

# The Bethlehem Star

A PUBLICATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER



Volume 70, Issue 7/8

July/August 2020

## From Pastor Bill

Fifty years ago, the predecessor Churches of the ELCA began Ordaining women to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. This change was made official at the National Assemblies by the swapping out of a single word in the governing documents. The word "man" became the word "person." A small adjustment on paper. This change was barely enough to modify the spacing on a page, as if to demonstrate a piercing pinpoint focus of all the resolve and advocacy before the amendment and all the challenges and change of minds and hearts to follow. A huge amount of energy brought to one target and an ocean of resettlement of expectations after.



I remember in the early '80's the startled look on my visiting mother's face when I introduced her to the congregational president of my church in Denver. This president was a woman. My mother was a feminist before the word was minted. Her mother was a suffragette. Still she was surprised again when the newest member of the Pastoral staff led communion. Again, a woman. Even the desired end can be surprising when the effort is wearying.

Notable that my mother has served as a congregational president and their congregation has called a woman as pastor.

When I announced the results of the new Bishop election in Northeastern Ohio Synod at the Sunday Service I said, "and her name is Elizabeth Eaton" there was an audible gasp from many members at the word "her." Yes, that is the same Elizabeth Eaton who is our national Bishop.

You may see Bishop Eaton and her challenge to us at <https://www.elca.org/50yearsofordainedwomen>. The challenges to Christ's Church are everywhere. I especially like the invitation at the bottom of the web page, just above the social media marks. Does that sound like us?

It is worth marking an anniversary that took so much work to accomplish because there is still so much remaining. It also helps us realize how much can be done.

What are the changes of heart and mind that we are willing to put our resolve and advocacy towards? What challenging change of heart and mind are we ready to hear? Will the Holy Spirit continue to stir, lead, and sustain us?

Pray hard.

Peace,

*Pastor Bill*

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

## Expectations

The man whispered,

"God, speak to me"

And a meadowlark sang.

But, the man did not hear.

So the man yelled,

"God, speak to me!"

And, the thunder rolled  
across the sky.

But, the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said,

"God, let me see you."

And a star shined brightly.

But the man did not notice.

And, the man shouted,

"God show me a miracle!"

And, a life was born.

But, the man did not know.

So, the man cried out in despair,

"Touch me God, And let me know  
you are here!"

Whereupon, God reached  
down and touched the  
man.

But, the man brushed the  
butterfly away and walked on.

Don't miss out on a blessing  
because it isn't packaged the way  
that you expect.

*Submitted by Siri Fenson*

# July Second Mile Sunday



**San Francisco Night Ministry**, "The Church's Night Shift" provides compassionate and non-judgmental pastoral care, counseling, referral services and crisis intervention to those in any kind of need or distress during the night.

Every night of the year trained volunteer Crisis Line Counselors provide a listening ear to callers from around the Bay Area and beyond who are experiencing loneliness, fear, anxiety, grief or distress of any sort.

The Night Ministers are ordained clergy who offer middle- of-the-night counseling and conversation on the streets of San Francisco and in bars, coffee shops, transportations centers, hotel lobbies, hospitals and wherever people gather at night.

Night Ministry also sponsors two weekly outdoor ecumenical worship services, called Open Cathedrals, in the Civic Center and Mission neighborhoods of San Francisco. A free meal follows each.

On average we receive 4,800 calls per year from people who are lonely, anxious, frightened or upset. In addition, Night Ministers will have up to 15,000 significant conversations with individuals on the streets and in coffee shops, bars and other places each year.

All of our services are free; our funding comes entirely from the generous donations of individuals, congregations and other organizations.

San Francisco Night Ministry began as a pilot project under the Department of Pastoral Services of the San Francisco Council of Churches in 1962. It was fully organized in 1964 and became an independent not-for-profit organization with its own governing board, charter, constitution and mission statement in 1990.

"Lighten the darkness.....rekindle the hope."

## Rebekah Circle News

Please join the women of Rebekah Circle for a Zoom Bible Study on Thursday, July 9th and August 13th at 10:00 a.m.

