

The Bethlehem Star

A PUBLICATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER



Volume 71, Issue 12

December 2021

From Pastor Tyler

“O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.”

I hate waiting.

I can order a package from Amazon and it will be delivered to my door in a day. I can stream my favorite television show in an instant on my smartphone. I can Google any answer I want with a few taps of my fingers. And, yet, despite all our technological advancements, our lives are still filled with waiting.

However, when I am able to quiet my mind from our everyday distractions, sometimes I find waiting can be a good thing. Sometimes, waiting gives me something to look forward to. Sometimes, waiting helps me slow down. Sometimes, waiting helps me appreciate when something finally does happen.

Advent, the liturgical season that precedes Christmas, comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming.” It is a season where every year we prepare our hearts for the advent of Jesus Christ into the world. We wait not only for our celebrations of Jesus’ coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but also his promised second coming at the dawn of the new creation. Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation as we wait for the coming of Christ. Well, at least, it’s supposed to be.

I don’t know about you, but I find we can often become so busy with our Christmas preparations that we are tempted to skip over Advent altogether and skip right to Christmas – sometimes as early as the day after Halloween. We long to sing Christmas carols the day after Thanksgiving. We focus on our shopping lists and meal planning, after all, there are gifts to buy, food to prepare, carols to sing, and homes to decorate. Yet, in all our busyness, we can forget the opportunity Advent presents us: to wait.

In this season we are invited to wait for the coming of the Lord: in the manger, in our hearts, and at the dawn of the new creation. Though Christ has already come into the world and into our hearts, we are invited to watch and to wait for God’s coming into our lives with renewed awareness that we might see God’s presence among us more clearly. We are invited to anticipate and look forward to the great gift we have in Christ Jesus – all so our Christmas celebrations might be all the more sweet.

So, may we watch and may we wait for all the wondrous ways God is showing up in our lives and in our world.

Advent blessings,

Pastor Tyler W. Jensen



Midweek Advent Vespers

7:00 p.m.

“Holden Evening Prayer”

Choral prayer service

Wednesdays

Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22

Children’s Christmas Worship

10:30 a.m.

Sunday, December 19

As part of morning worship service

Christmas Eve Family Worship

5:00 p.m.

Carols, choirs, bells,
and a living nativity

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

11:00 p.m.

Prayer, meditation, candlelight, carols

Gathered to worship,

Equipped by the

Holy Spirit,

Strengthened through community,

Sent in peace to serve the Lord.

What about a chick?

Ten little chicks make a big difference! When they are just months old, these chicks begin laying eggs, which make nutritious, protein-rich meals for families who are hungry. The many extra eggs are often enough to allow a family to start a small business by selling them for additional income.



Thank you Christiane Silverthorne for providing our Altar Flowers every Sunday to enhance our worship services. Bethlehem thanks you for your time and talents!

Life Pax

"Feeding the Hungry and Sharing the Love of Christ one meal at a time!"

The youth have put together new supply of Life Pax, and they are available on the table in the Narthex. The donation jar is right next to them and the requested donation is \$2 each to cover the cost. Thank you!



Members are encouraged to store a few in their cars, and share them when they see someone on the street asking for food or money.

Children's Program

Once a year our children present the Christmas Story during our worship service. This year's program will be held on December 19 at 10:30 a.m. Come enjoy this delightful service.



Advent Devotional

Advent begins November 28th. A copy of *Wait Upon the Lord!* has been mailed out to members. Extra copies are available in the Narthex.

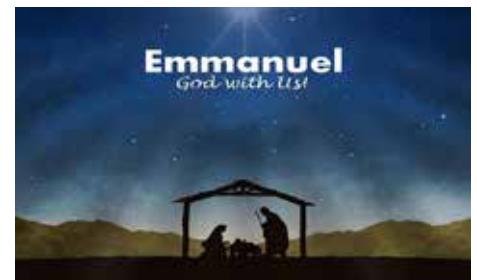
Wait Upon the Lord!

Take time to wait upon the Lord each day of Advent with these reflective and soul-searching devotions.



