.

Congratulations again to all our graduates. We celebrate your accomplishments and pray for you in your future endeavors!



Father's Day - Sunday, June 21st

Thunder and lightning-and peace

From *Christ in Our Home* (June 2020)

The God of glory thunders. (Psalm 29:3)

I like thunderstorms, especially when I have adequate shelter. I have experienced thunderstorms from inside a house, from a front porch, from inside a tent while camping, and while driving. I am always amazed by the sound of thunder and the brilliance of lightening. I am astonished by their power.

David speaks of this power in Psalm 29, describing the thunder as "the voice of the LORD" which "shakes the wilderness" and "flashes forth flames of fire" (v. 7-8). This display of power is often followed by a sense of calm. Given the storms of life that can and do occur, one understands why David prays "May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!" (v. 11). When such storms happen, figuratively or literally, we can pray to God for help and deliverance even as we give thanks for God's power, majesty, and ultimate assurance of peace.

Thank you heavenly Father, for helping us through life's storms. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer concern: Victims of natural disaster

Did you know:

The ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response is active in 40 countries around the world and in 20 states and territories. To learn more about Lutheran Disaster Response visit, ELCA.org/disaster

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. (*Suspended*)

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

Linda Knapp Witness & Service

Carolyn Cole-Schweizer, Worship

Michelle Thomson, Youth

Janet Krug, BCC Representative

Siri Fenson, Bethlehem WELCA President

Congregational Officers:

Cal Eriksen, President

Brad Powell, Vice President

Bev Powell, Secretary

Beverly Schaap, Treasurer

Susan Jenkins, Financial Secretary

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 Knudtzon, Parish Nurse 537-7450

Council Commissioners:

Nancy Trbovich, Education

Nick Keane, Property

George Kuhn, Stewardship

Drop Your Nets

By: Michelle Derusha

(Gather Magazine, June 2020)

Recently I re-read Matthew 4, where Jesus calls fishermen Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow him and become his disciples. "Come," Jesus says. "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

Matthew tells us that all four men immediately dropped their nets, left their boats and followed Jesus, and in that moment I wondered what Jesus might be asking me to leave behind in order to follow him. My initial response was, "Nothing." After all, I reasoned, *last* year was my year of leaving things behind. I quit book publishing. I quit writing my monthly column for the local newspaper. I quit speaking. I let so much go; surely there couldn't be more to release, right?

Last year was also a season of deep soul-searching. I read several spiritual and secular "self-help" books, re-entered counseling, and filled journal after journal with questions and reflections. I was on a quest-a pilgrimage of sorts-to uncover my true, God-created self. I was determined to leave no stone unturned. It was an exhilarating, gratifying, transformational season.

Research is my sweet spot, my comfortable place. Nothing makes me happier than gathering facts, evidence, knowledge and answers. I dove into my year of self-discovery with gusto. But here's what I am realizing about my desire for knowledge, information, clarity and answers: It is, ironically, yet one more way I've kept myself at arm's length from me, others and God. (*Continued on pg. 4*)

A message from Cal

May 29, 2020

Dear Bethlehem Lutheran Members,

Oh, how we're missing you! We are encouraged with the latest information regarding the gradual reopening of California. While the official date is unknown, we are preparing for the day when we will be able to welcome our members "home." We do not have official reopening criteria specific to our region, but we are monitoring CDC guidelines and expectations. The safety and comfort of our members and staff is vital to a successful reopening, and we have begun working behind the scenes in this downtime to consider how we can prepare the church building and facilities to meet the new safety concerns and requirements and to enhance cleaning protocols.

The church experience will likely be different once we do resume our regular (or modified) worship schedule and things may look and feel different at first (and likely for a while). We have increased our social media presence and have been sharing virtual worship via our YouTube channel. We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how we can better serve your worship needs and provide more connection during these days of uncertainty and isolation.

Of the utmost importance is ensuring that the church buildings are clean and safe when we do resume worship and that we can maintain distancing protocols while still allowing for a meaningful worship experience. We will share these steps as we get closer to a reopening date.

Even though we are working to make Bethlehem Lutheran Church as safe an environment as we possibly can, we understand that many of you will have concerns going out into any public environment even after we've reopened our doors. Our goal will be to offer as much as we can, while following the strictest of standards to make everyone feel comfortable in returning to worship.

Once we can open the church, if you choose not to return in person, you will be able to continue worshipping with us from home on YouTube and stay in touch through Facebook and weekly e-news. If you are not receiving the Starlite and newsletter electronically, please contact Michelle at the church office and provide your email address so that we may include you in these communications.

