

# The Bethlehem Star

A PUBLICATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER



Volume 71, Issue 1

January 2021

## Coming Soon...

Dear Members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church,

My name is Diane Bowers, and on January 18, I will begin serving as your Bridge Pastor. I'm taking the opportunity to make a quick introduction now, and I look forward to getting to know you better after I start.

I am an ordained Lutheran pastor and have been serving congregations in the Bay Area since 2002. I also have a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology with an emphasis on Luther and Reformation Theology, and I very much enjoy teaching. I am married to Hans-Christian Kasper, and although we are of somewhat advanced age (51 and 52!), we are in the process of adopting Elijah, whom you see pictured, through the foster care system. He is 21 months old. Elijah has been in our care since he was five days old, and he is the bright light of our lives!

What is a Bridge Pastor? They serve between the departure of an interim pastor and the arrival of the called, permanent pastor. The Bridge Pastor does not have the specific job description of an Interim, but is simply there to accompany you to your goal. I look forward to getting to know you, leading worship, and developing online community.

It is important for you to know that I am coming onboard as a half-time pastor, not full-time, and I that I will be working from my home in Berkeley, using email, Zoom, and the telephone. However, despite the pandemic and the challenges we all face, we will have a wonderful time together as we worship God, learn, love, and carry out the ministries to which God has called each one of us.

See you soon!

~Pastor Diane

Rev. Diane Bowers, Ph.D.



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



## Office Closed

The Church office will be closed on Friday, January 1st for New Year's Day, and Monday, January 18th for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.



# Bethlehem's Congregational Meeting

The annual Congregational meeting is on January 31st, at 11:00a.m. following 10:00 a.m. service. At this meeting we will review the accomplishments of 2020; the differences that we at Bethlehem Lutheran have made in our Church, our community and our world. You will meet the new and returning executive committee members and commissioners, and hear about plans for the upcoming year in 2021 and beyond. There will be items to be voted on and the 2021 budget to be reviewed and approved.

This is also a day to recognize our outgoing council members and commissioners, and to honor them for their dedication and hard work done here at Bethlehem Lutheran.



**Topic:** Annual Congregational Zoom Meeting

**Time:** Jan 31, 2021 11:00 AM Pacific Time

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83632210090?pwd=QzFEeHdRbVIRIUeXlPbWpMUXFucVFHQT09>

**Meeting ID:** 836 3221 0090

**Passcode:** 161676

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

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

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

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

Zoom Meeting ID: 889 9423 0337

Password: church

## 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

# Book Club News

Our book club is planning to resume on Tues. January 5, at 7pm. We will be using Zoom and will be discussing the book:

*Born A Crime* by Trevor Noah.

Here is the Zoom link for the Book Club meeting.

**Topic:** BLC Book Club Zoom Meeting

**Time:** Jan 5, 2021 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

**Join Zoom Meeting:**

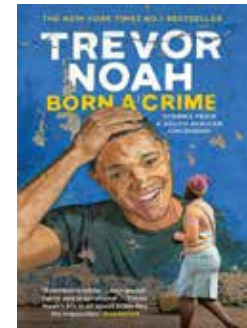
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89943393085?pwd=UjZhdnI2L3kyQ2RPUy8xSVErS0xldz09>

**Meeting ID:** 899 4339 3085

**Passcode:** 526355

Dial In: 1-669-900-6833

Passcode: 970869#



*Born a Crime* is the story of a strong-willed black mother and her mixed-race child as they traverse life in South Africa during apartheid. When comedian Trevor Noah was born in the mid-1980s, his birth was a crime under the laws of apartheid, forbade whites and blacks from mixing and procreating. Growing up during and after apartheid, Noah struggled to understand where he belonged in this racially divided environment.

Through anecdotes from Noah and his mother's life and details regarding the elements and consequences of apartheid, Noah provides an insider's perspective of racism, survival, abuse, love, and the importance of heritage in a society built on difference and oppression.

# Thank You, Bethlehem Friends!

## *Witness and Service Commission*

We greatly appreciate your generosity in recent months. Special thanks to Bev Schaap, Elaine Adams, and Siri Fenson for taking the lead on these projects...

