

The Bethlehem Star

A PUBLICATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER



Volume 70, Issue 12

December 2020

The Christmas Church

"Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ~Luke 2:15

The words of the shepherds take on double meaning for members and friends of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Santa Rosa. Bearing the name of our Lord's birthplace, Bethlehem Lutheran (The Christmas Church) is, in a special way, called and privileged to proclaim and celebrate Jesus' birth. Our name compels us to be a place where modern day shepherds and wise men (and women) — seekers of the Christmas miracle — may come and discover the promises and joy that the birth of the Christ child imparts to humankind.

Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing. We offer multiple opportunities this month for members and friends to come to Bethlehem (online of course!) and see and celebrate, wonder, worship, and discover grace and love that identifies with us so intimately that God himself stoops down to become one with us and one of us in the form of a baby born in the Bethlehem stable.

Sunday Advent Zoom worship, Wednesday evening online Advent Vespers, St. Nicholas Online Festival, Children's Christmas Musical, and Christmas Eve Choral Service, will all be opportunities for us to mark and to proclaim the gift of the Incarnation.

Let the words of the shepherds in the Christmas Gospel continually call us back (throughout the year) to remember our identity and our calling, so that all who find their way to our "Bethlehem", may here truly be able to see and experience "this thing that has taken place"; a miracle of love and grace which offers freedom, forgiveness and hope for all.



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



Zoom Sunday Worship

Sunday, December 6th, 13th, 20th
and 27th
10 a.m.

St. Nicholas Festival

Online craft and carols
Sunday, December 6th, 5:30 p.m.

Midweek Advent Vespers

"Holden Evening Prayer"
Online service
Weds., December 2nd, 9th & 16th
7 p.m.

Children's Christmas Mini Musical

Sunday, December 20th, as part of
morning Zoom Worship service
10 a.m.

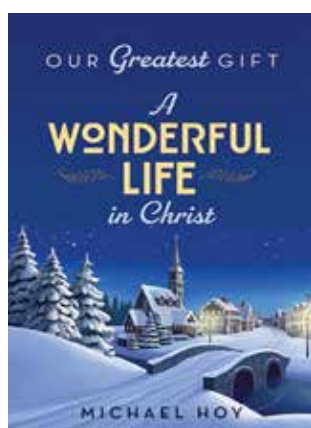
Christmas Eve Worship

Thursday, December 24th
Online Choral Worship
5 p.m.

Advent Devotional

Our Advent journey starts this Sunday-join us in reading *A Wonderful Life in Christ*.

"We hear the message of the angels who proclaimed the birth of this Greatest Gift in the Bethlehem skies: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" We really have a wonderful life in Christ!"



Stewardship Drive

Our heartfelt thank you and appreciation for your participation in this year's Generosity Project and pledge drive. Last Sunday was Stewardship Sunday (Nov. 15). To date we have received 42 pledge cards totaling **\$167,000**. As a reference point, last year at this time we had 62 cards totaling **\$232,650**. The corona virus has definitely had an impact on our ability to gather (and give). Unpledged and holiday giving is likely to remain low through mid-2021 (at least). We are grateful for your joyful commitments and pledges to support our ministries. The Council will work faithfully to create a budget for 2021 that remains

faithful to our commitments and maintains faithful stewardship of the gifts offered. As you might expect, cuts will be necessary to support these efforts. We ask that you will pray for us as we plan for the new year. **If you have not yet returned your card, you may return it to the church office at any time.**

Thank you,
George Schweizer
Stewardship Commissioner

YouTube Channel

Subscribe to our NEW YouTube channel.



Bethlehem Lutheran Church - Santa Rosa, CA

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA1g8W7SFMET386SfZBdwZQ>

Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Children's Center
1300 St. Francis Road, Santa Rosa, California 95409
Sunday Zoom 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

Zoom Meeting ID: 889 9423 0337

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa

Password: church

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA1g8W7SFMET386SfZBdwZQ>

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
- Linda Knapp Witness & Service
- Carolyn Cole-Schweizer, Worship
- Michelle Thomson, Youth
- Janet Krug, BCC Representative
- Siri Fenson, Bethlehem WELCA President



Warm Clothing Drive for Elisha's Pantry Clients

Now that the weather is turning cold, the faith partners of Elisha's Pantry would like to distribute warm clothing to the clients. The give-away will take place on Thursday, December 10 at 4PM at Christ Church United Methodist.