Our goal is to create a worship environment where our members feel safe, comfortable and protected. We all want to return to our friends, our faith community, our worship and some form of normalcy. We pray that this may be possible soon and we ask God's blessing on you and your loved ones during these challenging times. Please reach out to our office, Pastor Bill, or a member of the council if you would like to speak with someone. We look forward to welcoming you back to Bethlehem Lutheran Church when we can reopen.

In Christ,

Cal Eriksen, President

Carolyn Cole Schweizer, Covid-19 Committee Chairperson



Mini Prayer Shawls Needed

The Bishop Election Committee (BEC) is working on various aspects of the overall process to elect a new Bishop and prays for it to be one that is unified and Spirit led. To guide the voting members in prayer and discernment, we plan to provide mini-prayer shawls for each person. These mini-shawls will be made by folks around the synod who pray during their creation that each member is blessed and fully open to the Spirit's guidance. The shawls would also be a unifier as we gather to pray prior to each ballot. And they will go home with members in their brief cases, pockets, or purses as a reminder of the prayers of unknown sisters and brothers in Christ, and can be used during their own times for prayer and devotions.



And so, we are asking all knitters and crochet-ers to wash their hands, grab their needles and hooks, gather up their yarn, and create mini-prayer shawls roughly 6" by 3". We will need about 600 total! As your fingers are at work, please pray for God's blessings upon the recipient of your creation and that they receive the gift of spiritual discernment.

These mini-shawls can be sent to Assembly with your clergy and voting members. Your congregation is invited to bless them during a worship service beforehand.

For more information contact Beverly Schaap, 707-527-2872



- 1 Josh Bertoli, Alan & Joy Petty (29)
- 3 Seth Bowers
- 4 Jason Kracht, Linda Wilkening
- 5 Pastor Brian, Jim & Kay Fish (55)
- 6 Katrina Kuhn, Janet Bergman
- 7 Tony & Elizabeth Miller (23)
- 8 Alan Schroeder
- 9 Judiann O'Connell, Clint Stevenson,
Astrid Haugaard, Gary & Jenna Stein (41)
- 12 Anita Anderson, Bill Stirnus
- 13 Nancy Marvits, Michele Doss, Alexander
Fountain, Mary Beth & John Wells (39)
- 14 Ross Winn, Steve & Joyce Mortensen-
Child (34)
- 15 Alexis Kracht
- 16 Gale & Robert Muehlbauer (36)
- 17 Gloria Hamilton
- 18 Jenna Tiedeman, Paul & Judy Sengstock
(65), Mike & Donna Jeye (42)
- 19 Alexandra Jeye
- 20 Bev Powell, John LaRussa, Janet & Brian
Bertoli (33)
- 21 Katrina Anderson, Tom Torgerson, Jr.
- 22 Heidi & Justin Wood (7)
- 23 Daniel Abel, Matthew Younger, Bill &
Leslie Stirnus (47)
- 24 Alice Richardson
- 25 Joy Petty, Else Rodrigues
- 26 Judy Sengstock, Jackson Petty, John &
Tricia Karriker (15)
- 27 Duane & Shirley Jensen (61)
- 28 Alan Wall, Alan & Mary Schroeder (62)
- 29 Kaiden Kelly, Karl & Linda Smith (57),
Craig & Sarah Fountain (18)
- 30 Sara Mokaram, Carrie Winn

Drop Your Nets

(Continued from pg. 2)

There is nothing inherently damaging about most self-help books (spiritual or secular). There's nothing wrong with looking to the guru of the day for guidance and insights. Many offer a tremendous depth of wisdom and compassion, and I learned a lot from what I read this past year. The problem arises, however, when this quest for knowledge and insight becomes both another distraction—a way to avoid—and a means to control. As long as I assume I can find the answer or the way "out there," I don't have to sit with what's right here in the deepest part of myself.

When I heard Jesus tell me to drop my nets, I realized he was asking me to leave my desire for clarity and direction behind. I am called to walk alongside him in trust, even if I don't know where we are going. After all, Jesus didn't give the disciples any direction when he called them. He didn't point out which way they were headed. He didn't offer any clear insights or answers, not even a hint.

Jesus said nothing more than, "Come, follow me," with the cryptic addition of, "and I will make you fish for people." Jesus' presence was answer enough. Jesus asked the disciples to trust him with that single piece of evidence.

