

# The Bethlehem Star

A PUBLICATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER



Volume 71, Issue 5

May 2021

## From Pastor Diane

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

This week Hans and I get our second vaccine shots, and so in another two weeks we'll be as immunized as is currently possible. As the possibility of gathering with other humans or traveling for a vacation comes tantalizingly closer, we are even more aware of how much we've missed it.

My guess is that most of you feel the same way. We long to get back to "normal," including in-person worship. But those are actually two very different things, the idea of getting back to normal, and the possibility of in-person worship. The second one is more straightforward.

A committee of BLC members and leaders met to discuss in-person worship, and decided that we'll have our first outdoor, in-person worship service on May 16. After four weeks we'll add indoor worship to the mix, but there's definitely a strong "let's see how things go" element to moving indoors. Although Sonoma County is allowing indoor worship (50% capacity or up to 200 people), we cannot sing or chant indoors. Additionally, not everyone will be vaccinated by summer and as a congregation we cannot put members or worship leaders at risk. We will continue to make decisions carefully and deliberately.

And then there's the longing to return to normal, whatever that is. I think too often we humans emotionally confuse what we're used to with good. We often talk about the "good old days" when the times we are referring to were really were pretty awful for a lot of people. When we went into lockdown in March of 2019, the world was filled with hunger, racism, poverty, climate change, plastic trash in the oceans, weapons, and so forth, and all those challenges remain as we emerge. In fact, some have grown.

St. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:17, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" As Christians, the status quo, or normal, has never been our goal. Our goal is always to be more like Christ. Let's take the opportunity to reflect on this past year of being indoors/careful/isolated to see what we want to do differently, not just what we want to return to.

Some changes are kind of funny. For example, a lot of people let their hair go grey during the pandemic and have decided to keep it that way! In a more serious vein, my husband Hans, along with many others, found that he can do his job from home as effectively as he did in an office. Now that old commute time goes to our son, Elijah. In general, many people spent more time with their families, cooking at home, and in nature. These are good changes we want to see continue.

*(Continued on page 2)*

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

## Bible Study Circles

**WE ARE CHURCH**

**WE ARE CALLED**

**RUTH-** meets monthly, 2nd Tuesday, 10 AM, in the Parish Hall. Leslee Cramer designs and leads lessons. For details, contact Elaine Adams, 539-7831.

**MIRIAM-** meets monthly, 3rd Tuesday, 7PM, in members' homes. Lessons from Gather Magazine, led by members on rotating basis. For details, contact Beverly Schapp, 527-2872

**REBEKAH-** meets monthly, 2nd Tuesday, 10 AM, in the Parish Hall. Lessons from Gather Magazine, led by members on rotating basis. For details, contact Linda Widdifield, 539-7574

## Believers Softball!

Coach Tony Miller is planning for the BLC Believers to begin playing softball in mid-May. Details will follow as the schedule is finalized. Go Believers!



## From Pastor Diane

*(Continued from page 1)*

For churches, the pandemic was the push we needed to start using digital technology in worship and for gatherings. It turns out that committees can do their work in a Zoom meeting as well as they can in person. Online worship services have allowed those who cannot easily leave their homes to still be part of the community. We want to retain some of these new practices, or mix them in, as we emerge.

And then there are the big issues, the life and death issues that God cares so deeply about. We had a year with no school shootings. The relief I felt deep in my bones for this is hard to describe. So what am I going to do about it going forward? The pandemic laid bare the financial and racial inequities of our society as people like my husband and me were able to do our jobs from home, but many others – grocery store workers, medical personnel, mail carriers and delivery people, and farm and factory workers – could not. A greater percentage of these workers are black and brown, a greater percentage lack good healthcare, and a greater percentage caught Covid and died. Now that we see these inequities more clearly, we can act more effectively for positive change.

As we return to life in the public sphere, we are called to live our Christian lives as Martin Luther suggested – to rise and live each day anew. Every single day we affirm our baptisms and start over as forgiven, Easter people. Each day is new opportunity for Christ to dwell in us, and to be his hands and feet in the world. May we never go back to normal, but instead go forward as Christ’s new creation. Amen.

