

A Message from the Stewardship Committee

Each year we enter a time of discernment and faithful prayer about what it means to be stewards of God's gifts. A biblical definition of stewardship is found in Psalm 24:1: "Utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation." ... "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." The mission of Bethany Lutheran Church is to continue teaching the gospels to our congregation and to spread the word of God to others through evangelism, while being good stewards of God's gifts.

As the year comes to its end, it provides an opportunity to reflect on how we want to spiritually grow as a congregation. Stewardship within our congregation (teaching of the gospels) continued to be fulfilled, but our potential to effectively engage in evangelism (outside the congregation) and provide further spiritual growth within Bethany has been hampered by lack of financial resources.

Nonetheless, there is much to be thankful for. The many offerings received during the year as well as individual contributions of time and talents are much appreciated. And thanks to our committee members for working effectively while keeping operating costs to a minimum.

Our financial resources were sufficient to support annual operating expenses (salaries, utility costs, maintenance, etc.) slightly under budget. And additional financial resources were further required to keep the church building functional and safe by completing replacement of roof (to keep us dry) and replacement of the furnace in the original portion of the church building (to keep us warm and reduce utility costs). For these things, we are grateful.

Although the past few years have shown steady total giving, it has fallen short of allowing us to responsibly call a full-time pastor. We have been truly blessed to have Pastor Melba and Pastor Liz serve as part-time pastors. They have and continue to provide a strong spiritual foundation and great leadership. But to realistically achieve other aspects of our mission over the long term, more substantial and sustainable financial resources are required.

So, please reflect on the needs of The Church and consider a higher level of contribution to support our mission. This is perhaps a difficult request given the trying financial stresses on many of us. However, please know that even a small increase by many can result in a significant overall increase. And consider making a small sacrifice in one or more "luxury item(s)" (for example – as Pastor Melba often suggests: forego a \$5 cup of coffee from Starbucks once per week).

Also, please consider reaching out to a relative or friend, who might be interested in joining us in worship. Many individuals in today's divisive and uncertain world lead rather empty lives (whether they realize it or not). Bringing more meaning to their lives would be a blessing for all. Go be an evangelist!

Bethany Lutheran Church is truly one of God's awesome houses of worship. But we can do much more - particularly for our community - if more resources are made available. We graciously ask for your help in making this happen.



From the desk of Pastor Liz

Newsletter for December 2024

Another year and another start of the Advent season. The liturgical calendar helps mark time, but it also helps orient and shape our lives around Jesus's life, death, and Resurrection. That is what the Christian life is: a life shaped and transformed by Jesus's life.

Year C of the Revised Common Lectionary focuses on the Gospel of Luke. Luke's account of the Birth of Jesus is marked by songs of praise announcing and proclaiming who Jesus is and what his mission is here on earth. Four songs of praise found in Luke are often used as part of various liturgies.

The first song is Mary's Song, or the Magnificat (My soul Magnifies the Lord), in Luke 1:46-55. Mary sings a song of praise that God chose her to carry Christ as the savior. She sings of Jesus coming to God, turning the world upside down as this savior will feed the hungry, heal the sick, and bring down tyrants. Check out the Canticle of Turning (ELW 723). This verse is often sung during the Evening Prayer of Vespers.

The second Song is Zechariah's song or Benedictus (Blessed Be the God Israel), found in Luke 1:67-79. Here, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, after the birth of his son, sings a song of praise to God announcing the coming of the Savior and a song of salvation history, Of God's unique presence and action for the people of Israel in the past and now the Savior Jesus whom John will proclaim. The song of Zechariah is often sung during Matins or Morning Prayer (ELW pg 303). The emphasis is on Christ as the rising of the dawn.

The third song is Angel's Song or Gloria (Glory to God in the Highest), found in Luke 2:10-14, and is the song the Angels sing to the shepherds. It gives Glory to God and reminds us that God's son comes not to condemn the world but to bring peace. "Peace on Earth and goodwill toward men." This song is often used as a Canticle of Praise for worship. (Service of the Word, pg 213, is probably the most familiar)

The fourth song is Simeon's song or the Nunc Dimittis (Now let us depart) Luke 2:29-32. This song is sung by Simeon, who promises to see Israel's Salvation before he dies; when Jesus is presented at the temple to be blessed and circumcised, Simeon sees the Christ Child and praises God for keeping his promise. The song is sung during Compline or sometimes at the worship (ELW pg 324). It emphasizes God's presence and promises being fulfilled.

As we move toward celebrating Christmas, consider taking time each day to praise God. In the Morning, read Zechariah's song; at Noon, read Angel's song; in the Evening, read Mary's Song; and before bed, read Simeon's Song. Blessings to you this Advent Season.