Ninety clients of Elisha's Pantry were able to choose needed warm winter clothing for themselves and their families as a result of the Fall Clothing Drive.

We collected 326 pounds of food for FISH in September, in addition to 1241 pounds collected previously. This was very much appreciated by those who come to FISH because they need food for their families.

We collected 250 pounds of food and \$1,000 for Elisha's Pantry through the December Food Drive. You have helped bring some joy to those less fortunate than us.

Elisha's Pantry clients have also, once a month, been receiving "essentials", kindly donated by you. These give-aways will be continued in the new year.

Thanksgiving Offerings of \$625 were sent to Redwood Empire Food Bank. The Redwood Empire Food Bank is currently serving 85,000 individuals each month. That's more than double what they were doing last year at this time. Thank you for your support and for helping them keep food on the tables of our neighbors in need.

Our Mission Money of \$2418 has been equally designated for ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran Social Services of Northern CA, and Rwanda School Library Project. These organizations do exemplary work serving the needs of others here and abroad.

Many individual and family gifts have been given to ELCA Good Gifts. ELCA Good Gifts are a creative, meaningful way to support the ministries of the ELCA. 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 the programs is a long-term, partnership-based ministry that focus on the needs identified by local congregations and global companion churches and their communities.

"Christmas is not canceled, and neither is hope. If we lean on each other, we know we can cope". Thank you again for your generosity!

## Directory Update

Our 2021 Church Directory is being updated. Please send in your changes of address or phone number to the Church office (blc@sonic.net). Emails are an easy way to stay informed at BLC make sure your email address is on file and get connected!

## Sunday Morning Worship - 10 a.m.



Meeting ID:  
889 9423 0337  
Password:  
church



*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, 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 Michael Ferri.*



## Thank You!

Thank you for all your generosity for the Food Drive for Elisha's Pantry. We collected 250 pounds of food and \$1,000. You have helped bring some joy to those less fortunate than us. Thanks also to Siri Fenson for helping.



-Beverly Schaap



# January

- 3 *Stephanie Walls*  
 5 *Elizabeth Walls, Stacie Post-Sheffer*  
*Adriane Clissold*  
 6 *Sophia Thompson*  
 7 *Jeff Thomson*  
 8 *Carrie & Ryan Winn (16)*  
 11 *Ramona Doran,*  
*Gary & Pat Stone (52)*  
 12 *Cameron McConnell*  
 14 *Melissa Kuhn,*  
*Wes Silverthorne,*  
*Christen Thompson*  
 16 *Jaimee Comstock-Skipp*  
 17 *Patrick Riggs*  
 18 *Michael Jeye*  
 19 *Emily Wong,*  
*Anne-Elise Krug*  
 20 *Lucas Pettersen*  
 25 *Brian Schmidt,*  
*Don McCullough,*  
*Barry Wong*  
 26 *Greg Perrone, Nancy Doyle*  
 28 *Luke Jacobson, Tracy Huotari*  
 29 *Tom & Kathy Ziegler (56)*  
 30 *Rachel Anderson*  
 31 *Raymond Skipp*

## Called By Name

By: Halcyon Bjornstad, (*Gather Magazine, December 2020*)

Often, when I introduce myself as Pastor Halcyon, people assume that Halcyon is my last name. In college, people I met presumed that I was a foreign exchange student from Norway. I was complimented on how well I spoke English. When I meet people for the first time, they tend to ask about the origin of my name and how to spell it.

Our names are an important part of who we are. Names are the way that people get our attention and address us. When someone uses your name, you feel seen. Your name is personal to you and important for those around you to know.

Names are important in the Bible too. God calls out to people by name. Take Saul (as in “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”) in *Acts 9*. There is no mistaking that God is talking to Saul. After Saul turns away from persecuting Christians, his transformation is so complete that he takes on the new name of Paul.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus calls by name even the people he seemingly shouldn’t have known by name. What need would Jesus have had to know Zacchaeus, a tax collector and known sinner? Yet when Jesus arrives in Jericho, he calls Zacchaeus by name and spends time with him (*Luke 19*). And what does Jesus do when people have a hard time recognizing him? Jesus uses their names, and in doing so, reveals who he is, as he did for Mary in the garden after his resurrection (*John 20*).