Contact Siri Fenson for more information at (707)303-7860.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

-Matthew 18:20



## A word from Martin

*"Grant that I may not pray alone with the mouth; help me that I may pray from the depths of my heart."*

-Martin Luther



Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Children's Center  
1300 St. Francis Road, Santa Rosa, California 95409  
Sunday Summer worship : 10:00 a.m. (Suspended)

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

Church Website: [www.blc-bcc.com](http://www.blc-bcc.com)

Church Email: [blc@sonic.net](mailto:blc@sonic.net)

Children's Center: 707/538-2266

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa](http://www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa)

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/channel/UC5xTmtCjUddP81wRiTd2C8w](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5xTmtCjUddP81wRiTd2C8w)

Pastor:

Bill Wessner

707-782-8703 (Pastor's cell)

Email: [PastorBill.BLC@gmail.com](mailto: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,

Position Available, Bell Choir

Laura Lightfoot, Youth Choirs

Debbie Knudtzon, Parish Nurse 537-7450

Council Commissioners:

Nancy Trbovich, Education

Nick Keane, Property

George Kuhn, Stewardship

## Reopening Postponed Until Further Notice

Given the current rise in coronavirus cases in Sonoma County, the Reopening Committee has decided to postpone resuming in-person worship until further notice. We regret having to take this action...we were looking forward to seeing familiar (masked) faces this Sunday, but we feel it is in the best interest of our members to do so.

We will continue to closely monitor local health ordinances and will revisit our reopening plans again when it is safe. Your safety and wellness are our highest priority.

Thank you for your patience with this ever-changing situation.

In Christ,

Bill Wessner, Pastor

Cal Eriksen, President

Carolyn Cole-Schweizer, Reopening Committee Chair

## Agnus Day

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

Peace and Joy,

James Wetzstein, creator Agnus Day

HAVE YOU LOOKED AT THE  
**NEWS LATELY?**  
I WISH I COULD SEE  
MORE **EVIDENCE** OF THE  
(KINGDOM OF GOD!



WWW.AGNUSDAY.ORG

THE REIGN OF  
GOD IS WHEREVER  
JESUS IS.



OH **YEAH!?** WELL,  
WHERE IS JESUS THEN?  
'CAUSE HE NEEDS TO  
COME AND **KNOCK**  
**SOME HEADS!**



NO. JESUS IS  
WHEREVER  
THERE IS  
**COMPASSION.**



MATTHEW 9:35-10:8

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## July

- 2 Brian Bertoli
- 3 Bonnie Barnes
- 4 Rod and Karen Gundy (49)
- 5 Craig Clissold
- 6 Denise and Terry Newkirk (31), Megan & Jason Kelly (13)
- 7 Sue McCullough
- 8 Mason Cole-Schweizer
- 9 Lisa and Mark McIntyre (36)
- 10 Bob Beck
- 11 Cara McIntyre
- 12 Shirley Jensen
- 13 Susan Comstock
- 16 Danielle Sass
- 17 Dorothea Misasi
- 18 Elizabeth Sanders, Bob and Judiann O'Connell (51)
- 19 Rick Knapp, Dan and Michelle Thomson (34)
- 20 Laura and Greg Apostle (29)
- 22 Jeff Burton, Lynne and Gary Schouest (42), Carl & Gail Bowers (31)
- 23 Charla Paine
- 25 Bob O'Connell, Judy Flowers, Christiane Silverthorne
- 26 Sara & Yasha Mokaram (6), Michelle & Marc Frabotta (14), Dave and Rose Smith (17)
- 27 Connie VanPelt, Wes and Christiane Silverthorne (52), Charla & John Paine (46)
- 28 Daniel Virtue, Nancy and William Trbovich (30)
- 30 Dean Thompson
- 31 Justin Wong