We are requesting donations of coats, jackets, sweaters, hats and gloves, as well as sleeping bags, blankets and comforters. We ask that the items be in good condition and please, winter clothing only.

You may drop off your donations in the Bethlehem kitchen by **Tuesday, December 8**, at the latest.

Continued are the "essential care" giveaways. The next one will be on December 31. Needed are toilet paper, paper towels, Kleenex, detergent, shampoo (normal size), soaps, razors, toothbrushes and toothpaste.

For questions, please contact Siri at sirimax@att.net or 303-7860

"Blessed is the one who considers the poor" (*Psalm 41:1*)



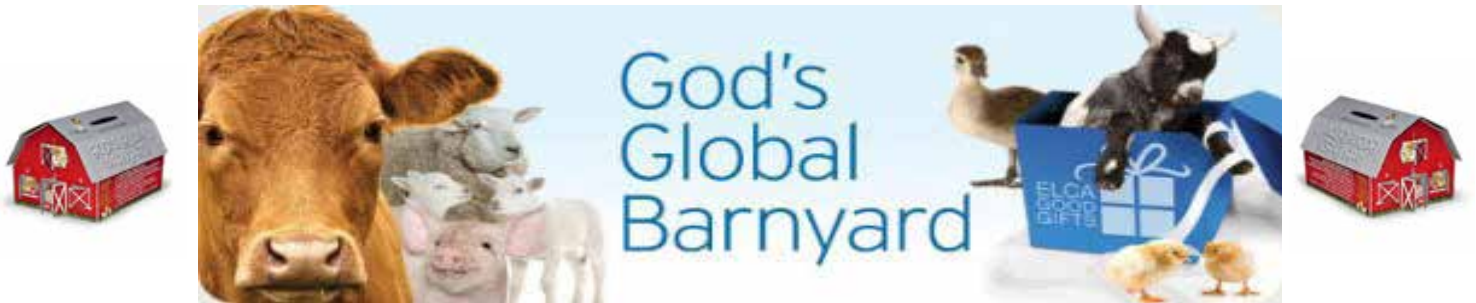
ELCA Good Gifts & God's Global Barnyard

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. 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.

Bethlehem has been very supportive in the past. Since there will be no narthex display this year, you can make donations to God's Global Barnyard online at Welcome to ELCA Good Gifts. <https://goodgifts.elca.org/>



It's time to order poinsettias to decorate for Christmas. You may order a plant in memory of or in honor of someone if you wish. The plant may be picked up from the Church kitchen the week of Christmas. As done in years past a special insert in the Christmas Eve bulletin will list the names of those who have donated plants and in whose memory or honor they were given. The cost of each plant is \$12.00.

Please complete the form below and make checks payable to Bethlehem Lutheran Church noting "poinsettias" on the memo line. Orders may be mailed or brought to the church office.

POINSETTIAS

ORDER FORM
DUE: DECEMBER 14

Name _____ Phone _____

Number of plants _____ x \$12.00 = _____

Write checks to Bethlehem Lutheran with "poinsettia" on the memo line.

Remember to take your plant(s) home after Christmas to enjoy or to give as a gift to someone special.

Plants are given:

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Note: If no dedication is made, your listing will read, "Given to the glory of God by (your name)".

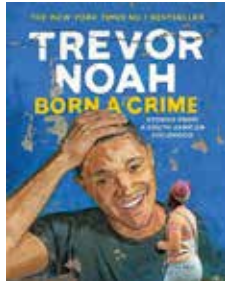


- 1 Ruby Malde
- 3 Morgan Apostle, Matthew Walls
- 4 Marsha Lightfoot
- 5 Pamela Perry
- 6 Sidney Petterssen
- 7 Mira & Donald Kiick (24)
- 8 Christa Knapp
- 9 Laura Lightfoot, Greg Gray
- 10 Melanie Sanders
- 11 Jeff and Pamela Perry (16)
- 13 Kathy Campbell, Linda Knapp
- 14 Ryan Muehlbauer
- 17 Marsha & David Lightfoot (32)
- 20 Steve Sturgeon
- 21 Judy Warner
- 22 John & Liz Ferrari (13)
- 24 Nathan Kuhn
- 25 Dorothy Gullixson
- 26 Mary Oslund, Anthony & Donette Mack (50)
- 30 Marion Heiken
- 31 Wendy Younger, Violet Keene and John Marozik



