



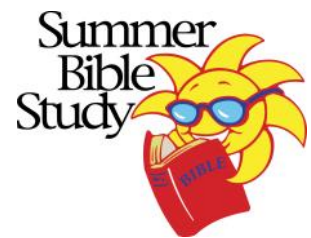
I've been thinking a lot about hope recently. Part of it is because of some very positive changes that have happened recently in my personal life. I also think part of it though is that at this time of year we are well into planning and dreaming and scheming (in a good way) for the next upcoming school year. Programs and events are being organized and decisions are being made about the direction that the congregation will pursue for the next year. Dreams are being made into reality and there is a large vibe of hope in the air. It feels especially nice to have that sense of hope when there are so many constant reminders why to not have it.

So that gets me wondering — where do you see hope in your life or in the world? What things are bringing you life? What things are reminding you that there is good in the world? I get reminded of it all the time in glimpses here at Bethlehem. I saw it as I watched youth on the Montana trip grow in their faith over the course of the week we were there. I feel it when I am surrounded by Bethlehem members who are excited about getting out into the community and meeting their neighbors. I hear it when Bethlehem members share stories with me about all of the ways this community of faith has made a positive impact on their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

I am often reminded of the quote by Paul from 2 Corinthians where he writes, "Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart." Paul was writing here about how he continues to have hope even in the midst of challenges. I think of this quote often when I feel surrounded by the challenges and struggles of the world. Then I come here to work each day and I find myself feeling like Paul — not losing hope because of all the amazing ways that God's love shines in this place among you all. That is where I find my hope.

I pray that you are able to see, hear, feel, and experience glimpses of hope in your lives. I also pray that it encourages you to not lose heart as we seek to share the story of Jesus with the world.

God's peace, Pastor Jacie




Deborah Circle would like to invite all interested persons to join us for a summer Bible study. **We will meet on August 19 in Grounds for Joy from 10:00-11:00 a.m.** We will use the summer study found in the Gather Magazine. Copies of the study will be available for those who don't have a subscription.

Hope to see you there!



August 22 in Grounds for Joy
To make an appointment, download the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit www.redcrossblood.org, or call 1-800-REDCROSS.

Could you sponsor a radio broadcast?
 Please call, e-mail, or stop by the office to sign up.
 Broadcasts are \$100 each.



BLC ADULT BOOK EXCHANGE
 IN GROUNDS FOR JOY



Like it.
 Love it.
 Share it.

~ Monthly Mission ~

Notes from the Community & Global Missions Board

Our featured mission for August is **Crossroads Campus Ministry at Minnesota State-Mankato**. Crossroads traces its origins all the way back to a Lutheran club at Mankato State Teachers College over a hundred years ago! Bethlehem has had close ties with Crossroads over the years, and Pastor Jacie is on the Board currently. Crossroads sponsors several programs which address needs for student food support. Campus Kitchen, a food shelf, is even able to provide halal food as needed. “Lunch 4 a Buck” provides a weekly tasty meal rotated between four Lutheran churches, including BLC. Contact Jan Blaisdell if you’re interested in volunteering. Crossroads has been without a designated pastor for the last year. There is a weekly Sunday night service using rotating local pastors during the school year. They are rebuilding programs post-COVID and have recently initiated a search for a new minister. There is a plan to expand services offered as staff grows. Our giving goal for August is \$1000. Thanks for supporting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of our students!

2023 STAGO Summer Organ Recital Series

The Sioux Trails Chapter of the American Guild of Organists is pleased to present its annual summer organ recitals on Tuesdays at 12:10 p.m. through August 8. There are only two recitals at Bethlehem Lutheran left on our schedule! (Where has the summer gone?!?) This yearly tradition is now in its 42nd year. Admission is free; however, a free-will donation will be accepted. Visit www.agosioxtrails.org for more information.



August 1 – Kraig Windschitl
August 8 – Christine Schulz



Financial Report



Elizabeth Ruiz, Financial Secretary

We are deep in the heart of summer, and the deficit has grown deeper as well. As of the end of June, the general fund deficit had reached \$38,247. While member giving has been steady at 94% of budget, there are several expenses that have been higher than budgeted. Mid-year contribution reports were mailed out in early July. Please review your report carefully for contributions and pledge amounts. Report any questions or errors to Elizabeth in the church office, preferably by e-mail at elizruiz@blcmankato.org.