We remember just how important names, including “child of God,” are in baptism, when we are claimed and reminded that we belong to God. What a powerful, life-changing promise! The One who has the power to calm the sea (*Mark 4:35-41*), heal the sick (*Luke 17:11-19*), give sight to the blind (*John 9:6-7*) and raise the dead (*John 11*) is the same One who creates, protects and calls you by name. *Isaiah 43:1* states: “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” As we walk through Advent, during a season of uncertainty, is there any more comforting thought than the knowledge that God has called us by name? The next time you hear your name, remind yourself of these words from Isaiah. You are God’s. God not only protects you but provides for you. Dangers and troubles may come, but they will not get the final word.

Let Scripture speak to you, promising the peace that you may have given up on, the justice that seems out of reach and the mercy that seldom seems to exist in our broken world. Know that God is still bringing about all these things, in new ways. Lean into the promise of new life for our church, ourselves and our neighbors near and far.

## Cancelled Stamps - CANCELLED!

It's been several months now since BLC stopped collecting cancelled postage stamps. You'll recall that those stamps were sent to the Tubfrim agency in Norway which used resulting funds to aid disabled children. We ended collection because Sons of Norway lodges were no longer in a position to forward stamps to Norway. However, please know that during the course of BLC's successful collection effort I received sincere thanks from both the Sons of Norway and from Tubfrim. So despite the fact that BLC no longer collects cancelled stamps, the gratitude remains.

-Max Fenson

## Strong shoulders

By: Linda Post Bushkofsky, (*Gather Magazine, Jan.-Feb. 2021*)

These words are for all who participate in Women of the ELCA. I'm specifically writing to white women like myself who are the overwhelming majority of this organization, but it's important for the women of color in Women of the ELCA to read this too. These words are my commitment to them, and I pray they will be your commitment too.



When our organization began in 1988, our elected leaders said we needed to address racism, and the work began. In 1993 the executive board adopted a comprehensive policy that called us to create an inclusive sisterhood where white women and women of color worked together for justice and peace in our church and our society.

Over the past 27 years, we've been living into that policy, making progress in our flawed, human way, seeking God's guidance and asking for forgiveness when we've failed. We put staff in place, developed training programs, published stories about our efforts, committed to further training, developed a network of anti-racism educators.

In 2002, at the Fifth Triennial Convention, we took a significant step forward by amending Article III of our churchwide constitution to add:

*This community of women shall claim and practice an anti-racist identity and actively seek full participation and shared power in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies, and practices.*

Author and activist Blair Imani reminds us that "sometimes privilege looks like being able to ignore a crisis that others are dying from." Despite our past anti-racist efforts and acknowledgment of our white privilege, we can no longer ignore the crisis that is killing our Black and Brown sisters and brothers. This is a time of racial reckoning unlike any before. When George Floyd was begging for his life, he wasn't just calling for his mama; he was calling for each one of us. *Continued on page 7*

## Burial Ground: Rest in Peace, 2020

By: Angela !Khabeb

(*Living Lutheran, Jan.-Feb. 2021*)

Here lies 2020, and good riddance!

This year has finally been laid to rest and 2020's obituary is replete with tragedy and challenge. Nearly everyone was forced into a new normal as we navigated living through a global pandemic.

Even simple activities like watching the news or children going to school became overwhelming. Physical distancing eroded our community and inflicted involuntary isolation. Our nation was practically debilitated by disbelief as our death toll mounted. Millions of us lost our jobs and health insurance. Thousands lost family businesses.

In addition to COVID-19, some of us battled the twin pandemic of institutionalized racism and white supremacy. We learned of heartbreaking, devastating and downright terrifying events. The world witnessed the gruesome murder of George Floyd, when three police officers knelt on the altar of his black body and sacrificed him to the god of hate—just blocks away from my children's elementary school.

