



ANNUAL REPORT

— 2020 —



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



A MESSAGE FROM ELCA PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON

Dear friends in Christ,

This year has been a challenging one! The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the church and society. We have had to shift the ways we engage in ministry from a focus on in-person worship and meetings to livestream worship, virtual meetings and gatherings in the parking lot. We have had to shift to teaching children at home and working from home. We have not been able to travel to see friends or relatives or to celebrate life events. This has also been a time to address economic and social justice issues, to shift our thinking and our way of life.

In times such as this, our baptism in Christ makes a difference and makes us different. Like Christians before us, we recall that God is faithful to God's promises and God's people. We see that God enables us to connect with one another even when we are separated. Shifts in the world invite us to be innovative in how we do God's work and reach out to all ages in making disciples. We see that God is at work not only in our buildings but beyond them as well. We have found new ways to serve our neighbors and reach those in need.

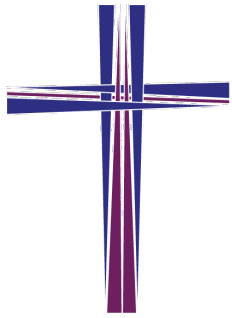
As we experience this time of uncertainty, we sense something new emerging. In many places there are new strategies and renewed energy for ministry, often generated by emerging leaders. We have developed a framework to build on, and now is the time to engage in hard work together. As you do in your congregation, we want our collaborative efforts to be both faithfully thoughtful and sustainable. We want to build up the body of Christ today and for the future.

Looking across the church, I am grateful for your generous giving of time, talents and resources. Yes, God does continue to bless us! God will provide both relief from life's struggles and hope for a stronger church, God's church. We do not need to know how the future will unfold. As members in the body of Christ, we need only trust that God is with us and will provide.

Building up the body of Christ together,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." —Ephesians 4:11-16



Bethany Lutheran Church

We **INVITE** all; We **GROW** in faith;
We **GO** to share God's love and grace.



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Bethany Lutheran Church

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January 2021
Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson's
Report to the
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

Dear Pastors, Deacons, SAMs, Council Presidents and Lay Leaders of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

On behalf of the synod council and the synod ministers, I want to express to you all my deepest appreciation and thanks for the hard work you've all done in the last nine months to keep your congregational members and neighbors safe during this unprecedented time in history. You made difficult decisions, adapted your ministry, improvised, experimented and learned as fast as you could, ways to connect with your people safely! Thank you for your faithful ministry! You

have done extraordinary creative ministry even as you have been grieving all the losses we've experienced this past

year. Some have lost loved ones who have died from the coronavirus. Some are grieving the loss of weekly in-person worship and especially missed celebrating Easter and Christmas together, and others are grieving the loss of small group Bible Study, quilting, choirs or Sunday school. The stress, the fear, the grief, and the pressure to return to in-person worship has been exhausting. I know I'm tired of all of this and I'm sure you are too. There is hope.

There is a vaccine. Soon, friends, we can return to a more normal way of gathering. We must be patient a little longer and wait for the infection rate to drop and for more to receive the vaccine. **I'm hosting a**

synod wide Zoom meeting with Rev. Kerri Parker, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches on Tuesday, February 2 at 10 am to talk about safely returning to in-person worship. Please join by clicking this link:

Rev. Kerri Parker, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches on Tuesday, February 2 at 10 am ZOOM
SAFELY RETURNING TO IN-PERSON WORSHIP.

"If your church building were to burn down tonight (God forbid) what would the community, (not your church members) miss the most?"



<https://zoom.us/j/93774999116?pwd=MEtnWklMcy93OU8zRUMwc25uaFJBZz09> Passcode: 970600

This winter, I've met with about 25 church councils across our synod for prayer, devotions and a brief conversation before their regular meeting. During the conversation we talk about the real struggles they have had with the pandemic, but we've also discussed the

opportunities that the pandemic has presented them. At one of those meetings, the congregation's treasurer talked about how surprised he was that the offering had continued to be

so strong even though the church building was essentially closed. He said that for him, the opportunity was to learn that the church wasn't about the building really at all, it was about so much more, the people and the people engaged in ministry outside the walls of the building. Your annual meeting is an opportunity to discuss your church's ministry beyond your building. Everyone is waiting for life after the pandemic. What will your church's ministry look like on

the other side of COVID 19?

A few years ago when I was Director for Evangelical Mission in our synod, I met with church leaders and

asked them, "If your church building were to burn down tonight (God forbid) what would the community, (not your church members) miss the most? That question helped start the conversation about ministry beyond the walls of

the building. This pandemic has shown us that we can reach out beyond our buildings with online worship services, classes, caring ministries, and new ways of meeting the needs of the hungry and poor. What has your congregation done beyond the walls of its building for the sake of God's mission in the world before COVID? What might it do now and after COVID is a thing of the past? For more ideas on how to have this conversation with your congregation, check out this presentation I gave to the Lay School in December titled *Blizzard, Winter, Ice Age: Church Leadership during a Pandemic*. <http://nswi.org/lay-school-of-ministry>

This year, our Synod Assembly will be held on Zoom on April 17, 2021. The theme is ***Justice and Joy: When Justice is done, it is Joy to***

the righteous, from Proverbs 21:15. We will have a full day of important work to do together. To make good use of our time on April 17, there will be four hearings to discuss and review the resolutions and other business before the assembly. These meetings will also be on Zoom on April 8, 10, 13 and 15. The resolutions are on Hunger, Racial, Gender and Environmental Justice.

In 2021 the synod's ministry will intentionally focus on Justice. Beginning January 11, the first group leaders in our synod will engage in a learning process called Transforming White Privilege (TWP). You are invited to join this course or the ones that follow to move toward greater understanding of racial justice. Registration information at www.nswi.org/calendar.

Synod Calendar Dates 2021

Jan 5, 12, 19, 26, Feb 2, 9, 16

Tues Together@10

Jan 7 Endowment Committee Meeting

Jan 11, 18, Feb 1, Feb 8 Transforming White Privilege (TWP) Training Deacon David Behling, Rev. Elizabeth Bier and Rev. Jen Collins

Jan 24-25 Winter Theo-*Finding our Way to a Wider Welcome* - Speakers: Emmy Kegler, pastor and author, *One Coin Found* and Aubrey Thonvold, Director of Reconciling Works.

Feb 11 or Feb 13 *Leaving a Legacy, Virtual Workshop* with Cynthia Halverson

Jan 31 EPIC virtual resources for council training

Feb 20 Walking Together - *Justice League*

Feb 27 Synod Council

April 8, 10, 13, 15 Resolution Hearings

April 17 Synod Assembly - *Justice and Joy*

To register or for more information about any of these events, please go to www.nswi.org/calendar

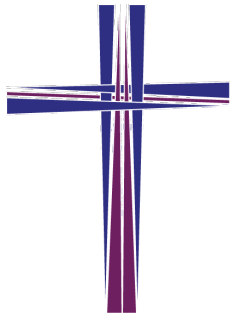


Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson, Rev. Randy Olson, Elizabeth Bartsch, Rev. Greg Kaufmann, Deacon David Behling, Rev. Erin Nelson, Deacon Laura Ramlow Thank you!

Thank you for your faithful, prayerful, and financial support of the work that we do together as the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. Thank you for your partnership in ministry, so that the next generation will come to know and love Jesus.

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

When Justice is done, it is Joy to the righteous. Proverbs 21:15



Bethany Lutheran Church

We **INVITE** all; We **GROW** in faith;
We **GO** to share God's love and grace.

Agenda

January 31, 2021 - 9:30 a.m.

- Agenda Approval
- Opening Devotions
- Approval of Minutes of January 26, 2020 Annual Meeting
- Committee Reports
- Trust Fund Report
- Financial Reports
- Election of Council Members
- Election of Trust Fund Members
- Election of Nominating Committee
- Election of Synod Assembly Representatives
 - April 17, 2021
 - 3 delegates
- Election of Luther Park Representatives
 - Luther Park Annual Meeting - date to be determined
 - 3 delegates
- Becoming a Reconciling in Christ Church
- Budget
- Annual Meeting Date & Time - January 30, 2022 - 9:00 a.m.
- Closing Comments
- Adjournment
- Closing Prayer

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Bethany Lutheran Church

January 26, 2020 - 9:00 a.m.

Agenda Approval: Eldon Vrieze moved to approve the agenda, Ted Hakala – 2nd. Discussion – none. Motion carried.

Opening Devotions – led by Pastor Luci.

Approval of Minutes from January 27, 2019 Annual Meeting – Bill Evans moved to approve the minutes from 1/27/2019, Mike Diercks – 2nd. Discussion – none. Motion carried.

Committee Reports – Lynn Sulackow moved to approve the committee reports, Pam Crouse – 2nd. Discussion – none. Motion carried.

Trust Fund Report – Eldon Vrieze moved to accept the Trust Fund report, Dave Hildebrand – 2nd. Discussion – lead by Ted Hakala. Ted thanked Business & Estate Advisors for waiving their fees and thanked Valmark for waiving their fees. Also, Ted encouraged the congregation to consider giving to the Trust Fund. Most of growth in the fund is dividends and interest. Motion carried.

Financial Reports – Nancy Vrieze moved to accept the financial reports, Bill Evans – 2nd. Discussion – none. Motion carried.

Election of Council Members – Chick Feather introduced the candidates. Three calls for additions to the ballot from the floor. No names from the floor. Ballots and pencils were distributed. Slate of candidates were elected by paper ballot. New Council Members are: Andrew Denison, Pamela Crouse, Jennifer Nelson (2nd term).

Election of Trust Fund Members – Jordan Erickson has been nominated for the Trust Fund. Three calls for nominations from the floor. None were offered. Dennis Zahrbock moved to approve Jordan Erickson for Trust Fund, Pam Crouse – 2nd. Discussion – none. Motion carried.

Election of Nominating Committee – Dave Wilson and Chick Feather will be on nominating committee as outgoing board members. We need three additional names from the floor. Wendy Markgren nominated herself, Sue Hildebrand nominated Joe Erickson, Amy Brekke nominated Wendy Denison. Ted Hakala moved to approve the three nominations from the floor, Jim Kusilek – 2nd. Discussion – none. Motion carried.

Election of Synod Assembly Representatives – Lynn Sulackow volunteered, Rick & Joan Benson volunteered. Joan Gerland moved to approve the three volunteers from the floor, Wendy Markgren – 2nd. Discussion – none. Motion carried.

Synod Assembly is May 16, 2020 at Trinity Lutheran Church, Eau Claire

Election of Luther Park Representatives – Mackenzie Narins volunteered, Laurie & Eric Carlsen volunteered. Eldon Vrieze moved to accept the three volunteers from the floor, Ric Brekke – 2nd. Discussion – none. Motion carried.

Luther Park Annual Meeting – Date to be determined

Budget – Mike Diercks made a motion to approve the 2020 budget as presented. Byron Crouse – 2nd. Discussion – Pastor Grant made a few comments. Motion carried.

Annual Meeting Date & Time – January 31, 2021 @ 9:00 a.m. – announcement of annual meeting was made.

Closing Comments – Pastor Grant offered some closing comments. Pastor Grant thanked Chick Feather and Dave Wilson with recognition certificates for their time served on council. Sam Kochel commented and thanked Bethany for our radio messages. Chick Feather offered some closing comments as well.

