

Church News

September 09, 2023, Issue No. 45

Welcome to the forty-fifth issue of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church Newsletter. This newsletter provides updated communication monthly to all members and friends of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, through September 09, 2023. As a church, strong communication is essential to truly develop and maintain a loving trusting relationship with each other. Articles that follow are submitted by leadership and members that relate information on activities being conducted and planned as we enact our mission of ***“Called to Invite the Community to Know and Grow in the Love of Christ.”***

Message from the Pastor – Submitted by Pastor Tim Feaser

When I was 12 years old, my parents took me from our home in Indiana to San Diego, California where my father was completing a master's degree in astronomy and geology. For my part, I was mostly focused on going to Disneyland and seeing the Pacific Ocean. However, that summer proved to be hugely significant for my Christian Faith formation in my adult life! My father's degree program was aimed at schoolteachers who were all teaching science in either middle or high schools. As a result, there were lots of kids my age who were the children of those completing the graduate program. Given the nature of my dad's program and the fact that they were training teachers, his professors were eager to include all these children in many of the labs and field trips. So, I remember visiting Mt. Palomar Observatory late at night while the astronomers were conducting research by observing galaxies around us. I also remember helping my dad locate rocks in the desert of Joshua Tree National Park and finding specimens that were literally billions of years old. After that summer I had to translate all of the Bible stories that I heard into a new worldview. That summer I learned that with each new scientific discovery, God's creation became even more amazing.

After becoming a pastor, I always wanted to give young people in my congregations a similar experience. That is what confirmation should be! Between our two churches, I think we can actually combine forces and organize a confirmation program this year. Certain parts of this program are mandated by our denomination, such as the Creed, Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. There are other things that I think you should know about like how the Bible is put together and a little bit about Martin Luther. There are also practical needs such as Science and Religion, identifying religious cults, and developing a prayer life.

This is to say, if you know of any young folks who might benefit from a confirmation program, please let me know. I'd like to host a "day retreat" every couple of months at our lake house at Smith Mountain Lake. It will be partially fun, partially educational, and partially reflective. As young people prepare for high school and possibly college, I hope that this would help them grow into an adult faith. Blessings to everyone!

Notes from Leadership Team – Submitted by Donna Curran

Editor's note: The sections below are selected items of interest from the minutes of the Leadership Team Meeting held on August 12, 2023, provided to me by President Donna Curran. The full set of detailed minutes is available to the congregation upon request.

Our Church Life and Mission

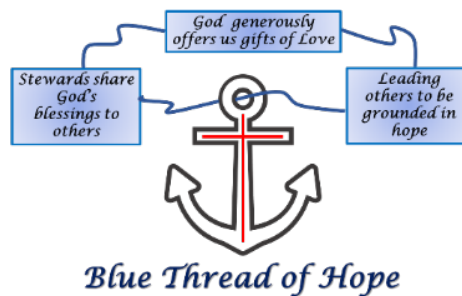
Stewards of God's Love - A Church with a Purpose – Submitted by Toby Murphy

Just mentioning the word “Stewardship” and eyes roll and there is an instinctive reaction to confirm the location of checkbooks. Sometimes we forget that stewardship is at the center of being a christian It everything we do after we say “I believe”. This observation was made by a gentleman named Clarence Stoughton who was a past president of both Wagner College and Wittenberg University and a leader of the United Lutheran Church in America which was to later become the ELCA.

Stoughton has maintained that everything belongs to God, even our lives. This stance of God's universal ownership is supported by the first words in the Holy Bible: In the beginning God created heaven and earth”. In other words God as owner of all that exists has made us stewards of his creation. The small slice of creation we call Lynchburg Virginia is in our charge. Our stewardship effort is not only about money but also the support and love we send out from our congregation into the community.

As we near the end of our stewardship campaign we should remember that God is love and everything God does is permeated with that love, including the creation of us. We in turn remember that love is in everything we do.

We are our Father's children.