Our congregation, Holy Trinity Lutheran in Minneapolis, was ground zero during the uprising, and the neighborhood remains virtually unrecognizable because of the fires during the civil unrest. For weeks, the only prayer I could find in my spirit was the psalmist's lament, "How long, O Lord?" (*Psalms 13:1*)

*Continued on page 6*

## The Latest from the Bethlehem Women of the ELCA

For most parts of this year, we have, as a board, met neither via zoom nor 6' part and wearing masks, but we do communicate via e-mail each month and in between, if necessary.

In October, Dixie Offt, our Secretary of Stewardship, kept busy promoting the WELCA THANKOFFERING SUNDAY, but due to Covid-19 pandemic, services in the sanctuary were not possible, so a letter was sent to some 80 women of Bethlehem, asking that donations be mailed (or delivered) to the church. More than half of those contacted made a donation, making the total amount close to \$2700. A job well done, Dixie. Thank you!

Recently, a good number of church women have received Lisa McIntyre's TIME CAPSULE booklet. An interesting collection of essays, submitted to Lisa by so many during the last half of 2020, have become a favorite "read" for many of us. We thank you, Lisa. Due to the Corona virus, the Bethlehem women could not gather for a day-long retreat (usually held in June), so Lisa, our Secretary of Education, came up with the idea of the Time Capsule. Lucky for us!

The board members are in "healthy" times, installed during the women's Christmas Luncheon. As there will be no such event this winter, an installation of sorts will instead be taking place via zoom at some point.

The Nominating Committee, led by Phyllis Hoover, has confirmed the following slate of officers for 2021:

President	Siri Fenson (2nd year)
1st Vice President	Phyllis Hoover (2nd year)
2nd Vice President	Linda Widdifield (2nd year)
Secretary	Janet Bergman (5th year)
Treasurer	Beverly Schaap (13th - or so- year)
Secretary of Education	Lisa McIntyre (2nd year)
Secretary of Stewardship	Liz Ferrari (1st year)*



\*Dixie Offt, having served in this post in 2020, resigned due to her and Mark's eventual move out-of-town.

Thanks to Dixie and welcome-on-board, Liz.

Siri Fenson

*President*

---

## Burial Ground

*Continued from page 5*

Who could have known that we would have experienced the multilayered trauma of 2020? Our nation is hurting and grieving. Due to COVID-19, countless dreams have been deferred - baptisms, confirmations, graduations, weddings, honeymoons and even funerals. Some of us are tired and distrustful. Some of us are disillusioned by fierce partisan divisions. Some of us are painfully lonely.

But we can remain hopeful.

As we lay this year to rest and entomb all of the worry, frustration, disappointment and loss, we remember that we are resurrected people. While painful, the events of 2020 are sacred because our mothering God promises to be near to the brokenhearted.

In one way or another, we are all connected through the unprecedented events of 2020. *Continued on page 8*

## Strong shoulders

*Continued from page 5*

Martin Luther said that "to love is not to wish one another well, but to carry one another's burdens - that is, things that are grievous to us, and that we would not willingly bear. Therefore, Christians must have strong shoulders and mighty bones."

My white sisters, if we are going to live out our mission and purpose as Women of the ELCA, we must be willing to carry the burdens of racism and white supremacy on our strong shoulders and in our mighty bones. We must be willing to work to overcome racism and end white supremacy.

It won't be easy to dismantle the structural racism embedded within our institutions. Our government, educational systems and economy are all built on racist notions that run deep, going back 400 years to when enslaved Africans were first brought to our shores. But working together as women do, we will claim and practice an anti-racist identity.

Start by going to [welca.org](http://welca.org) and clicking on "Ministry and Action." Then go to the "Justice" page for resources, books and presentations. Join the Racial Justice Advocacy Network and participate in the network's Facebook group. The Women of the ELCA purpose statement calls us to work for "healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world." Equipped with all that the 2021 "Just Love" Gathering will provide, we will be strengthened and nourished for the journey.