See you in Church,

Pastor Liz Mayforth
(412) 977-9392

The Visitor

December 2024

The Newsletter for Bethany Lutheran Church
5303 Madison Avenue
Bethel Park, PA 15102
(412) 835-9221

To email messages to the office: bethanylutheranbp@gmail.com
(Please note that the Church office email address has changed)



SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE TIME

The Sunday Worship Service will begin at 10:30 A.M.
Please call me with any questions or concerns at 412-977-9392.

**God's Blessings,
Pastor Liz**

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER AT BETHANY



STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

Next Meeting is Scheduled for Tuesday, December 17th at 7:00 P.M.



COUNCIL MEETING

Church Council will meet following Worship on December 22nd



ANNUAL MEETING REPORTS

All committee and financial reports for the Annual Meeting need to be submitted for preparation purposes. More information to follow.



CHOIR PRACTICE

Choir Practice is every Thursday at 7:00 P.M. Come join us!!!



Advent: Preparing for the Light

By Rob Blezard

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. -Luke 1:78,79

You need only watch the news to know that we are, indeed, a people who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Ignorance, hatred, politics, war, famine, greed, crime, apathy – all of these are rampant. We need the light of the dawn from on high to break upon us. We need to be guided in the way of peace.

Our primary stewardship responsibility is to live in such a way that our hearts, minds and spirits are aligned with God's purposes. How else can we become the people God wants us to be? For centuries, Advent was a time for Christian reflection and soul-searching; of asking God to show us anew what areas of our lives are still in darkness and in need of God's light.

Read the above passage from Luke 1, which captures the essence of Advent. Read it again, but slowly, as you would savor a fine chocolate with complex sweetness and luxurious texture. Go ahead. What new meanings do you discern? What nuances?

The four weeks of Advent help bring us into the proper spirit to receive "the dawn from on high" that will "give light" to us who sit in darkness. Advent worship is rich in symbolism.

- The paraments are deep blue, the color of the sky before dawn, when it is no longer night but not quite morning.
- With its five candles, the Advent wreath provides a visual representation of the gathering dawn. We light one candle the first week of Advent, two the second week, three the third, and four the fourth. At Christmas we light all five because the dawn of Christ has come.

Each candle and each week of Advent has a theme. Each expresses the gifts of God we have in the miracle of Christmas: Hope, Peace, Joy. Love. Make this Advent a time for prayer, devotion, meditation and focus on the light of Christ, which is coming anew into your heart – and the world! May it dispel all our darkness!

--Robert Blezard

Copyright © 2024, Rev. Robert Blezard. Reprinted by permission. Rob Blezard is web editor for the Stewardship of Life Institute and pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, MD.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION



Did you know there is an AED machine in our narthex? It is on the wall and is used to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest. It's a sophisticated yet easy-to-use medical device that can analyze the heart's rhythm and, if necessary, deliver an electrical shock or defibrillation to help the heart re-establish an effective rhythm. If it is ever needed, do not fear, there are voice prompts spoken once the system is activated. Stay tuned for more information/training on this important potentially life saving machine.

THOSE WHO SERVE THIS MONTH

WORSHIP SERVICES SUNDAY SCHEDULE

| Date | Communion Asst. | Reader | Acolyte |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 12/8/2024 | Jane Scheeser | Ruth Lipinski | Katie Hartos |
| 12/15/2024 | Cathy Irwin | James Palmer | Summer Parker |
| 12/22/2024 | Jeannine Stowers | Beverly Mueller | Katie Hartos |
| <i>Christmas Eve</i> 12/24/2024 | Jane Scheeser | Ruth Lipinski | Colt Widand |
| 12/29/2024 | Andrew Parker | Karen Housam | Summer Parker |

THOSE WHO SERVE THIS MONTH

USHER SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

Dan Volpatti will serve as Usher for the month of December

OFFERING COUNTERS' SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

The Offering Counters for the month of December are Jane Scheeser and Sandy Burns



PRAYER CHAIN

Anyone wishing to be on the Bethany Prayer Chain, please contact Terry Simony by email at bethanylutheranbp@gmail.com , or call the Bethany Church Office at: 412-835-9221.

Prayers Lifted Up This Month

Prayers for Healing and Wholeness for Danielle & Nicholas Boncella's son Cooper.

Prayers for Karen Housam's daughter Melissa, due to health issues.

Beverly Mueller's son, John's friend, Steven, passed away.

Steve's children are 10 and 15 years old. Our condolences to the family.

