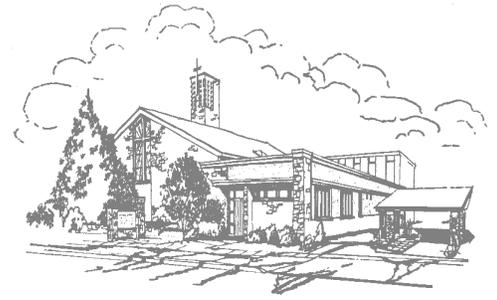


Bethlehem Star

Lutheran Church Lansing



Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lansing, Michigan

Pastor Matt Smith

August 2022

The main LEARNING component of my sabbatical was to become a Certified Church Revitalization Consultant with a focus on revitalization for Bethlehem. This included 17 video sessions, reading five books, and interacting online with church leaders all over the world after each session. And it is clear that Bethlehem already has EVERYTHING we need for revitalization.

Do we need revitalization? And, are we ready for revitalization; to see what the Spirit has in store for us as we move to a place of greater health? That is the simple definition of church revitalization – moving to a place of greater health. So, are we ready?

Now, you might be expecting (or even hoping) that there is an easy solution, a magic, silver bullet, - that if we do this ONE thing we will be able to turn around 20 plus years of decline in church membership and attendance. And, you might be expecting that I now have the answer, the quick fix for what ails us as a congregation.

Well, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but Bethlehem didn't get to where we are overnight, and there is not one single thing that we can do that will turn everything around overnight. There are no silver bullets. The journey of revitalization is just that – a journey. That is the bad news. But, there is lots and lots of Good news.

The first piece of good news I want to share is that **if God can save any person, God can revitalize any church.** But, don't take my word on that, listen to the Bible, from Ephesians chapter 3, probably not the Apostle Paul, but someone writing as him writes, "7 Of this Gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. 20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

God can and will accomplish abundantly for more than all we can ever ask or imagine. That is some good news for us to hear! God's got this... But, I have even more Good News:

While there is no silver bullet, there is one thing that every church who has ever worked through a process of revitalization and come to a place of greater health... there is one thing that they all have in common. Let me say that again. There is no overnight fix, **but there is one thing that every revitalized church has in common.** It seems important for us to know what that one thing is. The one thing is **PRAYER.** Prayer is the place for us to start. It is the first Mark of Discipleship.

So, if prayer is it, if prayer is the common denominator, what does that prayer need to look like?

Bethlehem has always been a place of prayer, and so I am asking the Board of Worship Life to do whatever needs to be done for us to get our prayer cards back in the pews, because prayer needs to be woven into our church culture, not just bookends at meetings.

- We need to pray that our members will learn to share the story of what Christ means to them; how God has been and is active in their lives and in the life of the congregation.
- We all need to pray that Bethlehem will have an ever increasing impact in our community for the Kingdom.
- We need to pray for ourselves as disciples that we will grow in spirit and truth.
- We need to pray for the community, that their hearts would be good soil, prepared to hear the gospel.
- And we need everyone to pray for the leadership (including me) to hear and be led by the Spirit in the right path.

We all need to be praying these things every day. But, not everyone has prayer as a Spiritual Gift. Everyone can pray, but there are people who are more dedicated in prayer than others. That's one thing, and the other is that if something is everyone's job, than it usually ends up being no one's job, because we all think that someone else is doing it.

And this is why I am seeking prayer warriors. In fact, we need a whole team. Above all, the team will be about praying for revitalization, the five things I mentioned above, and things that I didn't think of. That team's mission will be to find ways to empower our members to persevere in prayer. The prayer team could ask and arrange for people to stop and pray for the church and the pastor for one minute every hour of every day. I am also envisioning a sort of prayer manifesto, a written, public document about how our mission, ministry, and revitalization at Bethlehem will be covered in prayer.

