

The Bethlehem Star

A PUBLICATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER



Volume 70, Issue 11

November 2020

From Pastor Bill

Perhaps you have heard what I have, "I can't wait for 2020 to be over." It has been a difficult year full of many disruptions: COVID, Black Lives Matter Marches and Counter Marches, Fires, Evacuations, Smoke, Precautionary Power Shut Offs, and an Election season- year which may or may not be ending soon.... Perhaps you have heard what I have, "I can't wait for things to get back to normal." There are many times when we are asked to wait. Wait for things to be over, wait for things to get back to normal.



Waiting is often most appropriate, as in our Psalm for Reformation Sunday, with the changing earth, shaking mountains, tottering nations, God remains our refuge and strength- "A Mighty Fortress." We are even encouraged to "Be still and know that I am God." Even still we often aren't still. Just sitting on time is not being still and knowing God. If we sit with ready solutions that fit our personal needs without seeing and hearing the suffering of others, if we do not challenge our assumptions about people who are different, we are ignoring the heart of God. In all the busyness, and solutions, and doings, and problem solving, we must be still long enough to KNOW God. Without that stillness and self-awareness and deep objective listening and a secure sense of presence of God we will be back to the same abnormal that got us here to start with.

We are coming to the close of a year of listening to Matthew remembering Jesus' teachings about a Kingdom of Heaven; a holy royal rule that opposes self-centered oppressions. Are we still so quick with our earthly answers, that we miss how we ourselves are to be transformed against even the comfort of our "normal?" Jesus calls his disciple to excel in this "holy new way." Called out of poor in spirit, out of mourning, and into meekness¹, hunger and thirst for righteousness, bearers of mercy, purity of heart, peacemakers.

Without a doubt there will be waiting, but it won't be the turning of a calendar page nor the re-establishing of a typical normal that bring us peace. The first step in this journey is from our ears to our heart. It is Christ who makes holy things possible for mortals. It is Jesus who calls us to learn and follow and be devoted to God's work. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the ability to listen beyond ourselves and trust that God is with us.

Peace,

Pastor Bill

¹the appropriate and holy techniques of the use of power

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



All Saints Sunday

One Bethlehem member will be remembered in the Memorial Garden on November 1, All Saints Sunday.

James Norem

His memorial tile has been added to the outdoor wall and our saints will be communally honored at the beginning of our 10:00 a.m. outdoor worship service.

Also on All Saints Sunday we have a memorial canvas you can add names of those departed and bring pictures to share of your Saints.

We look forward to celebrating All Saints Sunday with you.



Risk-taking for love's sake

From *Christ in Our Home* (November 2020)

Esther...fell at [the king's] feet, weeping and pleading. (*Esther 8:3*)

Sometimes one person changes the course of history and affects the lives of countless people. Swedish diplomat and humanitarian Raoul Wallenberg is credited with saving thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust by issuing them Swedish passports and bringing them safely to his country. Centuries before Jesus, Esther risked her life by going to the king uninvited and asking him to stop Haman's plan to annihilate the Jews. Esther's uncle, Mordecai, had told her, "Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this" (*4:14*). She had replied, "I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish" (*4:16*). The king granted her request and saved her people.

We may never be called to risk our life to save another. But God only asks us to love our neighbor. This might mean, according to the Small Catechism, "[coming] to their defense" and "help and [serve] them" (*ELW, p.1161*). It might mean rejecting the mood of the crowd to do what is right. The privilege and the risk of being a child of God.

Ever-living God, help me make good decisions as I seek to follow your commandments. Amen.

Prayer concern: People taking risks today, for love's sake

Thanksgiving

The perfect way to start your Thanksgiving day is at the Bethlehem Thanksgiving Day service, November 26, 10:00 a.m.

The altar is decorated, the music is uplifting, making one grateful the moment one enters.

This year's Thanksgiving offering will be divided between several local charities.

If anyone has fall decorations they would like to contribute to help us decorate our Thanksgiving altar, please bring them to church on November 21. Thank you!



Rebekah Circle

Please join the women of Rebekah Circle for a Zoom Bible Study on Thursday, November 12th at 10:00 a.m. Kathy Ziegler will be leading the Study.