Waiting upon the Lord means trusting in him and being patient for his plans for our lives to come to pass. These devotions reveal that the birth of Jesus is worth the wait, and that we are not alone in these waiting days. The Lord is with us, even now.

Each day in Advent, wait quietly with devotions from Isaiah, including scripture, a reflection and a prayer, written to renew and enliven our hearts as we countdown to Christmas.



Directory Update

The Church Directory is being updated for 2022. 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!

Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Children's Center
1300 St. Francis Road, Santa Rosa, California 95409
Sunday Worship : 10:30 a.m.

Church Office: 707/539-5252, Hours: 9-3, W & F
Church Email: blc@sonic.net
Facebook: www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/>

Church Website: www.blc-bcc.com
Zoom Meeting ID: 889 9423 0337
Password: church

Pastor:

Tyler W. Jensen
510-470-4305 (Pastor's cell)
Email: PastorTylerJensen@gmail.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
Carolyn Cole-Schweizer, Worship Interim
Michelle Thomson, Youth
Susan Jenkins, BCC Executive Board
Siri Fenson, Bethlehem WELCA President

Staff:

Deborah McNally, BCC Director
Michelle Frabotta, Parish Administrator
Janet Bertoli, Adult & Youth Choirs
Barbara Laferriere, Organist, Adult Choir,
Laura Lightfoot, Youth Choirs

St. Nicholas Festival!

The Saint Nicholas Day celebration is happening on **December 5, 5:30 pm- 7:00 pm.**

Tickets are \$5 each or \$20 for a family. All ages are invited!

Bring the family for a pizza dinner followed by Christmas tree trimming, arts and crafts, cookie decorating and carols.

After the party there is a gathering in the sanctuary with the glow and aroma of the freshly cut Christmas tree decorated with chrismsons. Learn about and meet St. Nicholas himself!

Contact Laura Lightfoot, ljlightfoot@hotmail.com for more information.



Maybe a Goat?

Goats are known for surviving in some of the world's harshest environments — hot temperatures, rocky terrain — you name it! This makes them especially valuable for families living in dry, drought-prone climates where it's tough to raise other animals. Fresh milk from a goat provides great nutrition for children who are growing. And as goats multiply in number, families often share the offspring with neighbors in need, helping lift entire communities out of hunger and poverty. Another wonderful gift for a family in need at [God's Global Barnyard](#).



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 1 at 7 p.m. is the well loved "Holden Evening Vesper" service. Join us, lift your voices in quiet song and prayer, and be renewed. The service lasts only 30 minutes and fits perfectly after dinner and before shopping.



It's time to order poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. You may order a plant in memory of or in honor of someone if you wish. The plant may be taken home after the service on December 26. A special insert in the Christmas 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 or placed in the offering plate on Sundays.

POINSETTIAS

ORDER FORM
DUE: DECEMBER 17

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)".



December

- 1 Ruby Malde
- 3 Morgan Apostle, Matthew Walls
- 4 Marsha Lightfoot
- 5 Pamela Perry
- 6 Sidney Petterssen
- 7 Mira & Donald Kiick (25)
- 8 Christa Knapp
- 9 Laura Lightfoot, Greg Gray
- 10 Melanie Sanders
- 11 Jeff and Pamela Perry (17)
- 13 Kathy Campbell, Linda Knapp
- 14 Ryan Muehlbauer
- 17 Marsha & David Lightfoot (33)
- 20 Steve Sturgeon
- 21 Judy Warner
- 22 John & Liz Ferrari (14)
- 24 Nathan Kuhn
- 26 Mary Oslund, Anthony & Donette Mack (51)
- 30 Marion Heiken
- 31 Wendy Younger and John Marozik



Amazon Smile!

Shop AmazonSmile, and Amazon will donate 0.5% to Bethlehem Lutheran Church!



Martin Luther loved Christmas

This year we celebrated the 504th 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 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.

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.

Please check out the display in the Narthex beginning November 28th. ~Linda Knapp



2nd Mile Sunday

On December 12, we will have a basket available for contributions to support Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS).

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.



Ruth Circle Potluck

Ruth Circle will meet at the home of Shirley Jensen on Tuesday, December 14 at 11:30am. Members and guests will enjoy a potluck lunch and a devotion by Leslee Cramer. Sharing fond Christmas memories will also highlight the gathering at 3063 Las Mesitas Court.