In Christ,

*Pastor Diane*

Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Children’s Center

1300 St. Francis Road, Santa Rosa, California 95409

Sunday outdoor worship : 10:00 a.m. *(Starting May 16)*

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

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

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

Zoom Meeting ID: 889 9423 0337

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

Password: church

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

Bridge Pastor:

Reverend Diane Bowers, Ph.D.

510-816-5765 (Pastor’s cell)

Email: [Revdrdiane@yahoo.com](mailto:Revdrdiane@yahoo.com)

Congregational Officers:

Jason Kracht, President

Janet Bertoli, Vice President

Carolyn Cole-Schweizer, Secretary

Beverly Schaap, Treasurer

Susan Jenkins, Financial Secretary

Council Commissioners:

Laura Lightfoot, Education

Cal Eriksen, Property

George Schweizer, Stewardship

Linda Knapp, Witness & Service

Michelle Frabotta, Worship

Michelle Thomson, Youth

Susan Jenkins, BCC Executive Board

Siri Fenson, Bethlehem WELCA President

Staff:

Michelle Frabotta, Parish Administrator

Janet Bertoli, Adult & Youth Choirs

Barbara Laferriere, Organist, Adult Choir,

Laura Lightfoot, Youth Choirs

## Second Mile Sunday

On May 9th, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, along with all Lutheran churches in the Sierra Pacific Synod will have a basket available for contributions to support Mt. Cross Ministries.



Mt. Cross Ministries' main site is located in the coastal redwood forest of the Santa Cruz Mountains, 20 minutes from the Santa Cruz beaches. Mt. Cross offers summer camp and retreat opportunities for all ages. Most Mt. Cross directed camps are on the main site and many, like Day Camps, take place in communities all over northern California.

Churches, schools, clubs and other organizations use Mt. Cross as their group retreat center by utilizing the Outdoor Conference Center (OCC). Mt. Cross provides facilities, meal service and program support (as desired) to make your group's experience as successful as possible. Many groups take advantage of the Challenge Course and/or climbing tower.

Established in 1948, Mt. Cross has a unique history in Northern California.





## The Living Room

### "A Place to Find Help - Hope - Peace"

**The Living Room**, a 28-year-old, non-profit organization in Santa Rosa, provides a safe place for homeless, or at-risk of becoming homeless, women and their children. The primary aids are housing, food and outreach and include clothing, nutritious meals, low-cost housing, parenting skills, help with job applications and opportunities to learn new skills. Also available are use of computers, phones, copy machines, shared post office box, and updated housing and job resources.

Many women are homeless due to home foreclosures, loss of jobs, chronic health issues, struggles with addictions and mental health issues. More than 80% have been victims of domestic violence. The staff and volunteers are compassionate and free of judgement and help women promote stability and self reliance. For example, 3640 hours were given by volunteers in 2020, over 22,000 hot meals were served and 20 women and six children were given housing.

The Living Room was founded in 1993 by the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation in Santa Rosa. It started small, as a center for day-use only. Property at 1207 Cleveland Ave was eventually purchased and later, when a supporter allowed the center to acquire a small home nearby, low-cost housing was now possible. The office recently moved from the Cleveland campus to 328 So. E Street, to allow additional beds at the 4900 sq. ft. campus. "Work is going on to secure a new campus by mid to late 2021. The bold plan is to open a site with expanded services and plenty of parking."

The Living Room is in "partnership" with several local groups like The Redwood Empire Food Bank, Oliver's, Whole Foods, Spring Lake Village, St. Joseph's Health, Wells Fargo, Kaiser, City of Santa Rosa etc. AND, of course, Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

In honor, or in memory, of our mothers on the upcoming Mother's Day, the Bethlehem Women of the ELCA ask for your **generous support of this worthwhile, local organization**. Your donation may be sent or brought to Bethlehem (checks issued to BLC with 'Living Room' on memo line) or you have the option to give online (website blc-bcc.com to Giving Options, Ways to Give, Give Plus). Details are also found on Fridays' ENews, on Facebook and on the church website. *May the Lord reward you for your kindness Ruth 1:8*

Siri Fenson, *WELCA President*

## Farming Hope

Please join us to learn of Farming Hope's amazing story of transformation! Jamie Stark will share how Farming Hope is changing lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2019 they were awarded the ELCA's Big Dream Hunger Grant. The event will be on **Thursday, May 20th at 700 p.m.** Everyone is welcome!