Book Club News

Our Book Club is planning to resume on Tuesday, January 5th at 7 p.m. We will be using Zoom and will be discussing the book,

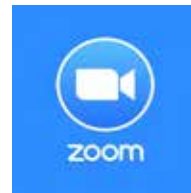


Born A Crime by Trevor Noah.

Everyone is welcome and Zoom is easy to use. We will send out a link closer to the date.

-Linda Knapp

Sunday Morning Worship - 10 a.m.



Meeting ID:
889 9423 0337

Password:
church

Thankoffering 2020

A heartfelt THANK YOU to those of you that supported this year's THANKOFFERING. We all have things we are thankful for and the tradition of giving thanks came through stronger this year than ever. Your donations will be wisely used world-wide to support the many efforts of WELCA.

The Bethlehem WELCA board appreciate your commitment and giving.

Thank You and God Bless You.

-Siri Fenson, WELCA President

Spread the joy around

From *Christ in Our Home* (December 2020)

The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. (Psalm 126:3)

Rejoice! Sure, things could be better, but if we wait for everything to be perfect before we rejoice, we'll spend our whole lives waiting for a day that never comes. And that doesn't do justice to how God has already acted: the list of amazing things God has done is long, and the list of things most of us lack is short.

Yet some do lack a long list of basic needs: food, potable water, safe shelter. If we have more than enough, may we share with others. Joy shared is not simply added but multiplied. The psalmist moves from personal rejoicing to spreading that joy around: "May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy" (v. 5). Our rejoicing alone is not sufficient. We want all others to have joy as well.

When we focus on what God has done for us, we can rejoice and give thanks. And out of joy and gratitude, we turn our attention outward and work for the joy of all.

Lord, help me celebrate the wonderful things you have done and share your abundance with others. Amen.

Prayer Concern: Those who battle depression and anxiety

2nd Mile Sunday

On December 13, we will have our 2nd mile Sunday where our contributions support Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The Mission of PLTS is to develop leaders for the church by: deepening faith in Christ; expanding the heart; challenging the mind; and energizing for mission.

Founded in Berkeley, California in 1950, PLTS serves as the only Lutheran seminary in the western half of the United States. Covering 13 states, the territory of service includes nearly two-thirds of the country.

With the focus of developing leaders for the church, 77% of their students are studying to be pastors. The student population is nearly balanced with women and men.

The average annual financial need of a PLTS Seminarian is \$27,676. Gifts from congregations help make seminary affordable for future church leaders.



Thank You!

A special word of thanks goes out to our **Call Committee** members who have helped lead BLC in our congregational work to call a permanent Pastor. Thank you for sharing your time and faithful energy with us.



Carolyn Cole-Schweizer, Elizabeth Goodson, Phyllis Hoover, Michael Knudtson & Alan Petty

Advent Calendars

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)

County of Sonoma Warm line

Call (707) 565-2652 for free and private support if you or someone you know is experiencing emotional stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. This warm line is available seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Service in Spanish is also available as well as telephone interpretation for other languages.



Advent Vespers

As the rush and fuss of the holidays begin, it's easy to lose focus of the real purpose of this season. Beginning Wednesday, December 2 at 7 p.m. is the well loved "Holden Evening Vesper" service. Join us online, lift your voices in quiet song and prayer, and be renewed. The service lasts only 30 minutes and fits perfectly after dinner and before online shopping. Advent Vespers will be offered December 2, 9 and 16.