Adjournment – Ric Brekke made a motion to end the meeting, Nancy Vrieze – 2nd. Discussion – none. Motion carried.

Closing Prayer

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Nelson, Council Secretary

President's Report

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" --Isaiah 6:8

A special thanks to all members, volunteers, committees, council and staff who heard the question and answered, "Here am I, Send me. We are indeed blessed with so many willing and able individuals to do God's will here on earth through Bethany's Mission and Vision. Everyone has been busy, highlights include:

- Alexa Giddings hired to be our custodian.
- Amy agrees to continue as interim music director.
- Scott Burns officially approved as our intern; preaching, assisting with confirmation and handling pastoral care on Fridays.
- CrossTalk is going strong.
- Bethany's generosity provides a \$21,000 surplus in the general fund.
- The piano concerto was great.
- Congregational Ministry Coordinator (CMC) position approved to help grow volunteers and new members by connecting them with their passions.
- Holden Evening Prayer Around the World enjoyed by many.
- Table Talk for Seven or So is gaining lots of interest.
- CMC to be rolled into Angie's job, plus part time hire(s) approved.
- The Advent Art and following auction show off some great artists within Bethany.
- Covid happens.
- Despite a pandemic, an empty Sanctuary and often locked doors, Bethany remains open to do God's work.
- Earth Day turns 50 with special evening service.
- Amber Derousseau is hired part time. Committees and Council continue to meet via Zoom.
- Working together with Partners in Faith approved.
- Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) is approved.
- Lunch Box continues with drive through.
- Safely Regathering Task Force creation is approved.
- Scott Burns completes his internship and leaves Bethany a better place for having been here.
- Kindness 2020 Campaign begins.
- Congratulations Class of 2020.
- The Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) is complete.
- Pastor Grant retires; he has been a blessing to all.
- Welcome new members.
- Transition Task Force (TTF) is commissioned.
- Mission Jamaica barrels start shipping.
- CAT results are presented by Pastor Kurt Jacobson.
- Jacqueline Bussie shares Love Without Limits.
- Drive-In worship services happen.
- Luther Park Pines quilt brings \$1,000 at auction.
- Our new video system is installed and helps us stream and record worship services better.
- Building an Inclusive Church (BIC) Welcome Statement is approved by Welcome Committee and Council.
- Interim Pastor Peter Muschinske begins.
- Diaper Daze is big success providing diapers to many in need.
- Lutheran World Relief truck is loaded!
- Lefse workshop perseveres.
- Pastor Peter begins Word or words: Zoomversations on our life of faith.
- Alexa Giddings retires and Amanda Baker starts working at Bethany.
- Ted Hakala updates council on TTF work to date.
- BIC and Welcome Committee proposal for Bethany's Reconciling In Christ recognition is approved and will be forwarded to the congregation.
- PPP loan is forgiven.
- Advent Prayer Walk created.

Presidents Report (*continued*)

- Red Cross blood drive happens.
- Congregation Advent Devotion books available.
- Toys for Tots collections.
- Christmas Dinner Box program provides Christmas meals.
- Messenger Street Kids provide a moving Christmas program.
- Our director/musicians inspire us with *A Bethany Christmas Special 2020*.
- Thank you to Pastor Peter for the Longest Night / Blue Christmas worship and the great healing message.

While we all miss the in-person worship, coffee hours and smiles while greeting our friends in church, let's not confuse the physical building with the real "church." We are the "church," we the people.

An excerpt from ReleventMagazine.com: *How the Church Is Built - People are the building blocks.*

"Jesus feeds the 5,000. A crowd has been listening to Jesus teach on a remote hillside, and the nearest Chick-Fil-A is still 2,000 years away. The gathering there is a mix of the invested, the curious and the skeptical. No sanctuary or liturgy; only Jesus speaking about God in real-time and then sharing a meal with those gathered on the hillside. ... Jesus says where two or three are gathered in my name ... Emmanuel 'God with us.'"

Shalom,
Bill Evans, Council President

Interim Pastor - Peter Muschinske

John 1:14, according to The Message version, is translated by pastor and scholar, Eugene Peterson as follows:

*The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighborhood.
We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind glory,
like Father, like Son,
Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish.*

I am back among Bethany for a season of interim ministry together. My family has returned to Rice Lake indefinitely—this is our home. It is a privilege to live and serve here and among you, as it has been in all other “neighborhoods” in which I have lived and served! In every case and location serving alongside as pastor, with and for saint-sinners called, gifted and free to exercise their faith in response to God’s generosity and for the sake of our every neighbor and God’s creation. What is going on in the congregation in this season? Where is the Spirit leading Bethany? What are you celebrating, remembering, learning and contributing—thanks to the manifestations of the Spirit (I. Cor. 12:7) “for the common good”?

I see the heart of my ministry, per my “letter of agreement,” to join the congregation in a meaningful time of remembrance, exploration, education and anticipation. The key leadership groups are the Transition Task Force (TTF), Church Council, current Staff, along with any and all members committed to do the work, join the effort to ready this congregation for the effective work of Jesus Christ to include the search, call and installation of the next Senior pastor. As any of the key tasks are accomplished, there will be fruit in this season. A congregation is a participating body of The Church and collective kin-dom of The Christ, effecting God’s “inside and out, true from start to finish” reign of peace on earth as in heaven. Some priorities are implied in the above (e.g. search, call and install), and here are several more of our tasks:

1. Examine the history of the congregation and our ongoing relationship as a body nested in—and simultaneously feeding into and fed by—our Synodical (Northwest Synod of Wisconsin) and Churchwide expressions (“manifestations”) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. I have personally witnessed almost concurrent decisive critique and enthusiastic affirmation of these identities, the congregation, Synod and Church. Both conclusions could be called “successes” in understanding the best conduits for Christ’s servants to “Invite, Grow and Go;” to further and more enthusiastically and authentically exercise their faith.
2. Develop a vision for the congregation’s mission. There are many differences between this interim period and the lengthy and tumultuous interim period of 2012-2014. In summer, a robust 79% of average worship attendance (pre-covid) responded to the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT). Numerous strengths were highlighted, including a spirit of flexibility, and the diligence among many, to nurture a spiritual life and continue to learn and grow. Such strengths are tested during Covid, along with so many of our congregational priorities and personal character-core values. Spiritual disciplines are practices both within and without a gathering body of people. Scriptural or theological study (through our denominational lens) is also ideally engaged in conversation with other laity and our theological guides, local pastors. Turns out, there is great confidence in this congregation’s vision and mission (see TTF report) and from this vision, our welcoming statement and rather recent priorities/lines of effort (e.g. “Growing Young”).
3. Evaluation of Staffing, committee structure and effective leadership. How do all our people live out of—and reinforce, embody—the implications of the numbers 1 and 2 above?

In addition, specific rubrics (literally “in red font”) in my covenant with you include “Thinking young” and (together with the congregation) “Seeking a Reconciled in Christ status”. The former sounds like a valuable skill

Interim Pastor (*continued*)

for any of us; the latter, a recognition of how our faith informs our ethics... and how Bethany will live out of our theology in public life.

In addition to these tasks somewhat unique to the interim period, I have followed guidance that closely resembles the charge, call and vows of any ELCA clergy person. Some pastoral events have been limited. I presided at no weddings, only one baptism and three funerals over the quarter (OCT-DEC). It is difficult to count the number of worship services (particularly through most of Advent with multiple Sunday and Wednesday services, live, outdoors/parking lot, pre-recorded) due to the pandemic modification and Bethany leadership's careful (and very prayerful) approach to severely limit face-to-face interaction. I was inspired during the nine interviews of/conversations with Confirmands. Phone conversations, zoom meetings and emails (aside from hundreds related to TTF, congregational president and executive team and other committee-related functions) related to grief support, illness and surgery; theological engagement and enrichment, responding to multiple criticisms or suggestions about how we should be conducting ministry during covid conditions also number more than 100. Staff leadership involves another couple hundred emails (as of this writing, 782 messages remain in my inbox established in October, and not counting dozens deemed delete-able!), weekly all-staff zoom meetings, additional calls with smaller groups and less often, safely distanced and masked in-person ministry.

In keeping with one of those categorical imperatives for all ELCA clergy (section 9.03 of our constitution), I continue to "speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world." I was appointed by the Barron County Sheriff to serve on a Citizens Advisory and Action Team (CAAT). This group of interdisciplinary leaders, meets to address various social matters "...from different perspectives and put(ing) Barron County ahead of the curve when it comes to addressing issues and formulating solutions (from the sheriff's press release of Dec 2020)" within our community. I close with praise of God and thanks for all who have received and welcomed me with my own sense of call and set of skills and abilities, into uncharted territory with uniquely troubled seas (and with this caveat, that "thanks" to covid, all my Navy chaplaincy ministry has been accomplished "long-distance" via telework, necessitating very little time away from this primary call as your interim pastor). Thank you, staff. Thank you TTF, Executive team and full Council; thank you committees, contributors and constituents of our Wednesday zoomversations. Thank you all for your witness to Christ through living as loving as "less-anxious servants" of this God who is in every neighborhood and sends us in various ways to those who experience neither abundant life nor the Jesus who promises it (John 10:10b).

Peter K. Muschinske, Interim Pastor

Associate Pastor - Luci Sesvold

“For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.” --Isaiah 43:19 NLT

We weren't too many weeks past our last Annual Meeting, with hopeful plans for our Vision 2020, when the world changed. We spent a few weeks hunkering down, as we maintained the most essential parts of our faith lives: Christ-centered worship and caring for each other. Following Easter, we shifted our mind-set. While Christ-centered worship and caring for our neighbors remained high priority, the entire staff shifted and basically recreated how we do ministry. Our goals being to maintain connection, provide for the spiritual needs of each other and do it as safely as we can. As you know, holding these three goals meant that often they were in tension with one another. While we are still dealing with the effects of the on-going pandemic, I am proud of the ways that we have re-imagined being the church for the sake of the world – apart – outside of our comfort zone (the building). Below is a glimpse of my various focus areas this past year.

Children/Youth/Young Adult: All previous activities have continued, despite having to revamp our approach. I am currently writing At-Home lessons for Bethany Tots (birth-age 5) and Connect (4th-5th grade). Upon Pastor Grant's retirement, I have taken over teaching HWS (6th-8th grade Confirmation). I also continue to be the pastoral leader for Club 9 (9th grade mentor program). In January and February, I taught another session of First Communion using Erlander's "A Place For You" material.

Since mid-March, Angie and I have tried a multitude of ways to stay connected with our children, youth and families. Some of our more successful ideas were Virtual VBS, where we provided all the materials and recorded all the videos. Kindness Bingo and Geocaching were super fun activities during the warmer months.

Not letting favorite traditions drop was a major focus. Although they looked different, we still had Rally Sunday, Blessing of the Backpacks, HWS Food Drive, Service Projects, Children's Christmas Program and Prepare Ye (Advent in a Box). It may be concerning to think that we are "losing" the youth, but I am constantly impressed by their resilience and dedication to show up!

Technology: I am excited to share that a year ago, I applied for a Technology Grant to update our Sanctuary sound board. We received funds to cover about half of the project, ordered the new equipment and it was installed the week we switched to livestream only! We were very fortunate to make that purchase when we did, since just a few weeks later, everything for streaming technology became high demand. We did eventually also upgrade the microphones, cameras and computer so that we can provide high quality streaming worship.