This event is sponsored by the Sierra Pacific Synod Hunger Network.

Here is the Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88016089577?pwd=MkZLbGJpd2FmSFZseTJQWWNCU1V3Zz09>

## Ruth Circle

**Guests Welcome! Ruth Circle** meets on Tuesday, May 11, 10am, in the Parish Center. Come for fellowship, light snacks, and a chance to share a favorite verse or two from the Bible. WELCA remains active at BLC and we all can help with the many projects and services of this women's group.

Social distancing still a part of our meeting.

Any questions? Call Elaine 539-7831.

## Volunteers Needed

**Outdoor worship needs help!**

We need volunteers for setting up chairs, sun shades, signing people in, temperature takers, clean up and so much more to make outdoor worship a success.

Consider how you can help and contact the office and a member of the reopening committee will be in contact with you. Thank you and remember many hands, make light work.





- 1 Russ Mortensen, Brad Powell
- 2 Emmett Mokaram, Brian & Joni Schmidt (23)
- 3 Leslee & Lyndon Cramer (47)
- 4 Anna Smith, Mary Schroeder
- 5 Amanda Knudtzon, Patsy Streckfuss, John & Danielle Sass (20)
- 6 Mira Kiick, Kay Fish, Michelle Thomson
- 7 David Smith, Mark Parnell
- 8 Rachel Walls
- 9 Peter Preston
- 10 Janis Biksa, Anthony Mack
- 11 Chris Hershwitzky, Camden Morrow
- 12 Troy Dauler
- 13 Alicia Virtue
- 15 Mark Jacobson
- 16 Bob & Elaine Adams (63)
- 17 Rosalie Smith, Pat Zivot, Paul Meyer
- 18 Terry Wilson
- 20 Jesse Claasen
- 21 Amelia Comstock-Skipp
- 22 Marcus Hershwitzky
- 23 John Huotari
- 24 Dorothy Ronne
- 26 Natalie Back
- 27 Patrick & Vanessa Riggs (14)
- 28 Erin Abel, Gail Bowers, Patrick & Lisa Kelly (17)
- 29 Tom Ziegler
- 30 Julie Barnes
- 31 Arend Folkens, Madison Frabotta

## Here Comes the Sun - Outdoor Worship Resumes Sunday, May 16th

We are happy to announce that outdoor worship will resume on Sunday, May 16 at 10AM on the Memorial Patio. A group of 14 Reopening Committee members met in April to strategize and plan how best to reopen safely, while maintaining the Zoom option and musical variety we have been enjoying these past months. Although Sonoma County is in the orange tier and we are allowed to gather indoors, there still remains the restriction on singing and chanting. In hopes that things will continue on the upswing and that restrictions will continue to loosen, we'd like to share our tentative plan for the immediate future and into Summer 2021.

**May 16 – June 6** - Outdoor worship with live Zoom option

**June 13 – September** – Mix of outdoor and indoor worship services with live Zoom option

In June, we will begin adding indoor worship Sundays (especially on hot days) and will experiment with safely integrating music, readings and singing options. Our hope is that restrictions will continue to lift and that by September we will be back indoors full-time. Of course, we will remain cautious and flexible, following all state and local regulations and guidelines. We will continue a live Zoom option for all services going forward (even after complete reopening) to support members who are homebound, ill or out of town.

Active member participation and support will be a key factor in successfully reopening and maintaining our outdoor worship over the next few months. The need for a committed and consistent roster of volunteers to assist in the weekly set-up and take-down will lighten the load and help make the worship experience a joy for everyone. We hope you will consider volunteering for a Sunday rotation that will work for you when the sign-up sheet is circulated.