First Communion Recipients

Celebrated on November 21, 2021

Gabriel Gutsch

Alexis Kracht

Emma & Julia Krebs

Camden & Colby Moll

Matthew & Megan Younger

Are You in the Loop?

Many members of the BLC congregation now wear hearing aids and it's likely that many more people may soon acknowledge they need hearing assistance. Not too long ago BLC installed a hearing loop system to enhance the quality of sound received by those wearing hearing aids. The loop system consists of a thin copper wire installed on the floor around the periphery of the sanctuary. The wire radiates an electromagnetic signal that is picked up by a tiny receiver built into the hearing aid. When the loop is turned on, the hearing aid receives only the very clear sound coming from sanctuary microphones with no interfering background noise. However, in order for the loop to operate, the hearing aid must be equipped with a feature known as a T-coil. The T-coil acts as a receiver of the loop signal. Therefore, if and when you purchase or upgrade a hearing aid, make sure it has a T-coil. And if you now have a T-coil hearing aid, make sure you turn on the T-coil as you enter the sanctuary.

-Max Fenson

Rebekah Circle

Getting Together for Cookies & Bible Study

On Thursday, December 9, at 10AM, Rebekah Circle ladies will gather in the Parish Center; first for "Potluck Cookies & Coffee", to be followed by Pastor Tyler leading the Bible Study. He will be using the December GATHER Devotional, "Women of Advent" (page 32), concentrating on *Mary and Elizabeth*.

If you wish to try us out, you are most welcome to attend. We are the newest Circle at Bethlehem, having started up in January 2020. Our study is also available via Zoom so please let us know if you would like the link.

Any questions? Please contact Siri at sirimax@att.net or 707- 303-7860

Nancy Marvits ends her five years as SPS WELCA President

On November 6, the Sierra Pacific Synodical Women of the ELCA held its much pared-down 14th Biennial Conference via zoom. The theme was taken from Cor. 5: 17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new".

Janet Bergman was Bethlehem's voting delegate. *Thank you, Janet.*

The devotional was followed by electing new officers and board members for the next two years, along with delegates to the 2022 National Triennial. Sue Hartless was elected the new president. Our own Nancy Marvits, after serving as president for the last five years, was thanked for her good work.

"We, of Bethlehem Lutheran, have been proud to know you as the SPS WELCA president, Nancy. Many thanks!"

Each of the three Bible Study Circles take up offerings each time they meet. Parts of the donations go to the various charities supported and part to the Sierra Pacific WELCA.

Siri Fenson, *BLC WELCA President*

Office Closed

The Church office will be closed for the Christmas Holiday on Friday, December 24 & Monday, December 27.

Normal hours will resume on Tuesday, December 28th.

 **Merry Christmas!**



We pray for loved ones and friends who are home-bound, ill or recovering especially: Richard Doran, Adele Mortensen, Tom Ziegler, Sharon Boschen, Janet Wolf, Brianne Konanz, Sue Bernard, Linda Wilkening, Steve Sturgeon, Martin Curtis, JoAnn Lockhard, Jesse Halderman, Max Fenson, Bob Bimbi, Lin Beck, Donna Cole, Janet Krug, Mira Kiick & Elise Much

Advent Calendars

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

Calendars are also available in the Narthex at the God's Global Barnyard display.

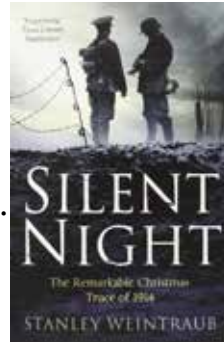
"Prepare the way of the Lord"
(Mark 1:3)

Book Club Holiday Party & Selection for December

This month's meeting will be held in the Parish Hall on Tuesday, December 7 at 7:00pm we will celebrate the season with our annual Holiday Party. Please contact Linda Knapp, knapping@sbcglobal.net for more details.