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



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

E-Mail: 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

Janet Bertoli, Adult & Youth Choirs

Barbara Laferriere, Organist, Adult Choir,

Laura Lightfoot, Youth Choirs

Position Available, Bell Choir

Council Commissioners:

Nancy Trbovich, Education

Nick Keane, Property

George Schweizer, Stewardship

Growing in God's Grace

Dear Bethlehem Members,

Stewardship Sunday is November 15th. Our stewardship theme for 2021 is *Growing in God's Grace*.

This theme is part of the ELCA's year-round *Generosity Project*, a multi-generational project (for ages 2 to 102) that encourages households to respond daily to God's extravagant generosity, equipping individuals of every age and stage of life to live as grateful stewards and committed followers of Jesus.



How Does It Work?

Each Friday between now and November 15th you will receive an email containing an at-home conversation starter (also available at www.blc-bcc.com on the Resources page if you are not on the email list). These conversation starters are meant to help nurture the practice of generosity in our households and daily lives. Each conversation consists of a theme, a goal, a key question, further discussion prompts and words of affirmation and blessing.

How Can You Participate?

We encourage you to explore these themes on your own or with your family. If you would like to share a message about your own experiences with generosity (practices, its impact on your life) to help connect our congregation around this theme, we invite you to share in writing or in person at a Sunday worship service between now and Nov. 15th. Please contact me directly or the church office.

This upcoming year, our congregation will face difficult decisions regarding our operational budget, including our monetary support of our synod and ELCA ministries. The coronavirus pandemic has impacted our community, businesses and organizations—and BLC is no exception. When you receive your pledge card in the mail, we ask that you prayerfully consider how God is leading you to generously support our ministries, not only through your annual pledge, but also through your treasures of time and talent.

We ask that you please return your pledge card by November 15th.

This will allow our council members to create a realistic budget for 2021.

We are God's creations, growing in God's grace generation to generation. It is our hope that through *The Generosity Project* our congregation will discover new ways of reliably supporting one another in our interconnected, consumer society and that our capacity to respond joyfully to God's abundant grace and generosity will be greatly increased.

George Schweizer

Stewardship Commissioner

Home phone: 707-525-1511

Email: gschweizer@yahoo.com

Each Day is a Blessing

(*The Lutheran Message*, 2017)

I awake in the morning,
put my feet on the floor,
ask God for a good day,
before I go through the door.

No matter the weather,
it's another good day;
I pause a few minutes
and take time to pray.

We cannot go wrong
when we keep God in our heart.
It's another good day
and a good way to start!

-Lafern Haas

Living Lutheran

The deadline to renew your subscription to "Living Lutheran" magazine for uninterrupted service beginning January 2021 is just around the corner. The annual group rate is \$8.95 (which is half price) if we have 25 or more subscriptions.

Please make all checks out to Bethlehem Lutheran with "Living Lutheran" on the memo line. You can also put your check in the offering plate or hand it in or mail it to the office. New subscribers are welcome! Living Lutheran is a magazine of the Evangelical Church in America.



November

- 3 Siri Fenson
- 6 Rod Hannon, Richard Ziegler
- 8 Dan Carlson, Heidi Wood, Mary Carson
- 10 Rylee Pettersen
- 13 Janet Bertoli
- 15 Duane Jensen
- 18 John Wells, Megan Younger
- 19 Laurie Claasen, Don Hux
- 20 Nathan Sanders
- 21 Gary Schouest, Jena Preston
- 22 Howard Camin, Mike Pettersen
- 23 Joann Schumann, David Peck
- 24 Richard Graalfs
- 25 Chris & Cheri Hershwitzky (25)
- 29 Candy Claasen, Siri & Max Fenson (29)
- 30 Sean Knudtson

Advent begins Nov. 29

To receive your free Advent Calendar please contact the office and one will be mailed to you.

"Prepare the way of the Lord"
(Mark 1:3)



God's time didn't mean what I thought it did

By: Rebecca Eve-Schweitzer
(Gather Magazine, October 2020)

I learned two things about time: that God didn't want us to waste time, and that God would work things out in God's own time. The Christian tradition in which I grew up considered "wasting time" to be a sin. Verses of scripture were presented to me as reasons to work hard, work constantly and make the most of every minute. *Ephesians 5* was used to remind me to live wisely and seize every opportunity to fulfill God's will. I was also given *Psalms 39:4-5*, where David begs: "Lord, let me know my end, and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is. You have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight."