(continued on page 7)

549 E. Mt. Hope Ave.
Lansing, Michigan 48910
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Ministers

All of the members of
Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Pastor Matthew A. Smith
pastormattsmith@gmail.com
(517) 881-9890

Pastoral Assistant
Pastor John Burow
pastorjburow@yahoo.com
(517) 614-4559

Church Secretary / Star Editor
Tracy Baker
bethlehemplansing@gmail.com
(517) 482-3225

Congregation President
Jim Whitman

Organist
James Schippers

Choir Director
Sue Nelson

Handbell Choir Director
James Schippers

Contemporary Worship Director
Laurey Wyble

Office Hours
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (M-F)

Visit our website at:
www.bethlutheran.org

Worship Schedule

10:00 - Worship - Holy Comm.
Sanctuary - in person
And LIVE Streaming on
YouTube and on Facebook at
BELC Worship Group

Worship in August 2022

Assisting Ministers

August 7 - Nancy Holderread
August 14 - Bob Meeker
August 21 - Don Telles
August 28 - Susan Mahoney

Children's Sermons

August 7 - Liisa Whitman
August 14 - Pastor Matt
August 21 - Pastor Matt
August 28 - Pastor John

Guess Who Is Turning 100?!

We are, and we look good for our age!

In September of 2024 we will be celebrating the 100th year anniversary of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church. What a wonderful milestone! **And one that will certainly warrant a special event.**

September of 2024 and the 100th Anniversary of BELC will be here before we know it, and we want to be ready! Here is your first assignment. Much of the history of the church is told in stories and in pictures. So, for the next few months we are asking that you find those special pictures that document the church's past. Whether it is a picture of the first members or of last week, we want your photos.

Please bring or send COPIES of your photos to the church office and ask them to be placed in the anniversary box. On your COPIED photos please provide information about the who, what, when, where and why if possible. Please only submit COPIES of your photos as we are going to be unable to return them to you after the celebration. In addition we are looking for your stories. A one page typed story to be included on a storyboard would be a wonderful way to share a memory you have about the church for all to see. These pages can be emailed to bethlehemplansing@gmail.com with the subject line **ANNIVERSARY STORY**, or brought to the church office. We hope to collect them from now until January 2023.

So, bring in your pictures and email those memories!

Statement of Purpose and Guiding Principles for Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

God's purpose for our church, as disciples of Jesus Christ, is to share with all people God's word, love and saving grace.

We will pursue this purpose by:

1. Being a Christ-centered, joyful community of baptized believers who gather regularly for worship, the Lord's Supper, study and prayer.
2. Inviting, accepting, and supporting all people as we build attentive, respectful relationships.
3. Taking action and risks with bold faith, acknowledging our imperfection, while trusting in Christ.
4. Actively engaging in community outreach near and far.
5. Being faithful stewards of our time, talents, possessions and all of God's creation.

Adopted January 29, 2017

Stewardship

Dear Friends of Bethlehem,

I hope this message finds you happy, healthy, and enjoying the beautiful Summer that we are having. As I embark on another term serving as President of the Congregation, I feel that it is important to touch on some topics that we will be addressing in the coming year that are important to you and Bethlehem's future.

In what seems like a very long time, we are slowly experiencing a more familiar worship experience by integrating elements that have been suspended. We are receiving Holy Communion at the altar, collecting the offering pew by pew, passing the peace in a more open manner, and not wearing masks except for singing to name a few. Being able to reintegrate these is a way to come together and regain the familiarity we have had in worship throughout our history. We sometimes take things for granted and expect that they will always be there, and this has been a learning experience for all of us. As we continue to move forward every effort will be made to resume a full worship service with no exceptions, as well as all the other functions that make Bethlehem our church.

With Pastor Matt returning from sabbatical, I feel it is the perfect time for Bethlehem to have a complete reengagement with Pastor Matt and the congregation. We will soon learn what his sabbatical was like, what he learned, and what his vision and hopes are for Bethlehem and the future. It should be an exciting time and the perfect time for a new beginning as we make a concerted effort to be the church we have always been in every way.