~ Council Corner ~

Highlights from the Monthly Council Meeting

Here are the “highlights” of the Bethlehem Council meeting held on **July 18**. Meeting minutes with more details are posted at www.blcmankato.org and are also available in the church office notebook. Visit with Council members with questions and concerns! We welcome your conversation & feedback!

Finances: The **general fund balance** as of June 30 is a deficit of **-\$38,247** as a result of higher expenses and less than 100% member giving. 6-month giving statements and a letter encouraging fulfillment and advance payment of pledges has been sent to BLC members. The Finance Committee and Council are monitoring this situation and are hopeful that a traditional summer deficit will be resolved by the end of the year. The **mortgage balance** now stands at **\$686,278**. An early principal payment of \$22,000 was made. The mortgage interest rate and monthly payments have been reset with financial adjustments made by the Finance Committee. Annual financial review process is being evaluated and updated.

LSS/REACH Lease & Facilities: New 5-year lease has been negotiated with LSS for its office space and the REACH. Lease rates will increase 2% each year after year 1. Facilities improvements to address humidity and bathroom renovation needs will be conducted by BLC.

Family Faith Formation: A successful summer Montana youth trip reported. The FFF comprehensive plan is being revised to address changing needs and priorities. Monthly young adult gatherings are being planned starting in September.

Boards/Committees: Revised **Finance Committee & Stewardship Board** responsibilities approved. New **Fair Trade Committee** responsibilities approved. These will guide the annual work of these groups. Annual lay staff performance reviews completed by pastor & **Personnel Committee** with positive outcomes. **Facilities Board** has developed a list of 5 needed short-term & long-term facilities projects. They will be investigated for costs and options. **Welcome & Inclusion Board** participated in Mankato Juneteenth events.

Council: Liaisons to BLC boards/committees & calendar of meetings approved. Plan on fall **November 19** and spring **April 21** for semi-annual meetings. 11 Council goals approved for 2023-24. Council will review 1 of the 5 strategic goals at each monthly meeting with background and progress to be presented. Council members to interview community leaders to fulfill strategic goal.

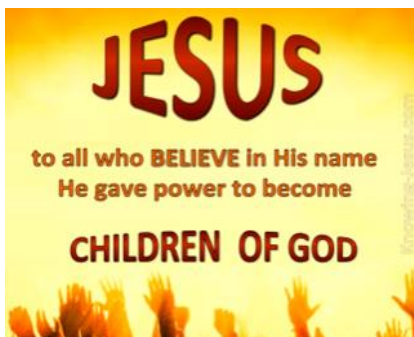
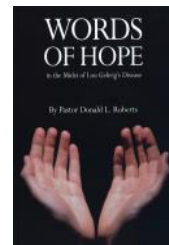
Pastors: Annual pastoral performance review process, timeline & questions approved for July & August. Continued support reported for Cruz family with WELCOME project. Pastors meeting monthly with REACH and LSS staff to build relationships. Good news for Pr. Jacie in securing a Mankato house with closing/moving plans scheduled for end of July!

Next Council Meeting: Tuesday, August 15. No June Council meeting scheduled.



Pastor Don's Devotion

Pastor Don Roberts served as pastor at Bethlehem from 1989-1996. He was diagnosed with ALS/Lou Gehrig's disease in 1995 and continues to be an inspiration of life and faith to our congregation.



He was in the world, and the world came into being through him. He came to what was his own, and his people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become the children of God. ~ John 1:10-12

The preexistent Christ created the world. He created us. He owns us. When the preexistent Christ became Jesus, he came to his own. Some didn't accept him. For those who believed, they became children of God. So are we. We are children of God. Why? Jesus died a painful death on the cross to make us children of God. This makes it personal in baptism. Most of us were baptized as babies. As we grow, it is our responsibility to accept Jesus. Some of us know someone who has not accepted Jesus. Show love to them. If we get into a conversation with them, don't argue with them. Just listen.

Jesus owns the world. He has given us stewardship of it. As children of God, take care of it. Do things that protect the environment. Stop doing things that harm it. After all, we are children of God.



