



# The Bethlehem STAR

## December 2022



As we move into December, we have begun the season of Advent. Traditionally we talk about Advent being a season of waiting. We await the birth of Christ. For those of us here in the northern hemisphere, we also are into the season of winter and we await for return of longer hours of light and springtime. During wintertime, when it gets dark early I find myself reflecting on the darkness. Usually many of us have been taught to associate darkness with bad or sad things, but maybe there are good qualities to darkness as well. Darkness can invite reflection. It can be a space of quiet in a world that is filled with noise. There are even many things in creation that need the dark to survive and thrive. The quiet and reflective nature of darkness actually is very appropriate then for Advent.

The waiting of Advent is something that our wider culture is not good at. Back when I was preparing to move I would go to stores to get packing supplies and I noticed that Christmas decorations were already out. It was only the beginning of October! We are taught not to wait for Christmas, but instead to zoom right toward it as soon as Halloween is behind us. It is no surprise though because do any of us really like waiting? Advent though invites us to wait and to remain still for a moment before we go zooming off into the celebrations of Christmas. Maybe, like darkness, Advent can then be seen in a more positive light. Maybe we can see the waiting of Advent to be a joyful thing because it creates a chance for us to breathe in a world that embraces hectic hustle culture.

As we move through the season of Advent, I pray that you are able to find the waiting to be joyful. I pray that you find it to be peaceful and that it may help you to embrace Christmas with even more joy once it arrives. ~ **Pastor Jacie**



### Join Us For **Wednesday Night Suppers!**

JD Truffles Catering will prepare a variety of delicious weekly meals, and Bethlehem volunteers will greet and serve you. **All are welcome!** Join us between 5:00 and 6:15 p.m.

#### Wednesday, December 7:

Beef stew, salad, roll

#### Wednesday, December 14:

Lasagna, salad, garlic toast

#### Wednesday, December 21:

**NO SUPPER ~ WINTER BREAK**

#### Wednesday, December 28:

**NO SUPPER ~ WINTER BREAK**

Free will donations are welcomed to cover supper expenses.

### Imagine: A Vision of Hope

As we conclude our capital campaign, we are excited to report that 125 Bethlehem families and individuals have committed over \$720,000 to eliminate the mortgage! Thank you! It's still not too late to make your commitment. You can contact the church for a form, or go online to our website.

If you would like to make a special year-end gift to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, here are two options that can improve your tax situation as well as benefit the ministry of our congregation:

#### **Donate Stocks or Mutual Funds**

Contributing securities to Bethlehem offers valuable financial and tax benefits:

- Donors may deduct the entire value of the securities as a charitable donation; and
- Donors avoid paying capital gains tax on any increased value of the securities.

If you are interested in making an end-of-year gift to Bethlehem via stocks or mutual funds, it is important that you not sell the securities first. Please contact your financial advisor or Bethlehem's office for more information.

#### **Charitable IRA Rollover**

Many donors have discovered the benefits of making a gift using their Individual Retirement Account (IRA). If you are 70½ or older, you may be interested in this way to make a significant gift while lowering the income and taxes from your IRA withdrawals. Benefits of an IRA charitable rollover:

- Donors avoid taxes on transfers of up to \$100,000 from your IRA to Bethlehem;
- Donors satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year;
- The gift reduces the donor's taxable income, even if you do not itemize deductions;
- A charitable IRA rollover is not subject to the 50% deduction limits on charitable gifts; and

You make a real difference in the ministry of Bethlehem! **Thank you.**



**Make a joyful noise!** We're looking for special music for our 4 and 6 p.m. Christmas Eve worship services. Contact Charlie at [charlieleftridge@gmail.com](mailto:charlieleftridge@gmail.com) or (701) 690-8861 with ideas or if you want to sing/play/dance and just need music.



## Monthly Mission



Notes from the Community & Global Missions Board



### God's Global Barnyard is our December Mission. Our goal is \$8,000.

Thank you, Bethlehem, for your faithful support of ELCA global missionaries and ministries. In this season of giving, we want to help fill hearts with joy, hope, love, and peace for Christmas. We believe that God is calling us into the world together — and with generous, loving hands, we can make a difference. What do pigs, cows, goats, chickens, and honeybees have in common? They are all part of God's Global Barnyard, a ministry that helps families who live in hunger and poverty around the world to become self-sufficient. These gifts keep on giving for years to come. Please consider "purchasing" an animal to support our Bethlehem mission. Thank you for your prayers and generosity to this important mission. There are forms available on the kiosk in the narthex or online.

**The deadline for names to be included on the screen at the Christmas Eve worship services is 5 p.m. on Tuesday, December 20.**



### Adult Forum Schedule 10:45 a.m. In Grounds for Joy (unless otherwise indicated)

#### December 4:

**New Associate Pastor Installation Reception — NO FORUM**

**December 11: Christmas Hymn Sing in the sanctuary**

**December 18: NO FORUM**

**December 25: Christmas Day — NO FORUM**



**Sunday, December 11 — 9:30 a.m.**

Choir & Ensemble program during worship

Christmas hymn sing in the sanctuary following worship

**Sunday, December 18 — 9:30 a.m.**

Children/Youth Christmas program during worship

**Saturday, December 24 — 4:00 & 6:00 p.m.**

Christmas Eve candlelight worship

**Sunday, December 25 — 9:30 a.m.**

Christmas Day worship



## Council Corner



Highlights from the Monthly Council Mtg.

Here are the "highlights" of the Bethlehem Council meeting held on **November 15**. Meeting minutes with details will be posted at [www.blcmankato.org](http://www.blcmankato.org) and also are available in the church office notebook. Visit with Council members with questions and concerns! We welcome your conversation & feedback!