CAUGHT IN THE GOD "GIMME"

So using my time well was my responsibility—even if I never accomplished what I had planned. I learned that this was where "God's timing" came in. God would bring me a job in God's time, so I shouldn't get discouraged even after five years of freelancing and odd jobs. God would give me a less temporary place to live in God's time, so I need not worry about the ever-rising cost of housing. God would reward my hard work in God's time, so I just need to keep my head down, keep working and push through my burnout and disappointment.

While I wholeheartedly believe that we as Christians are called to use our time wisely and that God, who sees the bigger picture, is always working things out, the way I'd been taught to expect a certain kind of reward led to a lot of resentment toward God. I was working so hard, waiting so patiently and so actively. Why wasn't God bringing the parts of my life together? *(Continued on pg. 6)*

Benefit BLC with Christmas Online Shopping

Many of you are shopping from home as we shelter in place. But Christmas is right around the corner. Do your



Christmas shopping online and 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.

Women's Thankoffering Sunday

As we make our Thankofferings on November 1, 2020 we share in a tradition that began in the 1800's. At that time there was inadequate monies to carry out the work of the church.



Women in the church acted. Throughout the year Lutheran women set aside monies at home as a future offering for church ministries. The offering was in recognition of the many blessings they had received. On a special Sunday women attended church to make an offering of their yearly savings. This was their way to support special ministries.

In the twentieth century women of the ELCA are committed to continue this tradition of giving in gratitude for blessings. Let's make our Thankoffering Sunday on November 1st a generous one.

Thank You!

A special thanks goes out to our **Praise Band** members who have helped lead our outdoor Worship services. Thank you for sharing your gifts with us.



Melissa Preston

George Schweizer

Carolyn Cole-Schweizer

Dan Thomson

Richard Graalfs

Janet Bertoli

Pr. Brian Claasen

and

Peggy Bimbi

BLC Monthly Book/Video/Magazine Exchange



Have you finished any adult-level book, video or magazine recently during the pandemic that you thought mmm, someone else might enjoy this? But who?? How to find them?? BLC has the answer!

On Sunday, November 8th, (the second Sunday of each month) you will find a table set up by 9:30 a.m. right near the check-in/temperature station for you to donate any book, video or magazine you are done with, AND as importantly, for you to take away any items you see of interest.

Remember we have a fine church library if you have a religious book (or video?) that merits being loaned and returned.

Questions? Call Michelle in the Office 539-5252.

ELCA Good Gifts & God's Global Barnyard

As odd as it seems to give someone the gift of a cow, or a goat, or some chicks, or honey bees, it is this kind of a gift that can change a life, a family and possibly a whole community.

ELCA Good Gifts are a creative, meaningful way to support the ministries of the ELCA that mean the most to you and your loved ones. The items in the Good Gifts catalog lift up examples of work being done in different projects and programs supported by funds from the ELCA: the ELCA Fund for Leaders, ELCA Global Church Sponsorship, the ELCA Malaria Campaign, ELCA New Congregations, ELCA Vision for Mission, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response. Each of these programs is a long-term, partnership-based ministry that focus on the needs identified by local congregations and global companion churches and their communities.



The animals of God's Global Barnyard are among some of the most popular gifts in the catalog. Your gifts to God's Global Barnyard in advent will support the sustainable development ministries of ELCA World Hunger, which include training, education, resources (and much more) to help the community care for animals and create new market opportunities like starting a small business selling eggs, meat or dairy products. Your gifts support this comprehensive approach to animal husbandry.



You can make donations to God's Global Barnyard during Advent at BLC. For more information contact the Church office.

-Linda Knapp

God's time

(Continued from pg. 4)

I spent hours—in therapy, talks with friends, prayer, Bible study and conversations with religious leaders—trying to figure out what I was doing wrong. I worked myself beyond any healthy capacity. I put 100 percent into my full-time jobs when I was blessed enough to have them, and I put 100 percent into ministry in my congregation, including serving seven years as the youth director. Why did I keep losing jobs to random downsizing and economic disruptions beyond my control? Why did every house I made an offer on go to someone else? Why did houses cost double what they did when I started looking? Why was rent increasing and my paycheck decreasing? What was I doing wrong? Wasn't I honoring God with my time? Would "God's time" turn out to be never?