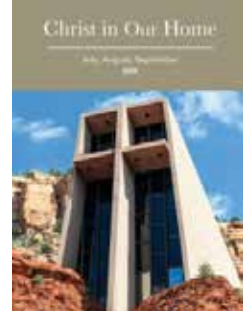


## August

- 1 Kathy Hannon
- 3 Jo Treagus, Richard Doran, Linda Smith
- 5 Barry and Jennifer Wong (20)
- 6 Luke & Rachel Anderson (9)
- 9 Avery Apostle, Pastor Brian and Laurie Claasen (45)
- 10 Michelle Frabotta
- 11 Janet Krug
- 15 Lorie Moser and Curt Shaddock (10)
- 16 Jesse and Candy Claasen (12)
- 17 Victoria Thomson
- 19 Jonathan Walls, Lisa Kelly, Connie Lorenz, Donette Mack, Richard and Ramona Doran (53), Dean and Christen Thompson (25)
- 20 Susan Jenkins, Matthew Barnekow
- 21 Katy Jenkins, John & Tracy Huotari (38)
- 22 Kara Kracht, Jason & Kara Kracht (12)
- 23 Brianna Perry, Cal Eriksen
- 24 Jared Bertoli
- 25 Eva Mikalson
- 26 George and Melissa Kuhn (31)
- 27 Jenna Stein, Rose Smith, Lynn Schouest
- 29 Annie Jenkins, Helen Jane Rommereim
- 30 Melissa Preston, Jeff & Vicki Thomson (61)

## Christ in Our Home

The July-August-September 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.



## Benefit BLC with Online Shopping

Many of you are shopping from home as we shelter-in-place. Don't forget, if you are shopping at Amazon, you can shop instead at smile.amazon.com and increase donations for Bethlehem Lutheran Church. AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support BLC every time you shop, at no cost to you. Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price (.5%) To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device.

## Freedom for what?

From *Christ in Our Home* (July 2020)

**For freedom Christ has set us free. (Galatians 4:21-5:1)**

Freedom is a great American value, but American freedom is quite different from freedom in Christ. As a teenager I longed for each new freedom: at sixteen, freedom to drive; at eighteen, freedom to be considered an adult; at twenty-one, freedom to drink alcohol. My desire for freedom was for and about myself. It had nothing to do with anyone else. In the same way,

much of our culture seems to long for and fight for this reckless abandon of freedom, a golden ideal.



The apostle Paul contends that we have been set free in Christ, but it is not a wild freedom from restraint. To be freed by Christ is to be freed from the grim results of life lived estranged from God. Reconciled to God, our freedom is like that of Christ, freedom devoted to serving others in love. It is not self-seeking or self-gratifying, but is freedom to be with and for others in love.

**Liberate us, O Christ, from the bonds we make for ourselves, and help us live into your freedom. Amen.**

*Prayer concern: Those lacking basic freedoms*

## Rwanda School Project Update

Our Students have been sheltering in place at home since our school was closed in March. As Moses [Ssenyonjo, Head of School] describes, our school in Rwamagana has adapted, transitioning from providing education to providing food. Thanks to Moses's nonstop work, Rwamagana Leaders' School has become a center of community activity as people look to us for help during this crisis. The government has permitted us to do humanitarian work during the closure, and we have received help from many, both in Rwanda and North America.

Rwanda is planning to open schools in September. Since school was in session for only about six weeks this year, all students will remain in their same grades for the duration of the 2020-2021 school year. The ending date for the school year has not yet been decided. In Rwanda, the school year for secondary schools has traditionally been from January to November. The problem has been, however, that most universities begin the school year in August or September which created a "gap year" for capable, qualified graduates who wanted to go to college. Because of the COVID-19 shutdown the difficulty of the "gap year" issue no longer exists.

For those of you who sponsor a student, your student will be in the same grade in 2020-2021 as they were in January. We thank you for your sponsorship during this troubling time. We have continued to support our staff and teachers and we are preparing for a good year when school opens in September.

*(Continued on pg. 6)*

## Brown Paper Bags

Elisha's Pantry and F.I.S.H. are in need of your brown paper grocery bags to help as they give food to those in need throughout our community. If you have extras and would like to donate, please drop them off in the BLC kitchen. Thank you for your donations!



## Contemporary Sunday, August 16th

One Sunday a month, the Bethlehem community worships accompanied by guitar, piano, bass, flute and other instrumentation at the 10:00 a.m. service. The pattern of liturgy is familiar, the

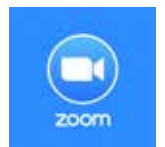


songs often have a more contemporary rhythm and "feel".

Join us for this special worship service!

## "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)

## From our Synod

If I were to create a “Word Cloud” for the feelings I am having these days following the murder of George Floyd, there wouldn't be a lot of “cheery” words in it: Shocked. Saddened. Angry. Heartsick. Fearful. Inadequate. Unprepared. Grieving. Frustrated. Disbelieving. Wondering. Weary.