I attended several webinars on church technology this year, which resulted in the new Sanctuary technology, worship now available on Facebook and I built an app for the church through MinistryOne. If you haven't downloaded this Bethany App yet, I encourage you to do so. We haven't utilized much of its features yet, but I see great potential for registering for events (RSVP) and being able to send "push notifications" to your home screen about any timely changes that we may encounter soon.

Creativity in Worship: I'm not even sure where to begin with this topic. I am so honored to be a part of a staff and congregation who has constantly worked towards engaging, creative worship without compromising safety. From video series, to collaborating with Partners in Faith, to individual family welcomes, to Angie's children's messages, to pre-recorded worship elements, to At-Home Communion, to Experimental Wednesday Worship, to Drive-In Worship and so much more, I believe this was our most creative year yet!

Other: This spring, I will conclude my term as a member of Synod Council. I will also conclude my three-year continuing education opportunity (First Call Finance and Family Systems) that has included pastors from all six Synods in Wisconsin who meet about 10 times a year.

I continue to thank God for all of you and the partnered ministry that we do together. I can't wait for what God is calling us to in 2021! ~ Pastor Luci

Director of Education, Youth & Congregational Ministries and Education Team - Angie Buchli

Education, Youth and Congregational Ministries are an integral part of Bethany for all ages. Our mission at Bethany is to promote discipleship through education, relationship building, fellowship and service. We strive to make Christ known to all and to raise up disciples. We want to invite everyone to “Come and See,” as in John 1:39 when Jesus invites his disciples to know him by witnessing for themselves his active presence in the world. We want to foster faith formation by making sure all receive that invitation to “Come and See,” to experience and learn about Jesus’ love for everyone and his light in the world, to become a part of Bethany and feel they are important and valued and then equip them to go out and share that love with the world.

At the February Church Council meeting, the Council approved the Personnel Committee’s revision of my job description, to the “Director of Education, Youth and Congregational Ministries.” As Director of Congregational Ministries, I will work to identify the gifts, talents and interests of congregational members and match them with ministry needs both inside and outside the congregation. Along with this shift in responsibilities it was recommended to hire one or more part-time assistants to cover the duties removed from my former job description. At the end of February, we hired a Ministry Assistant, Amber Derousseau, to help with Sunday school prep and Wednesday after school activities.

This year has definitely stretched us in the ways we look at and do ministry. From January 1, 2020 through about March 15, 2020 everything operated as “normal.” Since COVID-19, education, youth and congregational ministry has taken on a very different look. We have had to rethink and switch gears from in-person everything: worship, Bible studies, Sunday school classes, CONNECT, HWS and high school youth group and move everything to virtual/online. We have had successes and failures. There is a constant learning curve to what works well and what does not. We are continually looking for creative ways to connect with our Bethany family in different ways, so that we can offer helpful and meaningful resources during this time.

We have all had to learn new things, step in and help where needed. I think our staff has become more cohesive as we have all learned to adapt. I have learned video editing, helped organize/implement drive-in worship, taken on the children’s messages for worship, become familiar with Zoom and other virtual learning platforms, as well as adapting all of our curriculums and education programs to virtual/online formats and more. Once COVID hit and we were unable to meet in person for Sunday school and Wednesday after school activities, Amber helped wherever needed such as assisting with preparing/adapting Sunday school lessons for online format, helping organize/set up the Geocaching Adventure, VBS, Rally Sunday and prep/set-up for drive-in worship services. She continues to adapt the preschool Sunday school lessons for parents to do at home, help with drive-in worship and other events as needed.

Education, youth and congregational ministry at Bethany takes much more than just the staff to carry out. We would not be able to have our many education, youth and congregational ministry opportunities without a wonderful Education Team and our host of amazing volunteers. A huge thank you to all of our Education Team members, ushers, greeters, worship assistants, Sunday School teachers, Here We Stand Guides, Club 9 mentors, Wednesday pizza ladies, Wednesday After School Program volunteers, Vacation Bible School leaders and guides, bus drivers, chaperones and more! Current Education Team members are: Tami Bowman (council rep), Jennifer Nelson, Mackenzie Narins, Amy Pelle, Sara Scheu, DeAnna Westphal, Jan Wilking and Pastor Luci Sesvold (staff rep). I am currently acting as chair and staff rep for the Education Team. We greatly appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity of your time! Thanks to these volunteers, Bethany is able to offer and support many opportunities for Christian education youth ministry, and service opportunities.

Infants and Toddlers

Nursery - Pre-COVID, a staffed nursery was offered for our infants and toddlers on Sundays from 7:30-11:30 a.m. It was also offered during Wednesday after school programming and on Wednesday evenings during Advent, Lent and for other services throughout the year.

Director of Education, Youth & Congregational Ministries and Education Team (*continued*)

Baptism - All infants baptized at Bethany receive a Frolic First Bible board book. This awesome picture Bible tells twenty of the Bible's most beloved stories from creation to the resurrection, and introduces little ones to God's love and care. Parents of newborns are also offered a meal.

Bethany Tots - The Bethany Tots group is open to parents with children age newborn through three years. This class equips parents of newborns through toddlers in teaching faith at home through group discussions, activities, crafts and games. Until we can meet again in person, the Frolic lessons are being adapted for parents to do at home with their tots. Pick-up times are announced when Pastor Luci and I will be at Bethany handing them out, under the carport.

Elementary Youth (Preschool through 5th grade)

Sunday School - Sunday school classes are offered for students ages 3 through 8th grade. Our preschool class uses the Frolic Preschool Bible and explores each story for two weeks at a time. Each week, they learn Bible stories through music, games, snacks and fun crafts. The K-5th grade classes dive deep into Bible stories with *Spark: Activate Faith*. They explore the same Bible story for three-four weeks through different workshops such as cooking, science, art and more. Our 6th-8th grade class looks at real questions middle school youth are asking, and helps kids discover the power of a growing faith in Jesus. They have a great time in class looking at these questions with the help of movies, books and more. From January-March 15, 2020 all classes met in person. After March 15, Sunday school lessons for preschool through 5th grade were provided online for parents to access and do with their children at home. It was decided not to continue the 6th-8th grade class online, as they are already participating in our online HWS class.

Vacation Bible School - Bethany offered VBS virtually this summer. Participants had the option to gather with their family, friends, neighbors, etc. to participate in VBS and watch the lesson videos at their convenience. Pastor Luci and I recorded the VBS opening and closing videos. Pastor Grant led the Bible Adventure lessons. Amber Derousseau led the KidVid Cinema lessons. We had 59 participants register for Rocky Railway VBS.

Bible Sunday - On Sunday, October 11, 2020, we presented Spark Story Bibles to all of our Kindergarten students and Here We Stand Lutheran Study Bibles to our 6th grade students at our 10:00 a.m. drive-in worship. The Spark Story Bible uses creative language familiar to kids and features full-color, vibrant artwork. This is the Bible we use in Sunday school for our preschool through 3rd grade classes. It is a great Bible for parents to read to children and for younger children who are beginning to read.

First Communion - We offered our First Communion classes starting in January 2020. They ran for five Sundays in January and February, with a celebration of the first communion milestone on Sunday, February 24, 2020. These special classes are designed to support ongoing learning by exploring the stories, rituals and images of this meal. The classes are open to all children three years and older. We highly encourage students to attend a First Communion class sometime between ages three and 3rd grade. However, parents and guardians have the primary responsibility to determine when their child should begin receiving Holy Communion. We are planning to offer classes in a hybrid (in-person/virtual) format starting in March 2021.

CONNECT - Connect is a two-year rotation of Bible lessons created for preteens or "tweens." It is an interactive Bible-based lesson where youth learn how individual Bible stories connect to each other and to their own lives. Youth also learn to connect the individual lessons they have heard in Sunday School into larger concepts found in the Bible. When we are able to meet in person, Pastor Luci teaches the large group sessions and Jan Wilking is their small group leader. Connect lessons have been adapted and are available online for families to do at home until we are able to safely meet in person.

Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Here We Stand - Our confirmation ministry for 6th-8th grades meets virtually, by Zoom, Wednesdays during

Director of Education, Youth & Congregational Ministries and Education Team (*continued*)

the school year from 5:00-6:00 p.m. We are using a new curriculum, *re:form Ancestors*. This year, they are studying the Old Testament. Pastor Luci gives a short introduction to the lesson, followed by the lesson video, then a wrap-up discussion. Small groups either meet after the Zoom meeting or at an alternate time chosen by the group. I currently facilitate the 6th grade small group. Lessons are recorded and available for students who are unable to attend the Zoom class.

Wednesday After School Program - This will resume when we are able to meet in person again. The objective of this program is to add structure to the Wednesday after school time before HWS class begins and provide group offerings as to provide an all-inclusive, safe, nurturing atmosphere. All 6th-8th grade students choosing to come to Bethany after school on Wednesdays participate.

High School (9-12th grades)

High School Youth Group/Bible Study - Pre-COVID, we had an awesome group of high school youth that meets on Wednesday evenings throughout the school year for Bible study, fun and fellowship. Throughout the year we work on service projects such as helping get ready for the LWR truck. In April and May, youth group moved to virtual via Zoom on Wednesdays for check-in, devotions and games. This past fall, we were able to meet one Wednesday in-person outside in the parking lot. This fall, students were not interested in meeting via Zoom. I plan on trying a Zoom check in at least once a month for the rest of the school year and then possible outdoor meetings, when weather is warmer.

Synod Youth Board - The Synod Youth Board, called the SYB, is an organization of high school youth elected from each conference within the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. The SYB plans Godstock (high school youth gathering) and Christ Jam (middle school gathering). Both gatherings were canceled for 2020, but the board still met and worked on ways of staying connected with youth in our synod. They meet four-five times a year. Bethany has had several people on the SYB over the last few years. Bethany had six people on the SYB in 2020. Jonathan Nelson was elected to the SYB executive board as Vice President/President-elect. This is a two-year term with the first year being Vice President and the second year as President. In November, Jonathan became the current SYB President. Sarah Buchli was elected to the SYB executive board as Secretary. This is a two-year term that will end in fall of 2021. Emma Panasuk was the HON two-year representative and Paige Diercks was the HON one-year rep. I continue as the adult rep for the HON. Jan Wilking continues as the Heart of the North Adult alternate. Congratulations to all of our youth elected to serve on the board! This is a wonderful opportunity for our youth to gain valuable and useful leadership skills. They will also form friendships with other youth and adults from all over our synod.

Club 9 - We had nineteen 9th graders and their mentors complete Club 9 (our 9th grade confirmation ministry) in the spring. They met the first Sunday of the month during the school year. They finished up their last month virtually. Mentors and Disciples together explore their faith and the seven promises the 9th graders will affirm their faith with, during confirmation. This fall, we have a group of twelve 9th graders and their mentors begin their Club 9 experience. This group meets in a hybrid of Zoom and in-person, depending on safety recommendations.

Confirmation - This fall, our 10th grade students completed their review, interviews with pastor and faith statements. Celebrating their Affirmation of Baptism, traditionally done on Reformation Sunday in October, was postponed in hopes that we will be able to celebrate as a congregation. As of now, we plan to celebrate our group of eighteen 10th graders' Affirmation of Baptism on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021.