**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**  
*Monday, January 18, 2021*

## Remembering Dr. King

An American prophet of justice among races and nations, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was an eloquent preacher, a leader of the nonviolent resistance to race-segregated society, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. At the age of thirty-five, Martin Luther King, Jr., was the youngest man to have received the Nobel Peace Prize. When notified of his selection, he announced that he would turn over the prize money to the furtherance of the civil rights movement. Born on January 15, 1929 Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 at the age of 39.

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality...I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.

Use me, God. Show me how to take who I am, who I want to be, and what I can do, and use it for a purpose greater than myself."

*-Martin Luther King*

For more information on Dr. King's life and work visit:

[kinginstitute.stanford.edu](http://kinginstitute.stanford.edu)

## 2nd Mile Sunday

At Bethlehem Lutheran, in concert with the Sierra Pacific Synod, every second Sunday of each month is designated Second Mile Sunday.

Let's go the Second Mile with our Companion Synods.

During the month of January our Second Mile offerings will be divided among the Sierra Pacific Synod's Companion Synods:

**The Lutheran Church of Rwanda**

**Lutheran Church of El Salvador**

**Taiwan Lutheran Church**

Please keep these sister synods around the world in your prayers this month and consider an additional offering toward their ministries.

The Sierra Pacific Synod is blessed to accompany these Churches in mutual ministry as we proclaim God's creative, redeeming and sanctifying love in all the world.



## Zoom Readers

Each Sunday we are looking for new faces who are willing to read a lesson or psalm for Sunday Zoom Worship. All in the comfort of your own home!

Send an email to the office and volunteer! The reading will be sent to your email on your assigned Sunday. Zoom reading is an easy way to actively participate in online Worship.

# Burial Ground

Each of our stories connects us to every other child of God and, ultimately, to the overarching divine narrative. The grave of 2020 holds resurrection hope and, therefore, this burial ground is holy.

When I think of holy ground in our sacred texts, my mind goes to Moses. We hear his call story in Exodus and again in Acts. We encounter Moses at that amazing moment when he notices a burning bush. Although the briar plant is in flames, the blaze doesn't consume it. Fire is fierce and destroys everything in its path. Not so with God's flame.

We learn that God spoke to Moses from the inexplicable inferno: "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (*Exodus 3:5*) The voice of God continues: I have seen the mistreatment of my people and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to rescue them. Moses, amazed and trembling, asks: "What is your name?" God responds: "I AM WHO I AM" (*3:14*)

My translation? I AM whatever I'll need to be. God's love for us is an unquenchable fire, and this great I AM is our hope.

Though raging forest fires have devastated more than 4 million acres in California alone, the destruction won't consume our care for the environment. As we sift through the charred debris left in the wake of the Floyd uprising, we know our passion for racial justice won't be extinguished. Even though COVID-19 has changed our world forever, we can trust that God's promises are constant. Not even the vexing heat of unemployment and poverty will overcome our faith.

Hallowed ground seeks to restore the dignity of every person. Hallowed ground says we are children of God, regardless of political leanings. Hallowed ground has Jesus' High Priestly Prayer as its goal - "that they may all be one" (*John 17:21*).

As resurrection people, our hope is unstoppable because God's grace is invincible. God is here and wherever God is, it is holy ground. We begin 2021 with renewed hope, standing on hallowed ground and grounded in grace.

## 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, instead shop 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.

## Treasurer's Report

Beverly Schaap

**November 2020**

	Actual	Budget	Difference
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$22,180</b>	<b>\$29,460</b>	<b>-\$7,280</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$31,311</b>	<b>\$32,137</b>	<b>-\$826</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>-\$9,131</b>	<b>-\$2,677</b>	<b>-\$6,454</b>

**YTD 2020**

	Actual	Budget	Difference
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$220,047</b>	<b>\$285,540</b>	<b>-\$65,493</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$302,426</b>	<b>\$361,840</b>	<b>-\$59,414</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>-\$82,379</b>	<b>-\$76,300</b>	<b>-\$6,079</b>

**Amount needed to meet the budget \$7,625 per week  
November \$4,436**

The deadline for the next issue of The Bethlehem Star is January 22, 2021.

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 would be pleased to receive them.

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