And really, what it comes right down to is this — none of my feelings matter. Not one damn bit. Not now. Because what matters is Black lives. Black Lives Matter. Black lives that are being taken by murder at the hands of the police. Black lives that are being disregarded through judicial, legal, economic, voting and social policies that seek to minimize the voices and needs of people of color in this country in order to perpetuate white privilege. Black lives that are in danger every day because white supremacy, of which white people are a part through having benefitted from a system that empowers and enables them at the expense of others, is alive and well in this country. Black lives that are threatened by personal and systemic racism, which permeates every part of society in this country. From local police departments and schools and courts, to the highest governmental offices of the land – racist polices and laws exist to perpetuate white supremacy. What really matters at this time are the feelings and voices of Black People who are speaking out. These are the voices of people who are spilling out onto our streets crying for justice. Crying for justice even when the police are acting more like warriors than guardians. Crying for justice in the face of tear gas and blinding rubber bullets and horses and Billy Clubs. Are we listening?

For as long as Black Lives have been in danger in this country Lutheran Christians have been largely silent. We have been silent for far too long. A few years ago during my report to our Synod Assembly, I asked “Why is it that Black lives in Rwanda matter more to us than Black lives in our own cities?” This is a sad legacy we must first acknowledge and then move to change. Yes, we passed resolutions at our most recent ELCA Churchwide Assembly condemning white supremacy and racist rhetoric and offering a public apology to People of African Descent (see links at the bottom of this article). Fifty years after the Civil Rights Act was passed. One hundred and fifty years after Jim Crow Laws were enacted. Four hundred years after the first slaves were brought to this country. Yes, we have begun showing up at Black Lives Matter gatherings since the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Was the death of George Floyd *(Continued on pg. 8)*



## Rwanda School

*(Continued from pg. 5)*

For those of you who do not, won't you consider sponsoring a student? Our students are eager to get back to school and resume their studies. Now more than ever we need you. We currently have 182 students and 43% of those students (79) need full support. A full sponsorship costs \$160/mo and covers tuition, room and board, school uniform, supplies, and 24-hour/day supervision. Half and quarter sponsorships are also possible. More information is available on our website [rwandaschoolproject.org](http://rwandaschoolproject.org).

## What Jesus looks like

From *Christ in Our Home* (August 2020)

**Many will come from east and west and will eat. (Matthew 8:1-13)**

When we look at pictures of Jesus, we often see our own reflection. In Japan, he looks Japanese. Pictures of Jesus in Africa show him with dark skin and black hair. In Northern European cultures, he is often depicted as fair-haired and blue-eyed with a light complexion. This isn't shameful or wrong, unless we impose our image of Jesus on others. It's natural to view Jesus through our own lenses, but if we take the body of Christ seriously, we recognize Jesus in *all* types of people, for *all* human beings are made in the image of God.

It should be no surprise, then, in our reading today that Jesus sees God at work in a Gentile, this Roman centurion. Jesus recognizes his own and marvels, and then reminds us that the household of God is much bigger than people who look and act like us. Rather, many will come from every race, skin color, tribe, orientation, nation, gender, ability, culture-to eat the great feast in God's banquet hall. Even people who look like me!

**Christ, you welcome all to your feast. Teach me to do the same. Amen.**

*Prayer concern: Refugees and asylum seekers*

## Women of Bethlehem-You're Invited!

Do you know that every woman at Bethlehem Lutheran Church is already a member of WELCA? We all are; just by coming to Bethlehem!

This year 2020 has brought new challenges to everyone. We are not able to gather, greet, hug, worship, sing, or even eat together! It is difficult to not be with our church community. Many are alone and lonely. The women of Bethlehem are working together to write a time capsule booklet as we shelter in place. This is not a time to be forgotten, but a time to learn and grow in quiet contemplation. Please consider being part of this special project! Thank you.

-Lisa McIntyre, *WELCA Secretary of Education*

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### Women of Bethlehem 2020



The Spring of 2020 has been filled with uncertainty. Bethlehem Lutheran Church has not been able to meet or worship together. But, we are never alone...

...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Matthew 28:20

Thank you for being part of the Bethlehem Women 2020 Time Capsule. This started as something to do as we all shelter in place instead of a womens retreat. Now, it seems, the wind is blowing in a different direction. I think it is important to share these times with the future women of Bethlehem. Who we are and how we dealt with the Spring of 2020.