**Financial Report:** Great News! The September 30 deficit of **-\$43,247** has been converted to a **positive October 31 balance of +\$6,129.45** as a result of generous giving. **Mortgage balance is \$1,020,000** with monthly payments of \$8,187 for principal & interest. Members are encouraged to fulfill their 2022 financial commitments to the end of this year to maintain the positive news!

**Capital Campaign:** Progress continues with **125 donors** and **\$720,936** committed to paying off the mortgage. **151 pledges** totaling **\$322,798** have been received to fulfill the 2023 annual fund mission and ministry. We continue to reach out to every member in seeking a commitment to these 2 financial goals. You may complete an online intent card or turn in your card to the office. Save the date on **Sunday, December 18** after worship to celebrate our financial campaigns with a reception in Grounds for Joy. The Stewardship Board wishes to thank YOU for your support of Bethlehem. Time for charcuterie treats and conversation with the Bethlehem family.

**Financial Review Committee:** Mark Larsen appointed to new 3-year term on committee that conducts annual internal review of BLC finances. Thank you Mark for continuing your service!

**Welcome Pastor Jacie Richmond:** Pr. Jacie is meeting Bethlehem members and orienting to church activities as our new associate pastor. She appreciates the warm welcome from the congregation & staff! **Official pastoral installation will be held during worship on Sunday, December 4.** A welcome reception will be held in the dining room after worship. Join us!

**Pastoral Housing Allowances:** Specific dollar amounts from annual pastoral salaries were designated toward housing allowances for tax purposes.

**Resettling Refugees & Asylum Seekers:** Bethlehem continues engagement with area ELCA churches to provide for future financial support of refugees & asylum seekers. Pr. Jacie is representing Bethlehem in meetings with next one scheduled for December 8. BLC Community & Global Mission Board is supportive of this community initiative.

**Fall Semi-Annual Meeting:** Sunday, November 20 at 10:45 – 11:45 a.m. in dining room. A quorum of 75 members is needed. Please attend to allow us to conduct important business!!

**Next Council Meeting:** Tuesday, December 20.



## Financial Report

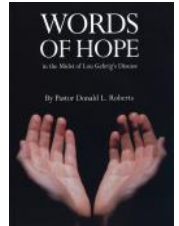


Elizabeth Ruiz, Financial Secretary

There is wonderful news to report. The deficit that had grown to over \$43,000 at the end of September has been erased. At the end of October, the general fund balance rebounded to a **positive \$6,129!!!** The generosity of the members of Bethlehem never ceases to amaze. General fund giving year-to-date is at 94% of budget, up from 83%. If you have not yet turned in your commitment form for 2023, there is still time. **Thank you for your continuing support of the mission and ministry of Bethlehem Lutheran Church.**

## 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.**



***The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
Those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.***  
~ Isaiah 9:2



In the Old Testament, Israel was going through a rough time. It was called a time of darkness. There was a hope for a better future. It was called light. We have times of darkness in our lives, but hope is on the way. The prophecy was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus' coming.

In John's gospel, Jesus is the light of the world. That is why we celebrate Christmas. The light of the world has come to live amongst us and experience our darkness. Though times have changed, Jesus on the cross experienced all of our darkness. Hope is on the way.

Christmas is meant to be joyful and less stressful. Humanity has made it stressful. If you have traditions that you can't do with a positive attitude, my advice is to stop them. Christmas is lonely for many. Bring the light of Jesus to them. Let them express their loneliness to you. They will feel better. Jesus is the light of the world.

***Thanks be to God!***

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Bethlehem offers taxi service for members who are not able to drive themselves to and from church. Rides are available for Sunday worship services only. Please call WS one day before and tell them that it is for Bethlehem Lutheran Church. You will be asked to sign a voucher, and the church will be billed.

## Family Faith Formation Updates

Anna Wencil, Family Faith Formation Director



Bethlehem Children & Youth Present

# GABE'S ANGELS

*All In A Day's Work*

Traditional Christmas Program  
Sunday, December 18th at 9:30 am

## NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Rake the Town

Organ Demonstration with Christine Schulz

## A Migrant Journey

WED., DEC. 14TH  
6:15-7:45 PM | DINING ROOM

Torchlight & Confirmation youth, along with youth from Messiah and Grace, will take part in an interactive experience in their small groups to learn about what it's like to be a migrant coming to our country. Parents and adults are welcome to join, too. Email [annawencil@blcmankato.org](mailto:annawencil@blcmankato.org) if you'd like to come.

Torchlight's Saint & Sinner Showcase

Youth Lock-in

Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
720 South Second Street  
Mankato, MN 56001

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

(507) 388-2925  
blchurch@blcmankato.org



*A Reconciling in Christ  
Congregation*

Pastor Jay Dahlvang: (507) 469-3792  
pastorjay@blcmankato.org

Pastor Jacie Richmond: (612) 581-8855  
pastorjacie@blcmankato.org



@bethlehem.mankato

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## ***Church Calendar – Fall/Winter 2022***

### **Worship**

**Sunday, 9:30 a.m.**  
*in sanctuary & online*

**Wednesday, 6:15 p.m.**

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

### **Education**

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

See the Adult Forum  
schedule on page 2.

### **Adult Bible Study**

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

**Wednesday at  
10:30 a.m. in  
Grounds for Joy**

### **Small Groups**

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

Please check online  
calendar for times  
& places.

### **Fellowship With Food**

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

**Wednesday Night  
Suppers** are served  
from 5-6:15 p.m.

**All calendar details can be found on the website at [blcmankato.org/calendar](http://blcmankato.org/calendar).**



**OUR MISSION STATEMENT:**  
*Bethlehem is an inviting community  
that is growing in Christ, loving our  
neighbors, and serving God's world.*

*The deadline for submitting  
newsletter articles is the 15th  
of each month.*