We look forward with joy to seeing you in person on May 16th at 10AM!

*The Reopening Committee*

## Call Committee Update – May 2021

Following the busy Lenten season and Easter celebration, the Call Committee reached out to BLC's Synod representative for a status update on receiving our first roster of candidates for interview. The Synod reported that it has been able to locate one possible candidate and is waiting for a fuller roster (3-5 candidates) before they send us the names.

The committee thanks you for your continued prayers for them and for the Synod—for guidance and diligence and to put their trust into God's hands. After all, "God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything." 1 John 3:20. Just because we do not see an immediate change doesn't mean God has not heard us, because He has!

In Christ,

*The Call Committee*

## First Sunday Forum

You are invited to join Pastor Diane on May 2 for First Sunday Forum. We will be studying A Sermon on Preparing to Die, 1519, by Martin Luther. This short essay, written in a time when life expectancy was short, touches upon many of our most basic spiritual needs and concerns, as well as major Reformation themes, from fear, temptation, sin, and despair, to forgiveness, trust, gratitude, and grace. Luther encouraged dying Christians to meditate upon God's mercy and victory over death in Jesus Christ and to receive consolation through the certainty of God's word and the sacraments of grace, and not to depend on their own goodness or works for their hope of salvation.

First Sunday Forum is on Sunday, May 2, at 9 AM, on Zoom. Log in with the worship service link.



## Elijah's Adoption Day

Congratulations to Pastor Diane and to Hans, who adopted their son Elijah Louis Kasper on Friday, April 22, 2021! Elijah was placed with Pastor Diane and Hans as a foster child when he was six days old, and finally, after two years, is now legally their son. Pastor Diane is delighted that some members of BLC joined them for the virtual adoption and celebration afterwards, and extends her thanks for your well-wishes and even a gorgeous bouquet of flowers.



Please join the Bethlehem Lutheran Church worshipping community on Reopening Sunday, May 16, at 10 AM, for our first outdoor worship service of 2021.

In honor of the day, the women of WELCA are hosting a festive cookie and coffee hour after worship, and everyone is invited to bring a food donation for FISH or an item for Elisha's Pantry. Items needed for Elisha's Pantry include cereal, pasta, pasta sauce, canned vegetables/soups and peanut butter. Check out our checklist for Pantry Essentials on page 8.



*Join us on Friday April 30th at 7 pm on Zoom*

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86176120442?pwd=Ny9NVVZ2Rm5iTVJtcVZNV3A3dHVxUT09>

*for our Offering of Letters Event*

We look forward to seeing your smiling face and having an opportunity to come together, and be God's witnesses in our world. You are invited to write letters urging Congress to address issues of Hunger.

Specifically, we will be writing letters to Congress asking lawmakers to:

**Make permanent the expansion of the child tax credit (CTC) offered through the American Rescue Plan.**

Sadly, 1 in 4 kids are at risk of hunger in the US, the richest country in the world. Forty percent of Black and Latino families struggle feeding their children. These child tax credits will lift some 5.7 million children out of poverty, resulting in a lifetime of benefits for them and for society. Here's a link with more information:

<https://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/bread-ctc-fact-sheet-2021.pdf>

**Increase US funding and leadership for global nutrition programs to developing countries facing the COVID crisis.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated communities across the country and around the world. In the US, more than 50 million Americans are facing hunger while globally, 270 million people face starvation this year. This is a pivotal year not only to make progress on better nutrition and more sustainable food systems, but also for the U.S. government to enact reforms to ensure food systems are equitable, sustainable, and resilient.

*As people of faith, we are called to:*

*Speak out for the rights of all the destitute, and  
defend the rights of the poor and need.*

*Proverbs 31:8-9*

We'll be sharing more information on the Offering of Letters over the coming weeks. Please join us on April 30th and make your voice heard.