"I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Mark 11:24)

MORE IMPORTANT INFORMATION



For anyone that may be an investment client of THRIVENT, did you know you are able to annually request a "COMMUNITY IMPACT CARD" that has a value of \$250? You would just need to go on line and choose Bethany as the recipient. There is no cost to you. In the past we have used these cards to purchase meals for First Responders, Vacation Bible School materials, Sunday School Supplies, etc. If you are so inclined, please consider supporting Bethany in our outreach efforts



Wow. Amazing. Bethany Lutheran a small but mighty church. This is Lisa from SHIM. I counted the gift cards and the grand total is \$910 !!! On behalf of SHIM clients and staff, I'd like to thank the congregation for their generosity. These donations will certainly help to make the holidays merrier and brighter for our clients.



JOIN US FOR OUR CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

7:00 PM ON DECEMBER 24, 2023

We have the privilege of having members of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra playing for us for the Christmas Eve service. Join us in celebration of our Savior's birth.

DONATIONS may be made TO DEFER THE COST OF THE SYMPHONY by depositing a marked envelope in the offering plate.

THANK YOU!



Just a reminder with the Holidays on the way, if you or your loved one is unable to attend church, Pastor Mayforth is available to visit for prayers and the distribution of Holy Communion. Please call the church to arrange a time convenient for you.



CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

We are grateful the following individuals have agreed to remain on Church Council:

Returning Members:

Sharon Brooks
Craig Conn
Janice Currie
Carol Hirschman
Karen Housam
Ruth Lipinski
Jeannine Stowers
Dan Volpatti
Deborah Wanamaker

Responsibilities may include mission, operations, congregational life, community outreach, education, finances, and worship.

Three additional members have come forth and have offered to serve as well.

New Nominees:

Sheree Kuehl
Jim Palmer
Jane Scheeser

A brief congregational meeting will be held on December 15th to officially vote and welcome them. Thank you to all.



DONATE TO PAJAMA PALS

For children in foster care, shelters, and other crisis transitions, the holidays can be really difficult. One simple, yet powerful thing we can all do is make sure they feel as safe, warm, and as comfortable as possible when they lay down to sleep at night.

We, as a church, would like to partner with Pajama Pals! Now through December 15th, you can donate new pajamas that in turn will be donated to local non-profits including 412 Foster Project, which just announced an exciting expansion that will allow them to help even more precious children.

Please bring your non-wrapped pajamas for children and place them in the basket in the narthex now through December 15th. We will then deliver them to the drop-off box located at Evey Hardware in Bethel Park the following week.

A special requestPLEASE....NO HOLIDAY OR SEASONAL DESIGNS.

We want the kids to be able to wear them year-round.

Thank-you in advance for your help and generosity!

CELEBRATIONS WITHIN OUR CONGREGATION IN DECEMBER



Happy Birthday to the following individuals:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1-December Michael Vargo | 9-December James Palmer | 19-December Kris Volpatti |
| 4-December Cathy Irwin | 14-December Beverly Mueller | 24-December Carolyn Hirschman |
| 4-December Lisa Unger | 18-December Rich McFall | 31-December Scott Hirschman |
| 6-December Matthew Monte | 18-December Deborah Wanamaker | |
| 8-December Ruth Lipinski | 18-December Peter Dibble | |



Happy Anniversary to the following individuals:












| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1-December Stephanie & Patrick Corbett | 28-December Sharon & Leigh Brooks |
| 1-December Kris & Dan Volpatti | |



Bethany Lutheran Church



December 2024

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|-----------|---|---|--|-----------|--|
| 1 9:15am: <i>Intergenerational Sunday School</i> 10:30am:Worship  | 2 | 3 | 4 7:00pm: Shamrock Manor Women's Club  | 5  7:00pm: Choir Practice | 6 | 7 |
| 8 10:30am:Worship  | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12  7:00pm: Choir Practice | 13 | 14 |
| 15  ELECTION OF COUNCIL 10:30am:Worship FIRST RESPONDERS LUNCHEON | 16 | 17 7:00pm: Stewardship Meeting  | 18 | 19  7:00pm: Choir Practice | 20 | 21 <i>Longest Night-- Blue Christmas</i>  |
| 22 10:30am:Worship   Council Meeting following Worship | 23 | 24  7:00pm: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service | 25 <i>Christmas</i>   | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 10:30am:Lessons & Carols  | 30 | 31 <i>New Year's Eve</i>  | | | | |



OFFICE CLOSURE



*Terry Simony will be out of the office Monday, December 23RD thru January 1ST.
 In observance of the Christmas, the church office will be closed Wednesday, December 25th
 and, in observance of New Year's Day, the church office will be closed Wednesday, January 1st.
 We will resume regular office hours Thursday, January 2nd.*



shutterstock - 143319268

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A BLESSED NEW YEAR FROM TERRY SIMONY & FAMILY!