Another area of focus will be regarding the finances of the church. I realize that there is considerable discussion and concern among the congregation in this very important area, and I want to say that church leadership is and will be very involved as it is vital to the future of Bethlehem. It has been stated previously that Bethlehem is not the only church to experience shrinking membership due to members moving, passing away, dropping their membership, or just not going to church. All the aforementioned reasons do not stand as an excuse for us to just accept the new reality and say "that's the way it is". There must be a proactive approach to understanding our current financial situation and laying the foundation for the future vitality of our church. Due diligence must be performed to determine any areas of the budget that can be scaled back, identify dedicated funds that could be utilized in a more productive manner, and work with the Endowment Committee to determine how the current restrictions can be altered to create the availability of funds should they be needed. These are just a few of the areas that I feel we need to spend time with to provide a clear picture of our options. I want to convey that while I understand the genuine concern for our financial status that Bethlehem is not in any way in a panic situation. Yes, we have had to transfer funds from savings to checking to meet our obligations periodically, but we are blessed to have had those reserves in place to do that. It is important to remember that we converted CD's that were earning us virtually no interest over two years ago to a collateral loan with MSUFCU for easier access to the funds. To date, we have not accessed any of those funds. Our Treasurer and Financial Secretary will be deeply involved in our discussions as well as our advisor to the Endowment Committee. We will use their expertise to help guide us to the future and be good stewards of the resources we do have available to us. We will keep the congregation apprised and informed as this work begins and continues. Communication is key to transparency and the only way to provide the information and status of our financial picture and you can expect that going forward.

Pastor Burrow's sermon last week "Distracted Living", provided a good example of how easy it is to lose focus and lose sight of God in our lives. There is just too much noise in the world and there is no way we can manage it all on our own. Cindy Marsh talked about getting distracted in her Children's Talk a couple of weeks ago. I don't know about you, but I see a pattern that we need to pay attention to.

(continued on page 4)

Prayer Corner

Please Note: Hospitals do not notify churches when a member has been hospitalized; even if you inform them at registration of your church membership. If you would like a visit from the pastor, please call the church office at 482-3225 or call Pastor John directly at 517-614-4559.

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS and with your cards and visits:

Shelby Waters in The Willows at Okemos
John Nelson in Grandhaven Living Center-Senior Care in Lansing
Rhoda Hunter in Prestige Way in Holt
Pat Lebsack in The Willows, East Lansing

Those at home: *Mary Ann Allen, John Bartel, Virginia Bauman, Tosha Brisbo, Crystal Collins, Gina DeWitt, Doug Griffin, Emma Hicks, Marilyn Bass-Huyser, Nancy Jackson, Carole Kienke, Marilyn Kostrzewski, Michael Mahoney, Linda McClellan, Yvonne Nelson, Andrea Norman, Tharin Palmer, Carol Roush, Connie Scott, Audrey Skidmore, Betty VanConant, Cheryl VanPatten, Matthew White*

If you know of a member you would like us to include on this list or remove from this list, please call the church office.

SEMINARY GRADUATE Jason Mills, from BELC, has graduated from United Theological Seminary. Please keep him in your prayers.

MISSION PARTNERS Pray for the people and ministry at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Pray for the Baker Neighborhood Partners and Community Police Officer and other first responders.



Pastoral Acts:

Internments:

Doug Ilten June 27, 2022
Dorothy Weber July 18, 2022

Funeral:

John Ransom June 9, 2022

Memorial:

Nancy Misner June 28, 2022

PRAY for those who are on active duty in the United States Military Services:

Chris Browne – U.S. Air Force
Tyler Barnes – U.S. Marines
Darian Doan – U.S. Army
Andrew Devine – U.S. Nat'l Guard
Carson Kosloski – U.S. Marines
Joshua Kosloski – U.S. Army

Rusty Landry – U.S. Air Nat'l Guard
Christopher Morgan – U.S. Marines
Ben Painter – U.S. Air Force
Ryan Schiffner – U.S. Air Force



(continued from page 3)

My prayer is for us to all be grateful and hopeful for the future of Bethlehem. There are challenges ahead for us, but there have been challenges in the past as well. I still believe that by not getting distracted, paying attention to the details and managing the things we can manage, that Bethlehem will be here for many years to come. It is not blind faith that I say this, but with the faith in God that He will be with us as He always has been. I know that in my own personal life I can get in trouble when I think I have the answers and can do things on my own. That is when I realize how ill advised it is and try to refocus on God's grace and guidance. May we all stay connected as one, together as a congregation, and work towards the future in unity.

May God continue to bless Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Jim Whitman
Congregation President

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church Women

**Women of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
in America**

All women of Bethlehem Lutheran Church are members of the Women of the ELCA and are invited and encouraged to participate in all activities listed in the newsletters, bulletins, flyers or on the bulletin boards.

NEWS FROM YOUR BELCW BOARD

The board met June 6th via Zoom. Not much news to talk about except the Rummage Sale and Project Day.