Baccalaureate - We honored our 2020 high school seniors on Sunday, June 7, 2020 during worship with Pastor Luci's message and a special slideshow, at the end of the service. We hosted the blanket blessing outside on Tuesday, June 9, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. Seniors received an embroidered fleece blanket from WELCA and their bags with

Director of Education, Youth & Congregational Ministries and Education Team (continued)

messages from the congregation. Pastor Grant and Pastor Luci led the short service that we were able to share via live stream on the website and Facebook. Our seniors and their families were very appreciative and thankful that we were able to do this for the graduates.

Congregational Ministries

We are continually looking for innovative ways we can enhance congregational involvement and connect with our Bethany family. Some ways we have done this since COVID are:

Geocaching Adventure - Amber and I created a fun activity to get people out of the house for an afternoon—a geocaching adventure! This was a fun challenge for all ages - families, middle school/high school and adults. We hid containers along the Cedar Side Trail (behind Goodwill). Each container was filled with a Bible verse to look up and a sticker/stamp to collect for your “passport.” Passport cards with GPS coordinates for all locations were sent out to the congregation (mailed or available to download). Completed passport cards were turned in for a gift card to Poppy Popcorn, Milk Pail or Cabin Coffee.

Kindness BINGO Campaign - Bethany Lutheran members were invited to help spread joy to our community this past summer by participating in a Kindness Campaign. People could pick up or download a Kindness BINGO card and complete activities spreading kindness in the community to earn a BINGO. Those earning BINGO could turn in cards for a gift card to Poppy Popcorn, Milk Pail or Cabin Coffee.

Drive-In Worship - This began as a way to have Rally Sunday and continued on Sundays through November 22 and then Wednesday evenings during Advent. It was loved by many and was a great way for us to gather safely!

Advent-in-a-Box - Pastor Luci and I created an Advent-In-A-Box for households containing Advent resources for people to do at home. Boxes included prayer cubes, an Advent wreath activity, December Advent activity cards, a simple nativity set and information about the Advent Prayer Walk. We handed out 99 boxes and received a lot of positive feedback on this project.

Children's Messages - I began working on children's messages for Sunday worship in September that connected with our Life of Faith worship theme. They continued into Advent connecting with our Incarnation series. I will continue doing children's messages into 2021.

Advent Prayer Walk/Christmas light display - We had our new lighted Christmas Tree Park in the Bethany greenspace (behind Appleyard's). As people walked through the trees, they were invited to reflect on the scripture/prayer signs and rediscover the mystery that brings hope and empowers us to bring light into darkness.

As always, it is both a pleasure and privilege to work with our congregation. It is my hope that education, youth and congregational ministries at Bethany provides opportunities for everyone to deepen and strengthen their relationship with God and each other so that they may grow in grace, faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Thank you for all of the thoughtfulness and generosity that has been given in support of education, youth and congregational ministries at Bethany. Without that we would not be able to equip people to shine God's light into the world.

Respectfully Submitted,
Angie Buchli

Director of Church Business - Dawn Paul

The Director of Church Business provides leadership for all business functions, supervision of communications & publications specialist, cleaner, financial secretaries and kitchen coordinator, delegation of responsibilities and direct work associated with the daily business activities. Accordingly, the Director of Church Business:

- Manages and is directly responsible for all financial operations including payroll, accounts payable/receivable, financial reporting, etc.
- Works effectively with community business representatives and vendors to ensure quality business relationships.
- Researches, develops and initiates innovative and efficient business practices.
- Coordinates and oversees all property maintenance issues, effectively collaborates with the Property committee and attends their monthly meetings.

A lot of my job is answering questions and reporting data for members and committees. Some days I spend most of the day on the phone with contractors getting bids for various jobs, coordinating things, proofing others work or ordering supplies, equipment, etc. that are needed in and around all areas of the building. This can be anything from communion supplies, salt for the sidewalks, computers, paper, replacing light ballasts, dishwasher soap, new flooring, to toilet tissue for the restrooms. I also enter weekly contributions, send quarterly statements and keep approximately 1300-member files up to date with personal information and life events.

At the end of each month, I balance the books then run monthly financial reports: Balance Sheet, Budgeted Financial Statement, Designated Funds Report, etc. and send them along with committee reports in the council packets. I also attend council meetings, to hopefully answer any questions council may have.

My job entails so many behind the scenes duties and 2020 was definitely challenging, with figuring out new ways to do things. Here are a few highlights:

January is my busiest, most hectic month of the year. Closing the current year books, working on the new year's budget, annual report, contribution statements, filing year end reports, W2's, 1099's, financial reports, etc. plus managing my daily workload. Most probably don't know that we currently have 24 people on payroll, even though some are still inactive, because of the Covid shutdown.

I converted to ShelbyNext Financials in the beginning of 2020, since our old financial software was no longer supported, as of March 2020. As many know, software conversions always come with complications and a learning curve.

We were constantly replacing bulbs and ballasts in the can lights in the entry/narthex area and were told part of the problem was the bad design of the fixture. This was costly not only because of the bulb/ballast expense, but because some of the lights were over stairwells, so we needed to hire bulb replacement out. I got bids in January and had 49 old can lights replaced with ballast bypass LED lamps, which won't need replacement for many years.

The ELCA Annual Report is due by February 15, each year. Pulling all of the data and information from various locations to complete this report is always time consuming.

With doors being locked on March 17, due to Covid, all meetings needed to be held virtually. We quickly realized that having the free Zoom account was not working, because meetings were timing out at 40 minutes. So, I set up the Zoom Pro Plan for a trial run in April. Everyone was thinking this would only be temporary. Unfortunately, it was not, and we are so grateful to have Zoom, to conduct church business.

We were having many issues with our current email provider, so I set up a Google G-Suite account in April and now staff have the bethanyricelake.org email addresses.

In April, I applied for the Borrower's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan. A loan in the amount of \$80,197 was approved. Then in November, I filled out the PPP Loan Forgiveness Application, with all of the necessary

Director of Church Business (continued)

documentation. We received great news on December 2, that the loan was fully forgiven.

The Shelby Users Conference was held online this year, instead of in St. Louis, as scheduled. ShelbyNext is the church management software that we upgraded to, in 2016. One of the nice things about the new software is that it is cloud based and user friendly, so ministry staff and even our members are able to use it. If you haven't tried it yet, please let me know and I will give you a new user id and password, so you can check it out. You can also view your contributions, and print your own end of the year statements. For those who use their cell phone for everything, download the Shelby App. If you forget your offering, give "Text Giving" a try. You just need to set up your personal information once, and then it only takes seconds to use it in the future.

In June, the Property Committee requested me to get bids to have the bad section of our northside sidewalk replaced. After getting bids, I submitted the City of Rice Lake Installation permit, for approval. This project was finally completed in November.

We only had one new member group this year, but we were still able to welcome 13 new members in July. I track all of our visitors from the Red Pew Pads and then, if applicable, add them to our mailings. I also contact them when we hold new member classes, get needed paperwork, send for transfers, assemble new member packets and anything else needed for them to join Bethany.

I contracted ServiceMaster to clean all of our carpets and also strip and wax the lower-level flooring. This was completed in August.

You might have seen the wooden box, which sat in our entryway, forever. This was our mail receptacle. But, with the church doors closed, mail had to be picked up at the post office. So, I consulted with the post office about what and where would be acceptable to them, for us to begin receiving mail at the church again. I purchased the materials in September and had a couple of awesome volunteers install a mailbox, under the carport.

October was busy with Commitment Cards and letters to members for the October 18 Commitment Sunday. Then November and December were confirming commitments, setting up/changing electronic giving and inputting pledges into our system. I also entered budget requests from the different committees, then met with the finance committee and worked on the 2021 Proposed Budget, to present to council and the congregation.

Alexa decided it was time to retire, which meant that the search needed to begin, once again, for a new cleaner. The position was posted on employment websites, and after scouring many applicants, we were fortunate in hiring Amanda. She began employment in November and is doing a great job.

The 15-year warrantee is coming due on roofs 1, 4, & 5 in 2021, so the Property Committee requested that I have them inspected. Paul's Sheet Metal inspected them in November and thankfully only had to complete minor repairs.

Many EXIT lights were not working properly, so they were either repaired or replaced with LED fixtures in November.

I met with our insurance agent in December, to see what we could do to keep our premiums down for 2021 and found a few ways to save the church some money.

Respectfully submitted,
Dawn Paul

Property Management Committee

The property committee has had a successful year, even though we had to adapt to working remotely. There were 15 projects completed by the committee. We are proud of the wonderful facility in our charge and endeavor to keep it up and improve it when possible. The church membership's input is key to our mission in this regard.

Highlights for 2020:

1. *Bus:* New tires have been installed and rust on the body has been addressed--it looks great!
2. *Sidewalk:* A section, about 15 feet long, was repaired on the north side of the property
3. *Roofs:* Inspected and found to be in good condition
4. *Windows:* Washed on the outside of the building on the north, east and south sides.

Underway for 2021:

1. *Parking Lot:* In the spring, one section is being replaced with the rest being resealed.
2. *Pews:* The Sanctuary pews are being reconditioned to address wear on the touch surfaces.
3. *Painting:* Interior walls are being evaluated, as to the need to be repainted. This has not been done since the addition was built many years ago.

Eldon Vrieze deserves a special thank you for his 25 years of service on the Property Committee. He has made it known he will end his participation on the committee with the completion of this year. It is his hope we can get some younger folks involved in the work of this committee. He genuinely will be missed.

Members 2020/2021:

Dave Jacobs, Dave Myre, Dave Sovacool, Eldon Vrieze, Eric Roethel, Joel Kohlmeyer, Josh Weinstock, Lynn Koob, Tim Schnacky, Keith Moffatt, Wendy Markgren, Shirley Berghold

I would like to thank this exceptionally talented team for their steadfast contributions during the year in spite of my always late meeting notices and Zoom mishaps. In addition, I would like to thank Dawn Paul, Director of Business, and Brad Wiedmann, the Church Council Representative, for their ongoing support which has been fundamental to our success, as well.

Respectfully submitted,
Keith Moffatt, Chairperson

Caring Community

A team of Caring Community Coordinators organize and facilitate our congregation's care for members. The coordinators meet once a month. They have formed a variety of "Care Teams."

During this time, the work of caring, connecting and communicating is more important than ever.

Please help us keep current on all our members. If you know of someone who you think could benefit from our team, please let anyone of the Caring Community team know. Thank you!

Current Team: Pastor Peter, Gail Weber, Paulette Hanson, Monica Berkseth, Kathy Swenson, Shirley Peterson and Geri Stout

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee consists of four members (three congregation lay leaders, plus the council president or vice president). The committee meets monthly, usually on the second Tuesday of the month at 5:30 p.m.

Term limits beginning January 1, 2020 are:

Eric Pelle – 3 years – ending December 2020. Thank you Eric!

Jolene Anderson – 3 years – ending December 2021

Gary Chilson – 3 years – ending December 2022

Bethany is truly blessed to have a strong ministry staff that serves the congregation through collaborations with strong pastors. That collaboration, innovation and commitment serves Bethany's mission well.