**Name:**

**Age group (20-30, 30-40, 50-60, 60-70, 70-80, 80-90, 90 and up):**

**Member of Bethlehem since:**

**Tell a little about who you are. Pick 2 or 3 of the subjects below:**

- `Favorite Sunday school memory
- `Favorite hymn or Bible song... one verse
- `Favorite Bible verse
- `What Extra curriculars are you involved in at church
- `What is your favorite church holiday/celebration/event
- `Favorite recipe to bring to church potluck

**What I have learned :**

- `Have you done something, learned something or accomplished something new during this time?
- `During this shelter in place and/or the racial equality movement, is there a quote/poem/words of inspiration you would like to add to your page.
- ...or maybe a prayer

# From our Synod (Continued from pg. 6)

finally hideous enough to awaken us from our slumber? Will it be a month from now? I pray so.

Black Lives Matter. Black voices matter. I've been listening to those who can share from their experience how dangerous, challenging and fearful a place America has been for them and for their families — for a long time. I want to listen so I can speak when called upon to do so. I want to speak because I believe it is crucial for all people to add to this conversation. Yet I feel inadequate (see words above) and unprepared to do so. Thankfully, I have been blessed to read words of Black colleagues and friends who are opening to me the world of their experience that I only thought I knew. Links to two of those voices are below. I encourage you to read the words of Bishop Yehiel Curry of the Metro Chicago Synod and Elena King-Garret, a longtime friend and co-worker of Debbi's. They embody words and feelings that I can barely begin to understand. And so I read and re-read their words. Please take the time to read what they are saying.

<https://www.facebook.com/yehiel.curry/posts/10157828357186633>

<https://www.facebook.com/elena.kinggarrett/posts/3169030246507167>

It is also important for us to acknowledge that Black voices cannot be the only voices that are calling out for justice. That is the job of all of us who say we live by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a Gospel that was first proclaimed as good news to those who were living on the margins, to those whose lives were relegated to the lowest places of society by those who enjoyed power and prestige. A Gospel that calls us to see everyone is made in the image of God and how that unites us to stand with those who are being killed because of the color of their skin. Can there be any doubt where our voices need to share that Gospel now? One way that might happen is offered elsewhere in this newsletter by the Racial and Ethnic Ministry Strategies Discipling Team – resources for commemorating the Emanuel 9 who were murdered at Mother Emanuel AME Church on June 17, 2015. There are many ideas in what has been shared that provide an opportunity for listening in our communities. There is also a link to the resolution (below) that was passed at our Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee and a link to the resource page on the ELCA website that could assist you in planning a commemoration service in your community. It would be a helpful beginning if we connected with other leaders, especially leaders of multi-ethnic and ethnic-specific congregations, leaders with whom we perhaps not have connected before, to plan such a service together. And not to stop there. To continue the conversations – hard conversations – that will lead us to keep speaking, to keep advocating, to keep working until true equality is realized in this country. To work for reform in local police departments and other agencies that will end the killing of people who are black and brown. To keep saying Black Lives Matter.

Come Holy Spirit, Come. Call us. Empower us. Enable us. Wake us. Move us. Cause us to be your justice, mercy, peace and hope. Amen.

Peace,

Bp. Mark

Sierra Pacific Synod

*Visit [spselca.org](http://spselca.org) for more information*

*The deadline for the next issue of The Bethlehem Star is August 21, 2020.*

*Please submit information and story ideas to the church office or email [blc@sonic.net](mailto: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.*

## Treasurer's Report

Beverly Schaap

### May 2020

	Actual	Budget	Difference
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$18,098</b>	<b>\$28,460</b>	<b>-\$10,362</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$27,481</b>	<b>\$32,835</b>	<b>-\$5,354</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>-\$9,383</b>	<b>-\$4,375</b>	<b>-\$5,008</b>

### YTD 2020

	Actual	Budget	Difference
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$103,544</b>	<b>\$132,680</b>	<b>-\$29,136</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$135,534</b>	<b>\$163,832</b>	<b>-\$28,298</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>-\$31,990</b>	<b>-\$31,152</b>	<b>-\$838</b>

**Amount needed to meet the budget \$7,625 per week**  
**May \$4,525**