The BELCW Board received approval from the Board of Buildings and Grounds and Congregation Council to have a rummage sale this fall. We have instituted some strict guidelines. We must have enough volunteers to run the sale and take down, or we will need to cancel. Also, if the Covid numbers go back up, we will cancel.

The date is September 28-30 for the sale.

Rummage **SHOULD NOT** be brought to church until **Friday, September 23-27.**

(as the sale could be canceled) **Rummage should not be placed on the stage!!!**

We will not be accepting computers, printers and components and no televisions or VCR's.

Project Day will be August 17, at 4:30 in the Social Hall. We will be assembling kits and boxing them to go to LWR. A brief BELCW meeting will take place afterwards and there will be light refreshments. Harmony Circle is hosting. Hope you to see you there.

Circles usually don't meet in the summer, but will begin to meet each month in person in October. If you are interested in joining a Circle, times and dates are as follows:

Rainbow – Chair – Susan Mahoney (944-1068) meets at 1:00 pm on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, at church.

Friendship – Chair – Cindy Marsh (285-4835) meets at 6:30 pm on the 3rd Monday of the month, at church.

Harmony – Chair – Laura Halbakken (281-3133) meets at 6:30 pm on the 2nd Monday of the month, at church.

“She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue” Proverbs 31:26

THANKOFFERINGS

We should be thankful everyday for something. Some days it is hard to find that thing. But we can always be thankful for the Love of God. In these times we always have God's promise, *“Behold I am with you always, even to the end of the age”*.
~Matthew 28:20.

**Continue to show your thankfulness
by filling your Thankoffering container.**



Here, you will find a list of the scripture readings that are part of the Daily Lectionary which move us from one Sunday to the next. You can also find these readings on our "Taking Faith Home" sheets we distribute after worship. They are also posted daily on our Facebook page. We encourage you to read your Bible every day as you live out your life of discipleship.

<> Pastor Matt

AUGUST 2022		
<u>01</u> Eccles. 1:2-2:23	<u>08</u> Genesis 15:1-6	<u>16</u> Hebrews 11:29-12:2
<u>02</u> Colossians 3:1-11	<u>09</u> Hebrews 11:1-16	<u>17</u> Psalm 37:27-33
<u>03</u> Ephesians 4:17-24	<u>10</u> Psalm 33:1-11	<u>18</u> Micah 6:6-8
<u>04</u> Psalm 19:7-13	<u>11</u> 1 Chron. 29:10-22	<u>19</u> Isaiah 30:18-22
<u>05</u> 2 Corinth. 4:16-18	<u>12</u> Isaiah 40:27-31	<u>20</u> Psalm 82
<u>06</u> Psalm 49:1-12	<u>13</u> Psalm 33:12-22	<u>21</u> Luke 13:10-17
<u>07</u> Luke 12:32-40	<u>14</u> Luke 12:49-56	<u>22</u> Isaiah 58:9-14
	<u>15</u> Jeremiah 23:23-29	<u>23</u> Hebrews 12:18-29
		<u>24</u> Leviticus 26:1-13
		<u>25</u> Exodus 20:8-11
		<u>26</u> Mark 2:23-28
		<u>27</u> Psalm 102:1-8
		<u>28</u> Luke 14:1-14
		<u>29</u> Proverbs 25:6-7
		<u>30</u> Hebrews 13:1-16
		<u>31</u> 1 Peter 4:4-11



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Marilyn Kostrzewski	August 4
Nancy Holderread	August 6
Mel White	August 13
Ron Miller	August 17
John Burow	August 18
John Riverside	August 20
Robert Christiansen	August 21
David Snider	August 29
Kay Bloom	August 30