Tuesday December 7- *Silent Night* by Stanley Weintraub

It was one of history's most powerful, yet forgotten, Christmas stories. It took place in the improbable setting of the mud, cold rain and senseless killing of the trenches of World War I. It happened in spite of orders to the contrary by superiors; it happened in spite of language barriers. And it still stands as the only time in history that peace spontaneously arose from the lower ranks in a major conflict, bubbling up to the officers and temporarily turning sworn enemies into friends.



Greeters. Welcome one and all to Worship on Sunday mornings. No need to handshake in this current climate, but a word of welcome and a smile are needed. This position requires you to attend 1 or 2 Sundays every other month.

Zoom Worship Hosts. We will train you, and you can do this from home or from church. It involves welcoming people, starting the recording, muting as needed, and a few other details. Interested? Let the church office know. Learn a new skill and be apart of an important ministry - online worship!

Ushers. Be apart of a team and an important volunteer in our Sunday Worship. Help with communion and offering as well as take attendance. Training is definitely provided and we are in desperate need of usher teams.

Readers & Assistants. Volunteer to read the lessons or assist Pastor in Sunday Worship or help with Communion. Readers and assistants volunteer once a month. Training is provided.

Tree Harvesting!

Happy Advent **BLC Youth Crew!** It's the most wonderful time of the year! And time to harvest the Bethlehem Christmas tree! Please join the crew that will travel out to the Graton Fire Tree Farm on Saturday, December 4th. We will meet at church at 8:30 for some cocoa and treats then head out to the tree farm in search of the perfect tree. Once back at the church our job will be stringing the lights. This is always a fun way to kick off the season and get in the Christmas spirit. Please let me know if you can make it so we don't leave without you. Looking forward to seeing you on Saturday! Let me know if you have any questions.

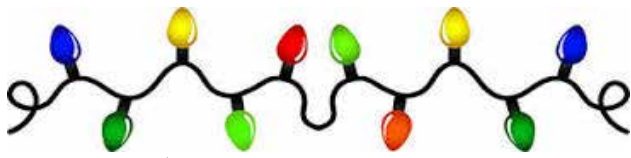


-Michelle Thomson 707-477-3536

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.





An Invitation

Wednesday, December 29 at
11:30am

Bethlehem Women invite you to
their annual Christmas program
and luncheon.

Men and women are invited.

Enjoy a delicious potluck and
program.

Installation of officers
Hosted by Ruth Circle



Treasurer's Report

Beverly Schaap

October 2021

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$21,624	\$25,300	-\$3,676
Expenses	\$32,382	\$29,969	\$2,413
Net	-\$10,758	-\$4,669	-\$6,089

YTD 2021

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$219,731	\$215,400	\$4,331
Expenses	\$241,918	\$275,326	-\$33,408
Net	-\$22,187	-\$59,926	\$37,739

Amount needed to meet the budget \$6,216 per week
October \$4,305

Who is Jesus to you?

From *Christ in Our Home* (December 2021)

Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for
another? (Luke 7:18-30)

Have you ever felt like John in this reading? Have you wondered what Jesus is up to? Why isn't Jesus doing more about injustice in the world? Sometimes I think about people experiencing homelessness, those who need to flee their countries and have nowhere to turn, victims of human trafficking, those who are unemployed or underemployed, children abused or neglected, people arrested or imprisoned unjustly, and all the other pain around the globe, and I wonder: Where is God? What is Jesus doing?

Sometimes I have expectations that God should rush in and rescue us miraculously. I am not always willing to accept that God sends us - sends *me* - to reach out in God's name with justice and food and protection for the vulnerable. Advent is a good time to reflect on who Jesus is to us and what our expectations are of this God-come-to-earth. We might prayerfully ponder: What is *my* role in bringing justice and peace? And what am I waiting for?

Dear Jesus, you are the one. Help us to be your heart,
hands, and feet in this broken world. Amen.

Prayer Concern: All who suffer injustice

Christ in Our Home

The January-February-March edition of *Christ in Our Home* is now available. Please send an email or contact the Church office for a copy to be mailed to your home. Please specify if you would like a large print edition.



These daily devotionals are another great way to worship at home and connect with scripture daily. Get your copy now!

The deadline for the next issue of The Bethlehem Star is Decemberr 23, 2021.

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.