These are our key accomplishments in 2020:

- Updated the position description for the Director of Education, Youth and Congregational Ministries.
- Reviewed the position description for the lead pastor.
- Reviewed and made a recommendation to the Church Council regarding the pastoral sabbatical.
- Participated in an exit interview with Pastor Grant Aaseng.
- Created and recommended updates to the employee manual, including sections on the sabbatical, continuing education, vacation and sick leave and the exit interview process.
- Received feedback and processed information from the Transition Task Force.
- Reviewed and made annual budget salary recommendations to the Church Council Executive Committee.

In addition, the Personnel Committee is responsible for the following tasks:

- Accountable to Church Council.
- Develops and recommends to the Council personnel policy and practice.
- Reviews and updates the employee handbook annually.
- Ensures a professional, collaborative and safe working environment for staff.
- Acts as an information resource to the employee and employer.
- Consults with the Executive Team and Council, as appropriate, regarding personnel issues.
- Assists with development of position descriptions and makes recommendations to the Council as appropriate.
- Assists to identify and recommend continuing education opportunities for the staff.
- Assists to identify legal issues and works with Council to address those issues.
- Works collaboratively with the employee, supervisor and Council to address employment issues.
- Develops and recommends grievance process/procedure to the Council and acts as a resource to ensure that the process is followed.
- Develops and recommends to the council an annual, and ongoing, employee review process that identifies employee strengths, opportunities for improvement and establishes annual goals.
- Develops a policy/procedure/forms manual that includes relevant employee forms and templates.
- Regularly reviews salary and compensation in light of both job requirements and local marketplace realities.
- Assist to create a culture in which continuing education is valued and supported.

Home Communion

Our Home Communion Ministry is an outreach to our members when temporary or permanent limitations prevent attending worship services. Our volunteers bring communion to their homes, assisted living facilities or nursing homes.

For the first few months, we had 13 caring, faithful volunteers visiting and serving communion to 22 members. Because of the pandemic, visiting in person has been on hold, but contact through phone calls and sending of cards has continued. Names have been included in the weekly online bulletin, under prayers for our home members.

If you would like to assist with this ministry, or would like to receive home communion, please contact the church office or coordinators Paulette Hanson at 715-234-4919 or Monica Berkseth at 715-205-2805.

Green Team

We only met once during 2020, because of the Covid pandemic. At our March meeting, we arranged to have used fluorescent bulbs recycled at the Rice Lake City Hall. We recommended the Sanctuary light bulbs be replaced by higher wattage bulbs and this was done. We also recommended that the styrofoam containers used for leftover foods after funerals and the Christmas dinner be replaced by paper-based containers.

With no in-person activities at church, our recycling projects are on hold. People are reminded that they can recycle batteries, newspaper, cardboard, glass and aluminum containers at the Rice Lake town shop on Macauley Avenue, and can recycle printer cartridges at Walmart. Plastic grocery bags can be recycled at Marketplace and Walmart. More recycling options can be found at the Barron County website (search recycling).

Green Team Members: Lynn Koob, Eldon Vrieze, Kathy Lehman, Cindy Nymo, Don Storm, Renee Swanson, Joel Kohlmeyer, Ed Skaw (Council Representative)

Library Committee

Committee Members: Jill Holtegaard, Wendy Halverson, Norma Bergum, Julie Hyllested and Elaine Gonske

The library was accessible to members of the church during the months of January and February. The library has not been accessible since March of 2020 when the pandemic started. We look forward to the library functioning again when the pandemic settles down and life returns to regular activities.

For these reasons, material checkout and library programming has been non-existent for 2020.

Stewardship Committee

This year's stewardship theme was *GRATEFUL*. The Stewardship Committee was able to accomplish our business successfully with monthly virtual meetings. The pandemic presented us with many ways to be creative with communications. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged all aspects of our lives. It has challenged Bethany's leadership and staff to create new ways to share our worship experiences together, while not in person. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Bethany has much to be thankful for.

- The dedication of the wonderful Bethany staff
- Our celebration of Pastor Grant & Ruth's service
- Positive results and high rate of return of the CAT survey
- Transition Task Force wrapping up information to assist Council and Call Committee
- Congregation participating in Zoom meetings, classes and attending streamed worship services each week, that the Technology Update Committee so generously facilitated
- The many drive-in worship services the staff creatively organized
- Pastor Peter Muschinske accepting the call as Interim Pastor and his dedicated service in this challenging year
- 190 pledges received by December 22, 2020
- A faithful response to the "Happy Dance Challenge" with a generous \$10,000 member match

Thank you to everyone who gave faithfully to Bethany this year. The year 2020 posed many factors that could inhibit our ability to give generously. As we enter a new year, we have much to look forward to with the recommendations of the Transition Task Force and Call Committee well prepared. We ask you to prayerfully consider your plan to support the ministry of Bethany in 2021.

Kevin Jacobson, Chair

Nursery

The purpose of the nursery ministry is to provide a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere for the nursery age children of our members and visitors. This ministry supports the parents in the care and education of their children in a consistently safe, clean and wholesome environment through a caring, qualified and motivated nursery staff.

I have taken on the coordination of the nursery since the summer of 2019. In September of 2019, we hired five wonderful nursery attendants who rotated Sundays and Wednesdays in the nursery: Laura Doeberiner, Heidi Nelson, Sarah Buchli, Emma Panasuk and Alaina Tomesh. They continued through March 2020 when COVID hit. From January 1, 2020 through March 15, 2020, we offered a staffed nursery on Sunday mornings from 7:30-11:30 a.m., on Wednesdays (non-Lent) from 4:15-6:15 p.m. and Wednesdays (during Lent) from 5:00-7:00 p.m.

In 2020, nursery attendance total from January-March was 168. This number is the cumulative total of children in attendance at each service/event. Total for 2019 was 367. This indicates that the nursery ministry was growing prior to COVID.

The nursery is a vital part of our ministry here at Bethany. We look forward to when we can safely gather again and resume our nursery ministry!

Submitted by:
Angie Buchli

Reaching Out

Bethany's Reaching Out helps to organize and serve funeral luncheons if a Bethany Circle is not asked to serve. This year, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have not had any activity for our committee.

We have given \$100 to each of the four circles and the Bethany Quilters, and \$80 to the Bethany radio broadcasts.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dave Lhotka

Worship and Music

Committee Members: Pastor Luci Sesvold, Amy Brekke, Marla Koob, Tammy Roberg, Deb Slagstad, Paul Hanson

The purpose of the Worship and Music Committee is to provide music and worship opportunities to and for our congregation and community that will enhance their relationship with God, their family and their fellow community members through a variety of music and worship service opportunities.

This year, 2020, our worship has changed greatly with the arrival of COVID in March. With the discontinuation of meeting in the church, our staff has had to become creative in how to offer worship services.

As a result, our staff has worked closely with many congregation members to continue providing worship opportunities and activities through streaming, radio broadcast, Facebook, TV and outdoor live worship services. Many of the services are archived and available on Bethany's website for all to view at their convenience. Below are listed the worship opportunities and worship supports that have been developed throughout this year.

- Streaming, Facebook and archiving worship services
- Sunday morning services: 8:00 a.m. (radio, TV, Facebook, streaming, archived)
- Wednesday evening worship: 6:00 p.m. (streaming, archived)
- Fall Drive-In Worship: Sunday 10:00 a.m., Wednesday 6:00 p.m. through Lent (live)
- Pre-recorded worship available at Bethany's website and archived
- Personal contacts to our shut-in members regarding their ability to receive worship services
- Committee meetings conducted through Zoom (internet meeting program)
- Upgrade video equipment for broadcasting worship through media
- Postcards mailed to each congregation member stating worship times and media used for each service

The Worship & Music Committee would like extend a sincere thank you to our staff (Pastoral, Worship & Music Director, Office Staff, Education Director) and the many congregation members who have given extra time, creativity and energy to develop and provide worship opportunities throughout the 2020 year. It is through their continued faithful work and support that worship opportunities are continued as we faithfully await the time when we can again safely gather together.

Blessings to Everyone!

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul Hanson, Worship & Music Chairperson

Mission Concerns

Greetings! Our members include Pastor Luci (staff rep), Annie Antonson, Naomi Candler, Carol Kohlmeyer, Shirley Peterson, Judy Jacobs, Joan Gerland, Pauli Storm, Elton Jorde and Deb Stange. Our council rep is Michael Husak.

As I looked back at my minutes from our meetings in January and February, I am struck at the optimism, energy and excitement for the work and progress we anticipated in our following months and year. Reality hit in March as my agenda stands empty of notes. We quarantined. Some of our plans ended for the year. I am so proud of both the plans that were not to be as well as the projects that continued and showed our resilience! Here is a snapshot.

Mission Jamaica had timing on their side and made this blessed annual trip with nine amazing folks. They saw the updates of the Clifton Boys Home that had burned and as always had an amazing experience at the orphanage. The garage sale fundraiser was not a possibility, but fundraising still found its way to help this cause. Please consider donating if you can, as they will definitely be short of funds from previous years, and thank you to all who have helped as well as already donated.

Our prayer shawl ministry continued with knitters alone with their needles more than together, but they are still knitting! More of us than ever need the comfort and support of the incredible healing power of the prayer and love from these shawls, and we definitely tried our best to find a way to get them to those that need them. If you would like to pick up a prayer shawl for someone in need, please call the office and they will arrange it!

The Lutheran World Relief truck was loaded during October and with masked faithful, we loaded just over half of a semi-trailer with all the kits and bandages, etc. from churches around our area. I was awestruck at the cars and boxes that were brought during this incredibly isolated year! We are so grateful for this outdoor event that benefits so many, so very far away!

Our committee was in the process of donating to, and developing a connection with, a missionary named Anna Skare who was serving in Jerusalem, but she was called home due to the pandemic. We did donate to the YAGM program for future students.

Lunch Box is one of the biggest heros, re-inventing the whole meal process and menu, but not hardly skipping a beat in feeding our hungry of Rice Lake. Our heartfelt gratitude to all who volunteered, organized and provided food!

Another hero is Audrey Kuselik for also reinventing the Christmas Dinner. This event is yet to be as I write this, but it is already a success! It is far from our tradition, far from what we all want it to be - in person - but it WILL BE! People in need will have the opportunity to pick up all of the ingredients for a traditional Christmas dinner they can fix for their loved ones. Thank you, everyone, who helped coordinate, donate, assemble and distribute Bethany's love and grace!

We continue to be affected by the pandemic, we miss seeing one another in our church! But we have adapted, innovated and kept inventing ways to keep on going! Thanks be to God!

In Loving Service,
Annie Antonson, Chair

Transition Task Force

Preliminary Report (subject to Council approval)

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.” --Philippians 1:9-11

What was true at the beginning of Bethany’s journey in the late 1800’s is still true today. The Mission and Vision of the church is alive and vibrant. “We Invite all; We Grow in faith; We Go to share God’s love and grace.” The journey continues for Bethany. This transition process and the calling of our next Pastor is another chapter of that journey to the glory and praise of God.

In August of 2020, seven Bethany members and Pastor Peter accepted the commission to serve as members of Bethany’s Transition Task Force (TTF).