All of this left me feeling guilty. Certainly there were people in far worse positions than me. I had a place to stay, even if it was temporary and cramped. I always found work before my bank account completely ran out. I was even able to save for a house despite these ups and downs. Still, I felt as if God wasn't holding up God's end of this perceived bargain. I had used my time wisely, so when would God's timing come through?

THE UNEXPECTED

When I agreed to write for Gather, I couldn't wait to share how all my years of working and hoping and despairing had finally paid off. I had a house and a new job. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, I was furloughed briefly, but I survived and was brought back to work. I knew this was still going to be a good year.

I wrote that article, but it's not the one you're reading now. Two and one half weeks after returning from our furlough, several of my coworkers and I were told our positions had been eliminated. For the third time in my adult life, I found myself in what I thought was going to be a routine meeting only to hear my boss tell me my job was being cut. I felt the trauma of those previous layoffs. I felt foolish about my hopes and justified in my cynicism. I felt like crying and throwing my computer. Then I felt guilty. I needed to use my time wisely, right? Time to get to work finding more work.

In the Gospel of Luke, we read the story of sisters Mary and Martha. Martha opens her home to Jesus and the disciples. She works hard to prepare her home and food for her guests. Martha's approach to service is that work needs to be done. Martha does that work. But Martha gets herself in trouble with her perspective on that work. She asks Jesus to make Mary help her. Jesus offers a different take: "... Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her" (*Luke 10:41-42*). I don't think Jesus told Martha this to diminish the value of the hard work she'd put into hosting everyone. Much of that work needed doing. Without the Marthas of the world, ministries would cease to function. But Jesus doesn't tell Martha to sit down and be like Mary, either.

Instead, he tells her that she need not focus so much on her worry. He gently reminds Martha not to compare herself to Mary. Mary isn't wrong just because she's in a different place than Martha at that moment. And Martha did the right thing by taking her worries to Jesus. Jesus' words remind her and us that the work we must do—and the needs we must meet—are important, but temporary.

I have often found the story of Mary and Martha frustrating. Like Martha, I worry about getting things just right. I am apt to take Jesus' admonishment personally. But Jesus reminds her—and me—of the right priorities. Jobs will come and go. Homes will come and go. Our sense of financial security will come and go. Even our ministries and congregations will come and go. We must work hard at these things, but we must also remember that they are temporary and that the heart of our work must be trusting God through the ups and downs.

Freed to serve others

By: *Kimberly Knowle-Zeller*

(Living Lutheran, October 2020)

“What type of person do you want to be?”

I was taken aback when asked this question during a college service-learning trip. Rather than focusing on what I should be doing as a career, the question shifted my perspective on vocation to how God was calling me to live a life rooted in the gospel. It still challenges me today.

Our readings for October take us to the vineyard and the banquet table, where we hear not only how God cultivates community but also how we are called to welcome others to God’s table. In Matthew’s parable of the wedding banquet, we hear the invitation to “come” and bring others: “Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find ...” (22:9). But the invitation doesn’t come without expectations. When the king sees that his friend isn’t wearing the appropriate attire, he becomes angry. Perhaps the king is being petty, but what if his anger challenges his “friend” (22:12) to live a fuller life by holding him accountable in his dress and actions?

When I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Gambia, every meal provided an open invitation to anyone nearby. Whenever food was served, all were invited with this refrain: “Come and eat!” Until those within earshot said yes, they’d hear: “Come and eat.”

“Come and eat” has become my refrain too. It’s an invitation that forms the heart of how I live out my calling. “Come and eat” compels me to take time to offer what I have to others. “Come and eat” reminds me that the gospel life is best lived in community, where we join our voices together for justice and peace; where we hold ourselves accountable to value the richness and diversity of God’s kingdom.