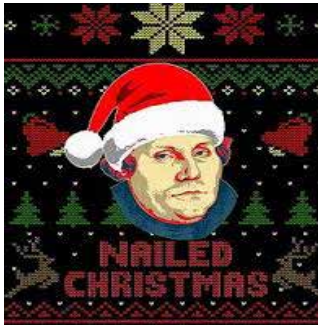
We pray today for loved ones and friends who are ill and recovering, especially Margaret Warrick, Don Hux, Vivian Farland, Dorothy Gullixson, Sharon Boschen, Gina Thompson, Mike Turner, Janet Wolf, Brianne Konanz, Sue Barnard, Linda Wilkening, Tom Ziegler, Steve Sturgeon, Donald Schaap, Wyatt Hughes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



December Food Drive

We will be having another food drive on **Saturday, December 12 2-4 pm** for Elisha's Pantry. They are serving between 90 and 100 clients per week and would like to give extras for their Christmas dinner. They are asking for **boxed mashed potatoes, canned pie filling of any kind and cranberry sauce.** The Dollar Tree has both mashed potatoes and pie filling. Our goal is to supply them with 100 of each of these items. You can bring them to church and leave them in the kitchen at any time or on the 12th. If you can't shop, you can donate with "Food Drive" on your check and someone will be glad to shop for you. Let's help make Christmas a little better for others in need.





Martin Luther loved Christmas

Christmas is a time to remember. The familiar smells from the kitchen. The familiar sounds of children laughing. The familiar glow of a dimly lit tree. Each of these and so much more reminds us of moments in our past - glimpses of experiences and emotions that have shaped the very way we view our lives.

Earlier, the Church celebrated the 503rd year of the Reformation, inspiring us all to remember Martin Luther's passionate quest to return scripture to the central place of authority in the life of the church (Sola Scriptura). We were also reminded, along with the rest of the world, that salvation is by grace alone (Sola Gratia) through faith alone (Sola Fide) and all because of the finished work of Christ alone on the cross (Solus Christus).

It would be all too easy to remember all these transformative truths, yet miss the way that they seamlessly flow right into the Christmas season. In fact, perhaps it was Luther's emphasis upon these unshakeable convictions that led him to an unshakeable love for Christmas as well. From that first night that the angels revealed the good news to the shepherds - the news that a Savior was born - they couldn't help but break out into song right there in the open fields.

It was around Christmas of 1523 that Luther revealed his desire to write and also find other gifted writers

(Continued on page 8)

St. Nicholas Festival Online

Our traditional St. Nicholas Festival is happening online this year! St. Nicholas couldn't let us down and has made special arrangements to spend a virtual evening with us.

Tune in on **Sunday, December 6th at 5:30pm.**

Learn about St. Nicholas and sing Christmas carols with Pastor Brian. Watch and learn how to make a Christmas Pop Tart House too!

Reserve your **FREE** supply kit to build your own Pop Tart House by calling the church office M-F (707) 539-5252.

Deadline to reserve kit: Sunday, Nov. 29

Supply kit pick-up date: Saturday, Dec. 5th at BLC

How to Watch St. Nicholas Online

You can watch the St. Nicholas Festival in three different ways:

Visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa>

Visit our Web site: <https://blc-bcc.com/>

Visit our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA1g8W7SFMET386SfZBdwZQ>



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.



We need your company

By: Catherine Malotky, (*Gather Magazine, December 2020*)

Everlasting God, who sees all and knows all, we are ready for you to come. It has been quite a year, and we need a God who can help, Christmas is burdened this year and won't be, can't be, the same as usual.

Too many families are grieving the loss of loved ones in the pandemic. Too many live with the lasting impact of disease. Too many fear catching it or sharing it.

How many of us have watched a loved one suffer alone these last months? How many of us have had to chose safety over an income, or an income over safety? How many of us have not yet met a new grandchild or have missed a wedding, graduation ceremony or vacation? How many of us worried about voting, and now wonder what the world will be like in the months and years to come? How many of us have lost jobs as we've navigated a shifting economy to protect ourselves and each other from the virus?

How many of us have noticed and been disturbed by the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on our siblings of color and on all whose poverty and constant struggle make following basic health guidance a daunting trial? How many of us risk our lives to make food available for the tables of others?

O, God, we can get lost in Christmas most years. We can turn our energies to the lights and carols, the gift-buying, the concerts and the parties. Not this year. Invite us, God, to see the most basic miracle of Christmas, the One we need so much right now.



O, come, Emmanuel. God, be with us. We need your company.

O, come Wisdom. Help us navigate the competing values that vie for our attention. Life was never simple, but it has certainly not been this year, and it won't be in the days ahead.