If you'd like to get a head start, you can download the letter here (it is also printed on the next page):

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/rt7w2rmdcwmt4o0/AADKVAYf\\_5TuDeesbQX9SI2wa?dl=0&preview=2021OL+Sample+Template+Letter.docx](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/rt7w2rmdcwmt4o0/AADKVAYf_5TuDeesbQX9SI2wa?dl=0&preview=2021OL+Sample+Template+Letter.docx)

May 2021

Representative Mike Thompson  
2300 County Center Dr. Suite A100  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Senator Dianne Feinstein  
One Post Street, Suite 2450  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Senator Alex Padilla  
333 Bush Street, Suite 3225  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_,      Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_,

Hunger is reaching historic levels. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to devastate communities across the United States with a disproportionate impact on Black, Latino, and Native American families, and immigrants, and worsening the effects of hunger and poverty around the globe.

The pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities in our safety net and food systems from farm to fork. And child hunger in both the U.S. and abroad has skyrocketed.

Specifically, Congress should:

Make the expansion of the child tax credit in the American Rescue Plan permanent and available to all children regardless of immigration status. The CTC expansion will lift millions of children out of poverty, as well as help reduce hunger and narrow the racial wealth gap exacerbated by unemployment amid COVID-19.

Increase U.S. leadership and funding for global nutrition programs without which an entire generation may be denied of their God-given right to flourish.

Now more than ever, my faith calls me to stand alongside impacted people in my community and around the world. Let us work together to ensure U.S. policies help people move out of poverty and feed their families in the U.S. and around the world.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Address]  
[City, State ZIP]

## "We Are Church Together - Called and Sent"

The 2021 Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly will be occurring in a week (May 6-8). Due to the continuing state of the Covid-19 pandemic, this Assembly will be held online using Zoom (with other online tools as well). Bethlehem Lutheran has three voting members attending this assembly: Pastor Diane Bowers, Jason Kracht, and Kathy Ziegler. Among other business, these three will be participating in the election of the next Sierra Pacific Synod Bishop. In addition to the voting members, others can participate in the mission of the Synod as a visitor to the assembly, or through donations:

**Visitors:** Visitors/observers are invited and encouraged to view the assembly via live streaming. Visitors DO NOT need to register. Information on how to view will be provided closer to assembly on the assembly page (<https://spselca.org/assembly/>).

**Donations:** All donations given through the Assembly will be given to the following organizations, one-third each:

- Sierra Pacific Synod Candidacy Scholarships
- ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response
- Mt. Cross Ministries



You may make your donation anytime by clicking on the donate link on the assembly page (<https://spselca.org/assembly/>).

## Elisha's Pantry Essentials:

- Kleenex
- Toilet paper
- Sm. laundry detergent
- Dish soap
- Lg. Shampoo/Cond.
- Toothpaste/brushes
- Deodorant
- Skin lotion
- Razors
- Mouth wash
- Masks

Drop donations off @ BLC on  
Weds. or Fri. 9 AM - 3 PM  
Pick-up dates: Monthly, on the  
third Wednesday.

~Thank you!~

## Treasurer's Report

Beverly Schaap

### March 2021

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$16,365	\$18,900	-\$2,535
Expenses	\$16,673	\$27,962	-\$11,289
Net	-\$308	-\$9,062	\$8,754

### YTD 2021

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$69,939	\$61,900	\$8,039
Expenses	\$69,907	\$81,023	-\$11,116
Net	\$32	-\$19,123	\$19,155

**Amount needed to meet the budget \$6,216 per week**  
**March \$4,091**



### VBS 2021

June 14-18

6:30-8:00 pm

Cost: free

For kids entering Kindergarten  
through completing 6th grade  
Deadline to register: May 30

Invite a friend and register now to join the fun!  
We will do experiments, learn about God's  
miracles, do some crafts, and play some games.

<https://forms.gle/ZuozKJHGWNfpJgZ>

\*\*This event will be held outdoors and Follow all social distancing  
guidelines\*\*

The deadline for the next issue of The Bethlehem Star is May 21, 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 will be pleased to receive them.

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