Family Faith Formation Updates

Anna Wencl, Family Faith Formation Director



Mountaintop Moments

By Anna Wencl, Family Faith Formation Director

Last month, seven youth along with two adults and myself took the train through North Dakota to spend a week together at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp in Lakeside, Montana. I knew it would be a beautiful place and experience, but I wasn't quite prepared for how incredibly awe-inspiring it would be.

Few places give me a sense of presence like mountains. As we sat by the shores of Flathead Lake – whether collecting rocks and sea glass, singing by the campfire during evening worship, or wondering together on the dock during Bible study – I couldn't help but feel God's presence all around. God is indeed everywhere and in all places, but certain places can't help but take your breath away. It's no wonder Jesus had so many ministry moments in the mountains! As the mountains stretched to the Montana sky, we also stretched ourselves that week, both individually and collectively. Whether taking on the high ropes course when we were scared, continuing to paddle through a windy canoe trip, working as a team on the low ropes course, taking just one more step to reach the top of Mt. Aenaes when our legs wanted to give out, or simply learning to make French toast over a camp stove early in the morning, we all stretched ourselves to grow. It was amazing to see what that sense of presence inspired in each of us.



As a way of saying thanks for your prayers and support, I leave you with The Montana Blessing we learned at FLBC:

***May your visions be as boundless as the breadth of the sky
May your soul have the strength of the mountains
May your life be as peaceful as the gently falling snow
And may your days be as many as the trees***

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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*A Reconciling in Christ
Congregation*

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 **Church Calendar**
Summer 2023 

Worship

**Sundays at
9:30 a.m.**

in sanctuary & online
*Wednesday worship
will resume in the fall.*

**Our Sunday service is
streamed live on
Facebook &
broadcast on KTOE
Radio at 11 a.m.**

Education

Please check Family
Faith Formation on
our website for details
about children's/
youth activities.

**Sunday morning
Adult Forums
will resume
in the fall.**

Adult Bible Study

**Tuesdays, 7 a.m.
Lectionary online**

* * * * *

**Book of Faith will
resume in the fall.**

Small Groups

**Music rehearsals,
book clubs,
social groups,
boards/
committees, etc.**

**Please check online
calendar for times
& places.**

**Fellowship
With Food**

Sundays, 10:30 a.m.
Join us for
coffee & treats
in Grounds for Joy
after worship.

**Wednesday Night
Suppers will resume
in the fall.**

An update on the Cruz family: Andrea, Ariac, Randy and Kamil are doing well in their new Minnesota home! And our multi-congregational collaboration is also going very well! Now might be a good time to take stock of just how far we have all come... Those who have been spending the most time with Ariac and Andrea and their children can tell you the most about their amazing journey getting to know their new home. Ariac, Andrea and Randy have all been doing summer school, and when they are not in school, Ariac and Andrea have been getting additional tutoring from volunteers, and their English is coming along nicely! The boys keep busy playing, and perhaps their favorite mode of transportation this summer is their bikes? The biggest news of late is that the WELCOME team has helped the family to procure a law firm to assist them with the process of seeking asylum. (Hint - it's COMPLICATED!) Thanks to your donations, we have paid the retainer to the law firm who is in the process of helping both Ariac and Andrea complete applications for asylum. Once those are submitted, they will be able to apply for green cards for employment. The entire process will take a few years at best, and there are no guarantees of success but we remain hopeful.

But we also need to mention the success of our collaborative work as congregations! Seven months ago we said "let's try this" and we are proud of our success to date. Thanks to the many financial donations, we are able to help the family with the costs of rent and utilities on an ongoing basis. This is after we worked together to set them up with an entire household of necessities! Volunteers from each of our churches — Bethlehem, Christ the King, Grace, Calvary, and Messiah — are providing transportation, helping navigate the medical system, offering assistance and tutoring with school, procuring proper legal advice, and in general, being "family". Others are monitoring the financial needs, staying in touch with the Synod, and planning fundraising opportunities. It's a lot of people, a lot of work, and together, it's apparent we are all a part of "God's Work, Our Hands." We give thanks to God for this opportunity to serve, and to serve together!

P.S. — watch for news of an opportunity to celebrate all these successes later this fall!