O, Branch of Jesse. Just as your people imagined a new shoot rising from the stump of what they once were, give us a vision of a world reborn - a world of justice and mercy and welcome for all. Help us do better this time around.

O, come, Key of David. Remind us that we are born of a long line of people seeking righteousness for our world. Guide our footsteps.

O, come, Sovereign of all. Be our cornerstone, not to exclude, but to fling wide the doors to your banquet table.

(Continued on page 8)

Maybe you'd like to buy a Pig??

A pig in the pen is money in the bank! A piglet is a perfect financial investment for many people around the world. That's because within months this little piglet can grow to nearly 200 pounds and grab a great price at the market. Should a family have a failed harvest, medical expense or other unexpected need, this gift can be cashed in to make all the difference. <https://goodgifts.elca.org/>



Directory Update

The Church Directory is being updated for 2021. With us meeting online and not in person, it is important to make sure your contact information is up-to-date. Please send your change of address or most current email to the Church office so your information can be updated. Thank you!



Church Office Closed

The Church office will be closed for the Christmas Holiday on Thursday, December 24 & Friday, December 25.

Normal hours will resume on Monday, December 28th.

Merry Christmas!



We need your company

(Continued from page 7)

May we lean on Mary's baby, born to be with us, Emmanuel. May we be astonished that your love for us extends into time and space, O God. You came as one of us. May our hearts be sustained by the promise of new life that Jesus preached and lived.

May our souls be inspired to be instruments of your peace. We stand in the quiet, sure, powerful presence of the newborn Jesus. It is in his name that we pray. Amen.



Treasurer's Report

Beverly Schaap

October 2020

	Actual	Budget	
Difference			
Income	\$24,230	\$22,860	\$1,370
Expenses	\$27,638	\$33,428	-\$5,790
Net	-\$3,408	-\$10,568	\$7,160

YTD 2020

	Actual	Budget	
Difference			
Income	\$197,868	\$256,080	-\$58,212
Expenses	\$271,107	\$329,703	-\$58,596
Net	-\$73,239	-\$73,623	\$384

Amount needed to budget \$7,625 per week

October \$6,058

Martin Luther loved Christmas

(Continued from pg. 6)

who would skillfully set the gospel to song so that God's people could joyfully sing it together. He wrote to George Spalatin in December of that year: "Grace and Peace! I am planning, according to the examples of the prophets and the ancient fathers to create vernacular psalms [that is, hymns] for the common folk so that the Word of God remain with the people... also their singing..." The greatest of these hymns would be the carols and Luther wanted people everywhere to sing them together with their congregations and families.

Luther himself wrote about the joy of the gospel revealed at Christmas when he composed these words in the hymn 'From Heaven Above to Earth I Come': *"From heaven above to earth I come / To bear good news to every home / Glad tidings of great joy I bring / Whereof I now will say and sing / To you this night is born a child / Of Mary, chosen virgin mild / This little child, of lowly birth / Shall be the joy of all the earth."*

Besides the carols, Luther also loved Christmas because it mirrors so many elements of the gospel story itself. To him, the tradition of giving gifts to children on Christmas Eve was an opportunity to educate them on the gift of grace that God had wrapped in a little human baby delivered to - and also in - a manger... just for them. It was a perfect moment to emphasize the miracle of incarnation. It still is.

According to tradition, Luther may have also popularized the tradition of the Christmas tree as a way to express and teach theology to his family. The story goes that while he was on his way home one evening, he became overwhelmed by the incredible beauty of a fir tree positioned against the backdrop of the brilliant starlit sky. He so desperately wanted to describe what he had seen to his family, but the words failed him. So he ventured back outside and chopped down one of these trees, bringing it home to share with his family. He even decorated the tree with candle tapers, mimicking the stars that hung over the manger where the newborn Messiah lay.

Christmas is still a time to remember. The sights and sounds may have been different, but Martin Luther loved Christmas as well because it reminded him of the purity, beauty, and truth of the Jesus story. This Christmas, may his passion for the real gospel also be a reminder to each of us to listen, remember, and sing the Jesus story ourselves with all the joy its truth affords.

The deadline for the next issue of The Bethlehem Star is December 23, 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 would be pleased to receive them.

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