The TTF was formed and commissioned by the congregation to conduct a comprehensive self-study of the church in advance of, and in preparation for, the calling of new pastoral leadership. The TTF is comprised of three teams, with a total of seven members, who were charged with the responsibility of conducting the self-study. Teams included, Mission & Vision, Self-Study and Staffing/Leadership. TTF members include; Jan Wilking, Kayelon Campbell-Murphy, Jodi Babineau, Kevin Jacobson, Pam Crouse, Bill Evans, Ted Hakala and Pastor Peter Muschinske, Intentional Interim Pastor at Bethany. The CAT was a significant resource for the TTF, along with many additional interviews and questionnaires.

Communications to the congregation included publications in the monthly newsletter, video spots during Sunday services, the development of the Transitions Tab on Bethany’s website, a photo blog, Zoom coffee meetings and publications in the weekly Bethany 411.

As a result of these efforts, each team developed preliminary recommendations to the council regarding the future structure, mission/vision, staffing, committee formation and pastoral leadership at Bethany. The current mission statement is affirmed, along with supporting vision statements. There is overwhelming support for reaching out to new families and developing outreach efforts/programs at Bethany. Movement toward becoming an inclusive church is also supported in the CAT survey, along with the welcome statement. This includes building more ministries that reach beyond our walls connecting with families and individuals seeking meaning and purpose in their lives. It’s a vision of hospitality and growth ... welcoming individuals where they’re at, discovering passions and empowering them in service, celebrating points of commitment as they occur, and dedicated to continued growth together in our Lord.

A potential staffing structure is recommended, along with the formation of supporting infrastructure and policy and procedure to guide the staff. Building communication between the congregation, staff and committees is emphasized along with a recommended committee/Council structure. Additionally, it is recommended that Bethany begin the process of developing a robust Lay Leadership program to assist our Pastors and Staff to address the Mission, Vision and program goals of Bethany.

Finally, pastoral leadership and staffing recommendations will be submitted to the council for their prayerful consideration, which includes the recommendation to call a Senior Pastor. He/She will embrace the mission, vision and values at Bethany, including effective family and congregational ministries where intergenerational activities are the norm, along with enhancing ministries for our youth and those young at heart.

This preliminary report is an abbreviated snapshot of TTF’s final report and recommendations to the council and congregation regarding the work summarized above. The final report will include comprehensive detailed survey information/results, team recommendations, conclusions and rationale. The final report will be submitted to Council by the end of January 2021.

The Transition Task Force is thankful for the leadership provided by Pastor Peter. We are grateful to the Bethany congregation for their confidence in TTF process and their support throughout this process. Thank you for your support and continued prayers. The Journey continues!

Invite & Welcome Team

The Invite and Welcome Team, like all other teams, faced many challenges this year. The biggest of these challenges was how we could continue to invite and welcome those around us, without being able to be physically present with one another.

Our team's purpose is to facilitate an invite to share Christ's unconditional love and to nurture a warm Bethany community for all. While this year undoubtedly looked different for everyone, I feel we were still able to make our purpose known.

Our original New Member Welcome and Gathering had to be put on hold while we determined the safest way to move forward. With a little "outside the box" thinking from our wonderful team, we were able to successfully host an outdoor, social distanced gathering to welcome in our newest members. This gathering consisted of a short meeting with our new members and their host families outside under the carport with some small breakfast treats on a beautiful day! It was enjoyed by all. We were so pleased to have found host families to support these new members, which made the gathering even more special during this year when there has been a lack of personal connections.

We also organized a small gesture of gratitude and delivered loaves of bread from the Wicked Whisk to our new members homes.

In addition, the Invite and Welcome Team was able to put some of our efforts into going over policies and updating Welcome Team information. We have also brainstormed ways that we can continue to welcome and invite people to Bethany in the upcoming months. While we are hopeful that we will be able to meet in person again soon, we are excited for the outreach ideas we have started to plan for the new year!

The Invite and Welcome Team is hoping to add some new team members this year as well. We typically have one meeting per month held via Zoom in order to ensure the health and well being of our members. If you ever have ideas you would like to share we would love for you to reach out! We appreciate the input from our congregation and would like to include others in our mission to invite, grow and welcome ALL to our wonderful Bethany family in the upcoming year!

Thank you,
Kayelon Campbell Murphy
Invite and Welcome Team Chair

Building an Inclusive Church Task Force

In 2019, a special task force was created at Bethany Lutheran Church to look into the process to extend our welcome to all people, including those who align with the LGBTQ community. The team came together and works under the auspices of the Welcome Committee. The core members of the team have continued to work on becoming recognized as a Reconciling in Christ Church within the ELCA. This effort will affirm our welcome to all - with no exceptions - by specifically indicating that we welcome those identifying with the LGBTQ community.

In 2020, this work included having individual conversations with members of the congregation, including a question/answer information section in each church publication, hosting educational opportunities through CrossTalk, hosting Jacqueline Bussie (author of Love Without Limits) through a video conference, joining a Synod work group sponsored by the Northwest Synod, surveying the congregation with a proposed welcome statement, adding library resources on inclusivity and meeting monthly through video conferencing. The task force has taken the results of our efforts to the Welcome Team and presented results of the efforts to Council throughout the year.

After receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback from a survey specifically geared to welcome ALL and from the Congregational Assessment Tool, the task force has presented the council with a proposal to become acknowledged as a Reconciling in Christ Congregation. The Welcome Team and the Church Council endorsed our efforts to present the following resolution at the annual meeting.

Bethany Lutheran Church of Rice Lake, WI affirms it being an open and inclusive church. We welcome all, no exceptions, because God welcomes all regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or relationship status. We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances or anything that too often divides us. Our unity is in Christ.

Acting on this intent, the Building an Inclusive Church (BIC) Task Force and the Welcome Committee make the motion that Bethany Lutheran Church of Rice Lake apply for recognition by Reconciling Works to be designated as a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) ELCA church.

Building an Inclusive Church Task Force Members: Byron Crouse and Laurie Carlsen (co-chairs), Pam Crouse, Dave Wilson, Ted & Carol Hakala, Amanda Amundson, Holden Burri, Keren Jorde

Altar Guild

The Altar Guild of Bethany is one of many ways Bethany members can serve. Our main responsibility is to prepare the altar in the Sanctuary and the Gathering Room for all church services.

On March 11, the Altar Guild met to prepare the Noon Lenten lunch, and review our procedures and think ahead about Easter. Little did we know that we would not be able to gather together or prepare the altar for the rest of the year. We have continued to change the altar paraments and keep oil in the candles for worship services.

As Bethany prepares for the coming year, we will continue to do what we have been asked to do, be the behind-the-scenes group that sets the table for the Lord's Supper.

Audrey Kusilek, Chair
Sue Finstad, Secretary

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

What a different year for our Bethany WELCA, as we tried to carry out our mission statement “committing ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engaging in ministry and action, promoting healing and wholeness in our church, society and the world.” These are bold words to carry out. All women of Bethany are invited and welcome to join our circles, come to board meetings and share in the work of our church when we meet.

We had plans made for a busy year and then the Covid-19 virus appeared and brought our programming to a halt. We did serve a couple Lenten luncheons before the church was closed and we were asked to stay at home.

Naomi Circle decided to gather August through October at Narrows Park for masked, outdoor, physically distanced meetings. They retrieved their newborn kit supplies from church and boxed up 200 newborn kits, which Mike & Annette Messner delivered to Global Missions in the Twin Cities. Naomi ordered, and had delivered to Global Missions, the required number of diapers for the kits they sent. Volunteers at Global Missions offered to assemble all the materials sent. AWESOME! One of their members put together 71 personal care kits that went on the LWR truck. They kept in touch with their special friends by sending cards to them through the year and sponsored a Christmas radio broadcast.

Hannah Circle kept in touch with their special friends by sending cards, flowers, making phone calls, delivered Advent devotional booklets and will sponsor a January 2021 radio broadcast in their honor. We were unable to safely do our school kits this year.

Elizabeth Circle has not met since the church was closed. They were able to put together 18 sewing kits that went on the LWR truck in October.

The Bethany Quilters, when they could no longer meet at church, took supplies home and sewed quilt tops. In early fall, they gathered at church to tie and finish as many tops as they could. They shipped 80 quilts to Lutheran World Relief; gave 10 quilts to Slumberland for their bed give away and donated 2 quilts to Luther Park's Fund Raiser. They are again sewing at home. Thank you to these dedicated women!

Even though the church doors were closed, these WELCA women continued to carry out God's request that we love and care for one another. It takes many hands to accomplish these gifts. Blessings to all.

W-ELCA: Lefse 2020

We planned for 100 pounds of potatoes (Donated by Amy & Ric Brekke). Sue Finstad worked her magic and did a great job on the Signup Genius, which was used to pre-sell the lefse and collect workers. She also printed out labels to make the pick up easier.

On November 12, we had eight volunteers that peeled the potatoes in Fellowship Hall; we had tables for each individual and had them bring the pots with potatoes to the window. Fresh water was put in pots and they were cut into even sizes. Most of these volunteers left as the potatoes were boiled.

We had eight volunteers that riced the potatoes and mixed the ingredients. This group stayed to help clean up and get the grills and cooling racks set up for Friday.

On Friday, November 13, Amy and I arrived to mix the potatoes. We had three volunteers that came and started balling the potatoes. A decision had been made to only roll and grill with one shift on Friday. We were lucky to have four teams that were experts at rolling and grilling and each team worked with two grills. Another team rolled and grilled with one grill, and tried to keep the cooling racks organized and potato balls delivered to stations. The church basement was back to normal by 1:30 p.m. with over 180 packs of lefse cooling in the fridge.

I believe that \$1,070 was the gross income and the only expense (\$55) was for lefse ingredients at Marketplace Foods. I purchased brown gift bags that were used to limit touching/contact at pickup times. (These were purchased at U-Line and ended up being part of supplies purchased for the Christmas Dinner Boxes.)

In addition to the 150+ packs of lefse that were sold, we delivered around 30 packs with cards to shut-ins, families that lost loved ones or past lefse helpers. The income does not match up with the number of packs sold because people were very generous and we were not providing change.

Thank you to all of you that gave me the go ahead to organize this project, and helped me work through the obstacles that were encountered. The smiles and thanks received at the pickup times made it all worth while. Thanks also to Bun & Paulette, Amy and Gail who helped deliver the many packs of lefse.

God's Blessing to all of you in 2021!

Trust Fund

The Trust Fund was established in 1983 to accept undesignated gifts received by this congregation, such as, but not limited to, bequests, life insurance proceeds and remainders from life income agreements from any individual or corporation or organization or and other source in cash or in property acceptable to them. All trust funds and property shall be kept and maintained separate, distinct and independent from the funds and property otherwise belonging to the church.

The purpose of the fund is to provide annual distributions beyond the operating budget of this congregation that will enable the further growth of our church, its ministries and stewardship opportunities.

Since the 2020 beginning balance was more than \$500,000, there was an opportunity to make available \$50,000 in gifts. However, the Trust Fund decided to reduce the figure to \$25,000 due to an uncertain market at the beginning of the year. We agreed to revisit that decision should the markets recover. Unfortunately, the fund did not distribute its stated goal, therefore gifts were left on the table. The information below reflects gift distribution in 2020.