Nets can offer us safety, but safety is not always the better way. What looks like safety can end up entangling us. What looks like security can keep us from the true freedom into which God invites us.



It is good and right to be attentive to God's movement in my life, but it is also good and right to trust that God will make the way known without my grasping or pushing, without my seeking or striving—without, in fact, a lot of effort on my part at all. This is not complacency or apathy, but rather, a receiving, a yielding, a surrendering in confident trust that God is putting everything right with me and for me.

I am learning that there's always more to leave behind. There's always something else to drop. Each time I release a net, I come closer to being caught up in the vision of God.

Daily Grace

This morning, May 21, I read in WELCA's Daily Grace email that "the meaning of gluttony was not only overeating but also eating without regard for one another." I had just finished writing about the plea for volunteer help at Elisha's Food Pantry—what a coincidence!

Everyday, Daily Grace sends out a short message that acts as an "on-the-go companion to our journey, offering a faith reflection, encountering God's grace." You can receive Daily Grace for free by going to womenoftheelca.org/dailygrace and click on the sign-up box.



~Siri Fenson, BLC WELCA Board President

Bishops' Joint Letter Against Re-opening for Public Worship

Dear People of God of the congregations of the Sierra Pacific Synod, the Southwest California Synod, and the Pacifica Synod:

Grace and peace to you, in the name of the risen and ascended Christ!

It is with concern that we reach out to you today, on the eve of Memorial Day weekend and the last Sunday of Easter, having just witnessed in a televised message by the President of the United States a statement declaring that the nation's churches should open for public worship this weekend. We understand the strong desire of our people to worship together, particularly on a meaningful weekend like this one. We wish to state for the sake of our church and its people that we believe the advice to re-open this weekend is at odds with the prevailing medical understanding of the course of this virus and the ways to prevent its spread.

We call on you to continue to listen to those state and local public health experts who, using the best medical and scientific information available, have already given us sensible guidelines to follow in our states and in the counties of our synods. Churches remain places of particularly high risk for contagion, and recent cases in many states have confirmed that opening prematurely can be catastrophic. We cannot ensure, in all our congregations, the sanitation and distancing requirements necessary to be together for worship. Nor has the risk of reduction in infections and effective measures to block contagion will be needed before we will be able to gather in person again.

This is not a question of religious liberty. Nothing earthly-no government, indeed no virus-can come between us and the love of God. The decision to quarantine us for a time is a public health decision, and we are obligated, for our own good and the good of our neighbor, to do the right thing-which in this case is to refrain from non-essential gatherings. Our faith is not optional-indeed it is "essential" to us as Christians-but it does not override our higher duty to consider our neighbor's welfare in a time of medical emergency.

Though in normal times people of faith gather every week for praise and proclamation on the day of Christ's resurrection, we are not absolutely required to do so in spite of every obstacle. We have alternatives right now; we do not need to be able to gather together physically in order to worship God-for God hears our prayers wherever we are and whenever we are. We may pray, we may hear the proclamation of the Word, and we may read and study the scriptures-we may even assemble in digital communities on Sundays-without endangering ourselves and others by gathering together in our church buildings.

Lutherans, in particular, know that there is nothing sacred about a church building except as our sentiment makes it so, and that God is as accessible to us in personal intercession as in corporate prayer. Again, we say, this time of separation is not a time of separation from God. You may cultivate and even expand and intensify your faith in this time of sheltering at home. God is with us in each of our homes right now as surely as God is with us anywhere. And at the appropriate, safe time, we will gather again for the face-to-face worship we miss and for which we ardently long. We share a hope that will come soon.

Again, we do not think resuming in-person worship ahead of the public health advisories is a good choice. It would be neither wise nor faithful for us to endanger our elders and those communities of poverty and color who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Nor would it be faithful to expose ourselves and our friends to contagion, or to rush into gatherings that are more likely to harm us than to bring us the peace we desire.

We call on the pastors, deacons, and lay leadership of our synods to comply with the standing public health directives in their localities. We recognize that as these directives continue to change, we will stay in dialogue with you. Our faithfulness to God is shown by our love of our neighbors, and in this situation there is a clear witness to be made-the one that best shows care for others.

May God bless and protect us all.

Bishop Mark W. Holmerud, Bishop R. Guy Erwin & Bishop Andy Taylor
For more information, please visit spselca.org

F.I.S.H. Food Pantry Update

Hello everyone. I thought you might like a quick update on what is, and what is not going on at F.I.S.H.