2020 hasn’t turned out how anyone imagined. This year has continually asked us to change, adapt and welcome a new way of being in community and being church. When Reformation Sunday arrives, what sort of truth will we be clinging to amid radical change, upheaval, uncertainty and an upcoming election? Can we remember the heart of the Reformation message, trusting that we are free in Christ to love and serve our neighbors? How can we listen to God for how we’re individually and communally called to serve others? Where can we say to our neighbors: “Come and eat”?

This November, may we profess loudly that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (*Psalms 46:1*). Through lives rooted in faith, may we share this truth with all who hunger.

A word from Martin

"No great saint lived without errors."

-Martin Luther



We pray today for loved ones and friends who are ill and recovering, especially Margaret Warrick, Don Hux, Vivian Farland, Dorothy Gullixson, Sharon Boschen, Gina Thompson, Mike Turner, Janet Wolf, Brianne Konanz, Sue Barnard, Linda Wilkening, Tom Ziegler, Steve Sturgeon, Donald Schaap, Wyatt Hughes Graham, Judy & Paul Sengstock, Martin Curtis, Judy Warner, Elaine Gutsch, Liz Halburg, Angie Salado, Richard Doran, JoAnn Lockhard, Darci Raphael, Greg Talmadge, Jesse Halderman and Wendy Younger.



Give us, O Lord

Give us, O Lord,
a steadfast heart,
which no unworthy affection
may drag downwards;
give us an unconquered heart,
which no tribulation can wear out;
give us an upright heart,
which no unworthy purpose
may tempt aside.
Bestow upon us also,
O Lord our God,
understanding to know You,
diligence to seek You,
wisdom to find You
and a faithfulness
that may finally embrace You;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Thomas Aquinas

Lutheran Social Services

During the month of November our BLC Second Mile offerings will be donated to Lutheran Social Services of Northern California. Below is a message from LSS. They continue to be instrumental in assisting those who have experienced loss of their home through floods and fires. Their support has been appreciated.

October 31st marked the 503rd anniversary of the reformation, out of which the Lutheran social ministry grew. Today, there are more than 300 Lutheran social service organizations across the country, touching the lives of one in 40 Americans each year. LSS of Northern California is your social ministry, serving more than 3,500 formerly homeless adults, former foster youth and families every day. We provide stable housing and compassionate guidance that assists in their journey to self-sufficiency and becoming engaged, productive members of their communities.

Luther set out to reform the Roman Catholic Church in 1517, but his focus wasn't just on the church. He also created a new approach to service. At the time, the Pope and certain bishops insisted that believers needed to make gifts or purchase special dispensations – indulgences – to secure their salvation. Luther argued that because we are saved by grace, in gratitude, we are free to serve others. Together with the Wittenberg Council he established the Common Chest, the first social services agency in Europe. The Chest provided funds to assist orphans, women and children, paid for education and vocational training and provided medical services.

The idea was that service was about giving a helping hand-up, not just about giving charity to the poor. Today we call this work Lutheran social ministry. LSS of Northern California's call is to end homelessness by addressing the underlying causes, which includes experience in foster care, poverty, chronic illness, mental health issues, unemployment, substance use disorder and disasters.

We extend our appreciation for your support! We appreciate your continued prayers and donations this holiday season.



Treasurer's Report

Beverly Schaap

September 2020

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$14,883	\$25,860	-\$10,977
Expenses	\$24,866	\$36,014	-\$11,148
Net	-\$9,983	-\$10,154	\$171

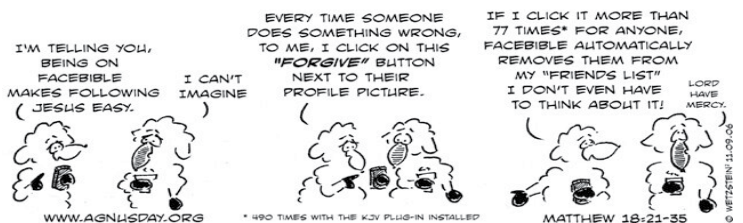
YTD 2020

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$173,637	\$233,220	-\$59,583
Expenses	\$243,080	\$296,275	-\$53,195
Net	-\$69,443	-\$63,055	-\$6,388

Amount needed to meet the budget \$7,625 per week
September \$3,721



Agnus Day



The deadline for the next issue of The Bethlehem Star is November 20, 2020.

Please submit information and story ideas to the church office or email bhc@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.