2021 Goals & Objectives

- Promote the Trust Fund
 - Share the stories of the ministries funded
 - Increase giving
 - Promote giving to the Fund
 - Develop written and web based promotional materials

Balance as of January 1, 2020	\$510,766.34
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2020 Gifts Distributed from the Fund:

Bethany Quilters	\$500
Marshfield Clinic Oncology	\$500
Naomi Circle	\$500
Elizabeth Circle	\$250
Building an Inclusive Church Task Force	\$1900
Mission Jamaica	\$4500
Feed Our Kids Backpack Program	\$3000
Christmas Dinner Boxes	<u>\$3000</u>
Total Gifts Distributed	\$14,150.00

Gifts received in 2020	\$0
Interest/Dividends – Gain (Loss)	\$32,525.37

Ending Fund Balance as of December 31, 2020	\$529,141.71
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Bethany W-ELCA Financial Report

Balance on Hand - December 31, 2019	\$8,671.46
INCOME	
Miscellaneous	\$105.00
Lent / Advent	\$520.00
Circle Quarterly	\$115.50
Love Offering	\$3,020.00
Lefse Sales	\$1,095.00
Donations	<u>\$110.00</u>
TOTAL INCOME	\$4,965.50
EXPENSES	
Miscellaneous	\$793.93
Kitchen Miscellaneous	\$30.85
Advent / Lent	\$300.03
Lefse Expense	\$54.58
Luncheons	\$71.50
Milk Products	\$41.00
Salvation Army	\$1,000.00
Boys & Girls Club	\$1,000.00
Postage	<u>\$11.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$3,302.89
Checkbook Balance on December 31, 2020	\$10,334.07

Respectfully Submitted,
Ione Gohl, W-ELCA Treasurer

2020 Good Samaritan Checking Account

Income:

Balance (January 1, 2020)	\$4,377.22
Receipts	<u>\$13,430.00</u>
Total	\$17,807.22

Expenses

Hotel	\$333.00
ACEOGas Cards	<u>\$2,000.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$2,333.00

Balance on Hand (December 31, 2020)	\$15,474.22
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2020 Activity Report For All Designated Funds

Description	Opening Balance	YTD Credits	YTD Debits	Ending Balance
World Hunger & LWR	\$0.00	\$2,190.00	\$2,190.00	\$0.00
Bethany Missions	\$4,077.87	\$1,215.00	\$350.00	\$4,942.87
Sunday School Offering	\$3,149.19	\$222.69	\$488.61	\$2,883.27
Christmas Dinner	\$1,111.03	\$6,936.56	\$6,400.21	\$1,647.38
Good Samaritan Fund	\$3,347.78	\$13,430.00	\$1,833.00	\$14,944.78
Energy Savings Fund	\$563.05	\$0.00	\$563.05	\$0.00
Memorial Fund	\$3,233.74	\$1,680.00	\$2,738.33	\$2,175.41
Banner Fund	\$872.54	\$30.00	\$431.89	\$470.65
Altar Guild	\$743.59	\$135.00	\$0.00	\$878.59
Weddings	\$3,123.32	\$0.00	\$1,378.65	\$1,744.67
Youth Account	\$5,666.24	\$592.00	\$650.00	\$5,608.24
Library	\$518.68	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$518.68
Nursery	\$288.79	\$25.00	\$0.00	\$313.79
Children's Library	\$519.86	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$519.86
HS Trips	\$20,765.64	\$3,765.84	\$221.00	\$24,310.48
Choirs & Music	\$4,767.61	\$1,715.00	\$506.81	\$5,975.80
Worship Arts	\$0.00	\$491.00	\$0.00	\$491.00
Contingency Fund	\$16,930.23	\$1,580.00	\$16,500.28	\$2,009.95
Flower Garden	\$910.55	\$60.00	\$0.00	\$970.55
Building Fund	\$53,084.36	\$80,707.06	\$66,570.79	\$67,220.63
Hi League	\$980.43	\$127.00	\$0.00	\$1,107.43
Jr High League	\$7,268.75	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7,268.75
MS Pizza Money	\$571.34	\$49.00	\$438.48	\$181.86
Triennial Fund	\$2,373.63	\$386.00	\$663.20	\$2,096.43
Parish Nurse Ministry	\$1,094.82	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,094.82
Mission Jamaica	\$2,482.15	\$9,350.00	\$9,100.00	\$2,732.15
ELCA Disaster Relief	\$0.00	\$295.00	\$295.00	\$0.00
Organ Maintenance	\$13,019.16	\$975.00	\$0.00	\$13,994.16
General Gift Fund	\$3,767.58	\$0.00	\$2,738.33	\$1,029.25
Heifer Int'l	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$0.00
Media Project	\$0.00	\$4,476.90	\$4,176.90	\$300.00
Malawi	\$0.00	\$165.00	\$165.00	\$0.00
BIC	\$0.00	\$830.00	\$0.00	\$830.00
Bible Fund	\$658.90	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$708.90
Financial Peace University	\$153.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$153.00
Facility Deposits	\$2,250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,250.00
Bus Fund	\$24,148.06	\$90.70	\$2,542.35	\$21,696.41
Lead Pastor Sabbatical	\$3,000.00	\$260.00	\$3,260.00	\$0.00
Assoc Pastor Sabbatical	\$1,000.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Hospitality Fund	\$2,696.07	\$1,084.79	\$678.01	\$3,102.85
Healthy Initiative 2010-2012	\$5,712.38	\$0.00	\$4,475.41	\$1,236.97

Financial Secretary's Report

Year Ended 12/31/2020

General Funds

Regular offering	679,311.12
Loose offering	1,683.57
Lent/Easter	2,764.32
Thanksgiving	865.00
Christmas	3,653.00
Radio	5,005.00
Regular offering-2019	330.00
Regular offering-2021	70.00

Total General **\$693,682.01**

Other Funds

World Hunger/LWR	2,190.00
Bethany Missions	215.00
Good Samaritan	13,430.00
Memorial	1,680.00
Building fund 2020	78,143.37
Building fund 2021	1,000.00
Nursery	25.00
Mission Jamaica	9,000.00
Adult Education	375.00
Banner Fund	30.00
Bus Fund	90.00
Choirs/Music	1,715.00
Christmas Dinner	6,388.95

Clearing Fund	87,505.47
ELCA Disaster Relief	295.00
Hospitality	1,044.79
Flower Garden	60.00
Heifer Project	100.00
Hi League	127.00
HS Trips	1,765.84
M.S Pizza	49.00
Malawi	165.00
Office Expense	253.84
Sunday School Offering	222.69
VBS	25.00
Worship Supplies	44.00
Youth	50.00

Total Other **\$205,989.95**

Total Offering **\$899,671.96**

Submitted by Susan Derro

Balance Sheet

Year End 12/31/2020

	2018	2019	2020
Assets			
Current			
General Funds	\$72,927.12	\$60,864.16	
Checking	\$115,864.16	\$137,209.25	\$238,678.23
Designated Funds	\$210,103.75	\$194,850.34	\$198,909.58
Petty Cash Checking	<u>\$2,000.00</u>	<u>\$2,000.00</u>	<u>\$2,000.00</u>
Total Current	\$327,967.91	\$334,059.59	\$439,587.81
Fixed (Note 1)			
Bethany Lutheran Church	\$10,420,000.00	\$10,420,000.00	\$10,420,000.00
Equipment and Furnishings	\$1,271,917.80	\$1,271,917.80	\$1,271,917.80
Martin Looper II Van	<u>\$52,378.00</u>	<u>\$52,378.00</u>	<u>\$52,378.00</u>
Total Fixed	\$11,744,295.80	\$11,744,295.80	\$11,744,295.80
Total Assets	\$12,072,263.71	\$12,078,355.39	\$12,183,883.61
Liabilities (Note 2)			
Mortgage - Thrivent Financial	\$340,435.75	\$277,018.66	\$230,949.93
(Note 3)			
Net Equity - (Assets - Liabilities)	\$11,731,827.96	\$11,801,336.73	\$11,952,933.68

Note 1: Fixed assets are based upon insurance replacement value: not market value.

Property parcels without buildings are not counted in assets.

Martin Looper II Van valued at cost in 2011, per insurance policy.

Note 2: Mortgage June 1, 2005: \$1,850,000.00

Mortgage Recalculated 03/17 Remaining 10 year term, lower rate and lower payment.

Note 3: This Balance Sheet is prepared on a cash basis.

It includes payment for all invoices received to December 31, 2020.

This balance sheet has not been audited. It is for information only.

Narrative Budget

Bethany Mission: **INVITE** all; **GROW** Faith and **GO** to share God's love and grace.

Bethany's Vision 2020...and Beyond: Grow Young, Grow Faith and Christ-Centered Community.

On December 17, after many hours dedicated to study and vigorous discussion, the Council voted to approve a deficit budget for the congregation's approval. Please take a moment to consider the mission and vision that we share for Bethany and the facts that were before the Council.

Bethany has been blessed by a congregation that understands the link between their fiscal support and the mission and vision of the church. As you read the committee reports in this Annual Report, you can note that the work of the church has continued throughout this year despite the Covid pandemic.

The Council has usually been able to prepare a budget based on usual patterns and assumptions about giving and expenses. This was not a usual year! While we speculated that the Covid pandemic is a significant influence, we know that Bethany is also a church in transition following Pastor Grant's retirement. Uppermost in our discussion, and that of the committees as they planned and submitted their budgets, was the concern for the needs of our congregation, community and world resulting from the financial, emotional, physical and spiritual challenges we are all experiencing as we live a life in a pandemic, economic distress and social unrest.

PLEDGES 2021: The number of pledges and the amount pledged for year 2021 did not meet the usual target. While we speculated on the reason for this, it was just a fact to be dealt with. In overall income, we are planning a reduction in income of about \$60,000 compared to the budget of 2020.

INCOME 2020: The final fiscal report processes are now complete, and we are grateful that our 2020 budget has balanced despite a reduction in giving during this pandemic. In the spring, Bethany applied for, received, and met the requirements for an \$80,000 federal Payroll Protection Program loan. This loan has been forgiven and was spent on wages and payroll expenses. Surplus income will be carried over to 2021.

EXPENSES 2020: Expenses during 2020 were regularly monitored by our fiscal experts and the council as usual and reported to you in our publications. With the dramatic changes in response to the pandemic, expenses were carefully adjusted and shifted from areas that were underspent (staff travel and education for example) to those requiring more funding such as updating technology for improving and expanding worship opportunities. Decisions were always based on how to continue and even advance our mission to support worship, education, caring ministries and outreach. And this year salaries and staffing deviated from the planned budget, such as Pastor Grant's retirement.

2021 PROPOSED BUDGET- SPECIAL NOTES:

- Best practice in budget planning is to plan for usual and customary budget needs as if we are open and functioning. During Covid, and the uncertainty of when in-person programming will resume, we expect that some budget categories may be underspent as they were in 2020.
- Approximately 65% of the 2021 budget is salary and includes a 1.6% increase. During 2020, changes in job descriptions and staffing has resulted in underspending this budget category. The Council and personnel committee wished to acknowledge the staff for their efforts to significantly change their work processes to continue the mission and vision in new and creative ways. The total salary budget proposed is \$39,000 less than the 2020 budget.
- Benevolence (ELCA, Luther Park, Lutheran Social Services) - The budget includes a proposed increase from 5% to 6%, an increase of approximately \$4000. Bethany had tithed in the past, but reduced benevolence from 10% to 5% some years ago. The Council wishes to increase benevolence 1% per year to achieve the goal of tithing (10%) once again.
- Building maintenance is sustained and carefully considered. The Bethany building is recognized as a sig-

Narrative Budget (*continued*)

nificant part of our community outreach. Over 40 community organizations use our building at no-charge. Even with a building that is closed for some of 2020, the expenses slightly exceeded the budget.