Happy Birthday

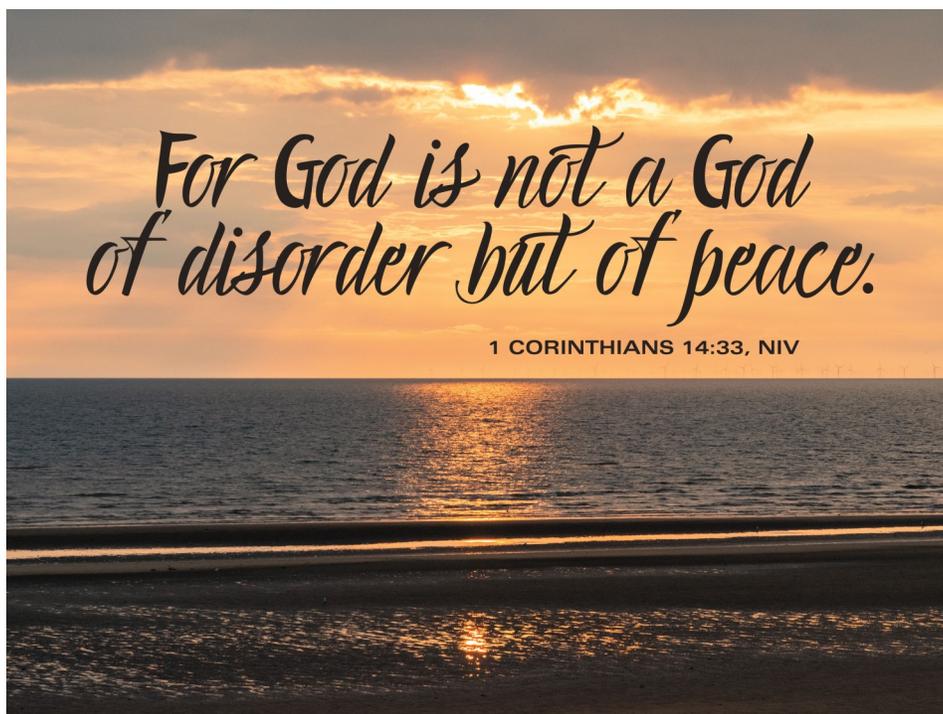
Each year our birthday list of members 62 and over is updated from the church records. If for some reason you do not wish to have your name appear in the newsletter or if you see someone we have missed, please call the church office.

(Continued from page 1)

PRAYER is the first step. There is not enough room in a newsletter to map out for you in detail every step we will need to take on the journey of revitalization. We will encourage our members to *practice* the Marks of Discipleship. We will reach out to inactive members and invite them to practice the Marks of Discipleship. We will also learn as much as we can about the community we are called to serve, and, through a process of Evangelism, invite our community to join us in *practicing* the Marks of Discipleship of Praying fervently, Worshipping regularly, Encouraging one another, Reading scripture daily, Giving freely of the gifts we have been given, Inviting others to know God, and Serving others. *A full report of my sabbatical will be available in August.*

◇◇ Pastor Matt

PRAYER WARRIORS Are you feeling called to serve as our lead prayer warrior for Bethlehem or to serve as a prayer warrior on the team? Please speak with Pastor Matt after you have taken time to pray over the calling God is placing in your life. Bethlehem needs YOU. Training will be provided.



Thank you!!

Dear Bethlehem Family,

Don and I want to thank all of you for the love and support you have shown us during my hospitalization and recovery at home. Your cars, phone calls and prayers, as well a God's presence, have been so important and appreciated in the healing process. Special thanks to Pastor John for his phone calls and visits. Our Bethlehem family is truly a blessing.

With love and thanks, *Don & Lois Cairns*

Bethlehem Star

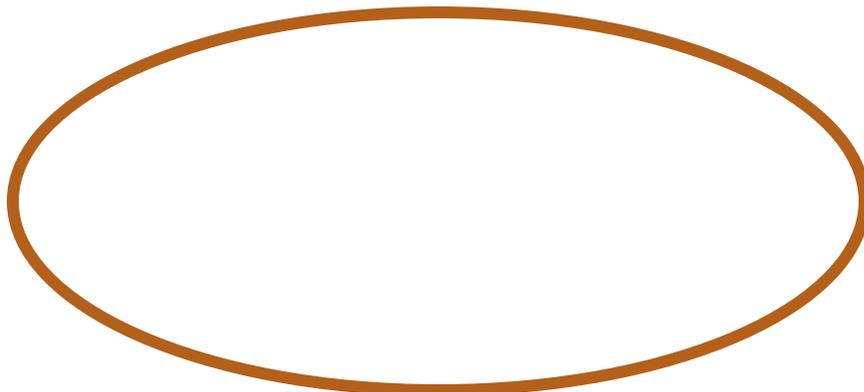
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Newsletter Deadline is **August 15**
for the **September 2022** Bethlehem Star.

Also available at
www.bethlutheran.org

In-Home Date: Saturday, July 30 2022
Mailed on July 28, 2022