On March 14 our Board of Directors voted unanimously to close F.I.S.H. due to the coronavirus pandemic. The average age of our all-volunteer crew is 70 years. We treasure our volunteers and felt it was the right move to protect them.

Up until we closed, we managed to feed 10,108 people and serve 2,778 households for the period from January 1, 2020 to March 13, 2020.

Upon closing, all of the perishable products were donated to Sam Jones Hall and various other organizations that serve those in need. Our pantry is stocked with only non-perishable products at this time.

Our outgoing telephone message, our Facebook page and our website refer those in need to Redwood Empire Food Bank, who with the assistance of the National Guard, set up an emergency food donation program. The Food Bank is doing a terrific job and we are grateful to them for stepping up in such a big way.

When we reopen F.I.S.H. (soon, we hope), we will need to protect ourselves with masks, gloves, sanitary wipes and cleaning supplies. We ask that you might help us by donating some of these scarce products. We are always in need of funds to keep our pantry shelves full. And we can always use those paper bags grocery stores now provide; we will re-purpose all of them.

Please be well and safe, and thank you, for your ongoing loyal support, especially during these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Kaarin Lee, Executive Director

P.O. Box 4291
 Santa Rosa, CA 96402
 707-527-5151
fish-of-santa-rosa.org



Scholarship Congratulations

BLC is happy to present scholarships to congregational members who have completed the requirements.

Jackson Petty will be receiving the Lutheran Education Scholarship for \$500 given to a student attending an ELCA College or University. Jackson will be a sophomore at California Lutheran.

Emili Marlar will be receiving the LUTHER Scholarship for \$500 given to a graduating high school senior. Emili graduated from Maria Carillo High School and will attend Chico State to become a teacher.



God's Blessings to you both!

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.

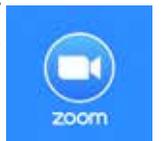
For more information, call Beverly Schaap 527-2872

"Zoom-ers" Needed

If you are familiar with, or curious to learn Zoom Meetings, Pastor Bill would like to include more faces in our worship.

Please join us for Prayers of the Church. Sharing of the Peace. Perhaps snacks after worship.

And what ever else our collective imaginations cook up.



Send an email to Pastor Bill to be included in the invitations.

PastorBill.BLC@gmail.com
 (Subject Line: Zoom Meetings)



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*).

Find the hidden Books of the Bible

Answers:

Can you find twenty-five (25) books of the Bible in the paragraph, below?

This is a most remarkable puzzle. Someone found it in the seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping himself occupied for hours. One man from Illinois worked in it while fishing from his john boat. Roy Clark studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Vicks mentioned it in her column once. One woman judges the job to be so involving that she brews a cup of tea to calm her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot... that's a fact. Some people will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. The truth is, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or a scholar to see some of them at the worst. Something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have. Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation may help. Books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. And punctuation or spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete. Remember, there are 25 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph.

- ACTS
- AMOS
- ESTHER
- GENESIS
- HEBREWS
- HOSEA
- JAMES
- JOB
- JOEL
- JOHN
- JUDGES
- KINGS
- LAMENTATIONS
- LUKE
- MALACHI
- MARK
- MATTHEW
- NUMBERS
- PETER
- REVELATION
- ROMANS
- RUTH
- SAMUEL
- TIMOTHY
- TITUS

Treasurer's Report

Beverly Schaap

April 2020

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$14,945	\$29,860	-\$14,915
Expenses	\$25,152	\$34,500	-\$9,348
Net	-\$10,207	-\$4,640	-\$5,567

YTD 2020

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$86,131	\$104,220	-\$18,089
Expenses	\$108,085	\$130,997	-\$22,912
Net	-\$21,954	-\$26,777	\$4,823

Amount needed to meet the budget \$7,625 per week
 April \$3,363

Elisha's Pantry

The Pantry has been kept open every Thursday since mid-March when the sheltering-in-place started; each week giving away bags of food to over 100 needy persons.

The call for 'younger' volunteers is still being made as nearly all of us earlier volunteers are over 65 years of age. From our congregation-Joni Schmidt, Joy and Alan Petty, David Vogel and Blanca Harnwell have come to help filing and distributing bags of food. Beverly Schaap has, and still is, sewing masks that are given to clients and volunteers.

If you can give some help, please contact Siri Fenson (303-7860 or sirimax@att.net).

"During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our needy neighbors." ~Siri Fenson

The deadline for the next issue of The Bethlehem Star is June 19, 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.