STAYING FOCUSED ON WHO WE ARE AS A CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY:

Acknowledging God's mysterious ways, we are blessed to be in transition, for we have had time to pause and assess, and now have a team in place to study who we are and what we want to be in the future. (Read more about this in the Transition Task Force's preliminary report included in this Annual Report.) The Congregational Assessment (CAT) has provided us with a set of priorities including:

- Continue to conduct worship services that are exception in both quality and spiritual content.
- Invest additional energy into reaching new people, especially families with children and youth, and incorporate them into the life of the church.
- Expend new energy to minister to and provide direct services to those who are marginalized by society and/or broken by life circumstances.

A church budget is different from our household or business budgets. Much of our income is based on faithful pledges and benevolence, and our expenses are driven by our mission and vision. With trust in God, the Council asks that you approve a budget in which we do not know if our income will meet our planned expenses. But we have studied the issues we face, have prayed for guidance, and with a hopeful heart, ask that you will support the continued mission as we navigate through our time of transition.

As in previous years, we invite you to join us for the Budget Forum on Sunday, January 24 at 9:30 a.m. You can learn more about the budget and ask questions. This year it will be a Zoom event for your convenience and safety. Watch for details on how to get the link on the 411 communication or on our website, www.bethanyricelake.org.

Bethany Lutheran Church

2020 Financial Statement & 2021 Proposed Budget

	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2021 Budget
INCOME			
Envelopes - General	\$730,529.00	\$682,059.67	\$685,000.00
Loose Offering	\$9,000.00	\$1,683.57	\$2,000.00
Lenten/Easter Offering	\$5,000.00	\$2,764.32	\$3,000.00
Thanksgiving offering	\$1,000.00	\$865.00	\$600.00
Advent/Christmas Offering	\$10,000.00	\$3,653.00	\$6,000.00
Radio Income	\$3,700.00	\$5,005.00	\$3,000.00
Interest Checking	\$400.00	\$254.52	\$300.00
Other Income	\$0.00	\$80,197.00	\$0.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$759,629.00	\$776,482.08	\$699,900.00
 PASTORAL SALARIES			
Salary	\$90,933.00	\$95,756.91	\$91,862.00
Housing	\$49,000.00	\$51,000.08	\$49,000.00
ELCA Benefits	\$63,646.00	\$49,865.03	\$40,322.00
Cont Education	\$2,400.00	\$976.07	\$2,400.00
Publications/Pastoral Exp	\$2,000.00	\$1,516.55	\$2,000.00
Social Sec Allowance	\$10,705.00	\$11,226.81	\$10,776.00
Mileage Reimbursement	\$3,000.00	\$849.84	\$3,000.00
Sabbatical	\$1,000.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00
TOTAL PASTORAL SALARIES	\$222,684.00	\$211,691.29	\$200,360.00
 EDUCATION SALARIES			
Salaries	\$89,693.00	\$80,188.81	\$76,436.00
Benefits	\$13,571.00	\$14,091.90	\$14,326.00
Expenses	\$5,300.00	\$1,399.79	\$5,300.00
TOTAL EDUCATION SALARIES	\$108,564.00	\$95,680.50	\$96,062.00
 MUSIC SALARIES			
TOTAL MUSIC SALARIES	\$14,920.00	\$6,916.11	\$14,920.00

Bethany Lutheran Church

2020 Financial Statement & 2021 Proposed Budget

	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2021 Budget
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SALARIES			
Salaries	\$117,746.00	\$105,117.65	\$119,432.00
Benefits	\$41,540.00	\$36,602.46	\$36,645.00
Expenses	\$3,000.00	\$327.70	\$3,000.00
TOTAL ADMIN SUPPORT SALARIES	\$162,286.00	\$142,047.81	\$159,077.00
FICA Employers Part	\$17,010.00	\$14,658.96	\$16,125.00
TOTAL SALARIES	\$525,464.00	\$470,994.67	\$486,544.00
OTHER EXPENSES			
Benevolences	\$44,315.00	\$45,364.11	\$48,534.00
Education	\$23,750.00	\$13,762.68	\$23,750.00
Worship/Committees	\$16,450.00	\$11,058.72	\$15,590.00
Worship Supplies	\$4,000.00	\$3,215.30	\$4,000.00
Office	\$32,500.00	\$27,041.80	\$35,500.00
Conventions/Conferences	\$1,750.00	\$548.75	\$1,750.00
Special Ministry	\$4,500.00	\$6,958.14	\$15,000.00
Utilities	\$40,400.00	\$28,774.22	\$40,700.00
Maintenance/Repair	\$45,500.00	\$47,449.96	\$41,000.00
Insurance	\$21,000.00	\$19,844.75	\$22,000.00
TOTAL OTHER EXPENSES	\$234,165.00	\$204,018.43	\$247,824.00
TOTAL ALL EXPENSES	\$759,629.00	\$675,013.10	\$734,728.00
TTL CONTRIB OVER/UNDER	\$0.00	\$101,468.98	-\$34,828.00

Pastoral Salaries Include: Lead Pastor, Associate Pastor

Education Salaries Include: Music Director, Congregational Ministries Coordinator, Director of Education/Youth Ministries, Pastoral Intern, Ministry Assistant

Music Salaries Include: Worship Accompanists, Choir Directors, Choir Accompanists, Ensembles, Bell Directors

Administrative Support Salaries Include: Director of Church Business, Communications & Publications Specialist, Custodian, Financial Secretaries, Kitchen Coordinator, Nursery Attendants

2020 Membership Statistics

New Members:

Adults	13
Children	<u>15</u>
	28

Members Received During 2020

	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>
Baptism - Children	11	0
Baptism - Adults	2	0
Affirmation of Faith	2	1
Transferred from ELCA Congregations	11	5
Transferred from other Lutheran Congregations	0	0
Transferred from non-Lutheran Congregations	2	1
Other sources & statistical adjustment	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
Total Received	28	11
Baptized Members Confirmed	<u>0</u>	<u>17</u>
Total	28	28

Members Removed During 2020

Death	10	10
Transferred to other ELCA Congregations	6	6
Transferred to other Lutheran Congregations	4	4
Transferred to non-Lutheran Congregations	0	0
Other sources & statistical adjustment	<u>17</u>	<u>0</u>
Total Removed:	37	20

Membership - End of 2019:	1,267	925
Membership - End of 2020:	1,261	951

2019 Average Weekend Worship Attendance: 284

2020 Average Weekend Worship Attendance: N/A

2020 Pastoral Acts

Baptisms:	13
Weddings:	0
Funerals:	11

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING **OPENING LITURGY**

LITANY

L. O God of all power and love ...

C. ... we give thanks for your unfailing presence.

L. O God of all power and love, we give thanks ...

C. ... for the hope you provide in times of uncertainty and loss.

L. O God of all power and love ...

C. ... we ask you to send your Holy Spirit to enkindle in us your holy fire.

L. O God of all power and love, we ask you ...

C. ... to revive us to live as Christ's body in the world.

L. O God of all power and love, we ask to be ...

C. ... a people who pray, worship, learn, break bread, share life, heal neighbors, bear good news, seek justice, rest and grow in the Spirit.

L. O God of all power and love, we ask you to be with us ...

C. ... wherever and however we gather. Unite us in common prayer and send us in common mission, that we and the whole creation might be restored and renewed, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Build Us Up, Lord

1 Build us up, Lord, build us up; set in
2 Build us up, Lord, build us up; let our

us a strong foun - da - tion. Lead us to do your
lives re - flect your glo - ry. Cast a - way all our

ho - ly will; form and shape your new cre - a - tion.
doubts and fears; help us tell the world your sto - ry.

Build us up, Lord, build us up; as we
Build us up, Lord, build us up; help us

guide and teach each oth - er, help us to share your love with the
bear good fruit for you, Lord, give us vi - sion and keep us

world: ev - 'ry sis - ter, ev - 'ry broth - er.
sure. Grant us faith that's stead - fast and true.

Refrain
Grow - ing in Christ, we plant seeds for the king - dom; we fol - low in
faith what's be - gun! Lord, set in our hearts the pow'r of your
word to spread the news of your Son!

Text: Mark Glaeser, b. 1956, and Donna Hanna, b. 1952

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In the early verses of Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus, a city on the Aegean Sea at the mouth of a river and at the intersection of three trading routes. The letter was written about ten years after the church had started. During the early years of this congregation, Jews and Gentiles from several ethnicities and nationalities had come together to form “one body.” Paul was aware that they had done well and commended them for their faith and love.

The word “one” appears more than seven times in the first four verses. This reflects the importance Paul gave to being called into the “unity of Christ.” He wanted to note that, although many of the church members came from far off, there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” This oneness reflects God’s gift of reconciliation in Christ.

A second emphasis from Paul was that, as believers, they were to “bear with one another in love.” This would require humility, gentleness and patience as each of them practiced their faith. It would require tolerance to “maintain unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

A third emphasis was that each person had been given gifts by God and that these gifts were given to increase the whole. Because the Ephesian church was a young congregation and its members were just beginning in their faith journey, their understandings were often tossed to and fro. But as they grew in faith, each person contributed to building up the body of Christ.

The fourth and final emphasis was that by “speaking the truth in love,” each person must grow into Christ. This means taking time to learn about one another and their gifts. Knowing these gifts, we can do God’s work both within and beyond the faith community. When there are decisions to make or relationships to reconcile, we know to begin with prayer and reflection, always desiring to speak the truth in love — not for our own benefit but for God’s glory, that we might become more complete.

As our members and friends gather today, whether face-to-face or online, we are reminded of our calling into “unity in Christ.” We come from many places and work in many contexts, and yet we recognize “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

Whether new to a worshiping community or further along the journey, we realize that humility, gentleness and patience are required both in the good times and especially in times of uncertainty and struggle. God wants us to be more complete through our work. Christ provides the way. The Holy Spirit is with us for guidance and courage. Each of us has been given the gifts to be complete, and through our faithfulness we will grow stronger and work together as one body.

LET US PRAY: LORD, LET THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL DWELL IN US DEEPLY. MAY WE EMBRACE THE RECONCILING POWER OF ONENESS WITH CHRIST. MAY THIS ONENESS GUIDE OUR CONGREGATION AS WE LIVE INTO THE NEW REALITIES OF THESE TIMES. AS WE MEET NEW PARTNERS IN MINISTRY, MAY WE TAKE TIME TO GET TO KNOW THEM WITH PATIENCE, HUMILITY AND LOVE. HELP US TO SEE HOW SHARING OUR GIFTS WILL MAKE YOUR WORK EASIER AND MORE FULFILLING WHILE BRINGING ALL OF US CLOSER TO CHRIST. MAY THE BLESSINGS YOU GIVE EACH DAY STRENGTHEN US TO A LIVING, DARING CONFIDENCE IN YOUR GRACE. AMEN.