Nurturing the Blue Thread of Hope by Bringing Hope to Others

Every Member Chat (EMC) – submitted by Stewardship Team

All BLC members will have an opportunity to receive information and provide input about the church's future vision including our financial situation during an *Every Member Chat* session that will be held starting on September 24th and ending on October 19th. The schedule for four of these sessions, to be facilitated by Pastor Tim, is shown in the “upcoming Events” table at the end of this Newsletter. You will have the opportunity to select attending at one of the four events scheduled.

Goals of the EMC:

- To reconnect with members.
- To provide an overview of BLC's financial status and future vision.

- To share information about BLC's 5-year plan to support a part time pastor.
- To personally give each member a pledge card.
- Provide an overview of the *Bethel Series* which provides a comprehensive adult study on the Bible. The first year is a review of the Old Testament and the second year is the New Testament. Pastor has taught this series in other churches, and it was very well received. Pastor will begin classes for us in late 2023 through 2024. Additional information about the *Bethel Series* is provided in the July 29th issue of the BLC Newsletter. A copy of which is included on the last page of this newsletter

Selected members of the Stewardship Team (Toby, Will, Susan and Carolyn) will divide up the BLC membership and contact each to personally invite them to the EMC sessions and to ask them to commit to attending one of the four EMC sessions listed in the "Upcoming Events Schedule" at the end of this newsletter. The invitations will be completed by mid-September in preparation or the first session to be held on September 24th.

Wicker Basket Remaining Schedule for 2023 – *submitted by Carolyn Robinson*

- September-Operation Christmas Child
- October-Capital Improvement Project*
- November Meals on Wheels
- December- Parkview Mission (Food Program)

*Funds will be designated towards a specific improvement project approved by the Leadership Team prior to the month of September such as purchasing mulch and repairs inside/outside of the building.

Operation Christmas Box and Blessing Bags Coordinated Efforts - *Submitted by Karen Murphy*

The two outreach ministries have combined their efforts. An item used in both ministries will be highlighted every month for contribution. At times many of these items can be found on sale or clearance in grocery stores or big box stores. If you purchase any of these items, please place them in the Blessing Bag basket under the mailboxes.

Remaining Items for future months:

September: Notebook Paper

October: Children's scissors

November: Glue sticks

Thanks for supporting Bethlehem's outreach programs.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL BACKPACK DRIVE – *Submitted by Karen Murphy*



Thanks to all who purchased or donated funds to purchase items for the Blessing Backpack Drive. A total of 25 backpacks were packed for students PK-6th grade and delivered to Lynchburg Department of Social Services in early August. At times children are removed from their homes and schools and placed in emergency foster care without any of their school supplies or personal hygiene items.

Thanks to Ann Johnson for writing a Thrivent Grant and to all who packed the backpacks. The Scrappers from BLC also made beautiful, warm quilts that were attached to each backpack. Each child also received a Prayer Bear. Thanks to Donna Curran, Carolyn Robinson, and Harrison Neighbors for delivering the backpacks.

Please keep an eye out for sturdy backpacks that may be reduced in price in the next two months as we will be packing Blessing Backpacks for those displaced from their homes in the winter of 2024.

Many hands make a lighter load to bless others!!

Together in Christ

Editor Notes: The list I am working from may be outdated. Please send me or Michelle our Administrative Assistant any updates on birthdays and anniversaries for future issues of this newsletter. This would include any new members or friends receiving this newsletter. Will Engelke – comdirblcva@outlook.com or office@blcva.org

Upcoming Events (Contact Engelke or Michelle Hight with Event Planning)

Day	Date	Time	Activity
-----	------	------	----------

Saturday	9/09/23	10:00am	Leadership Team Meeting
Saturday	9/09/23	10:00am- 12:00pm	Sewing Guild
Tuesday	9/12/23	6:00pm	Stewardship Team Meeting
Tuesday	Sept. 12- Oct.31st	10:00am- 12:00pm	Adult Bible Study "The Chosen" Season 2
Sunday	9/17/23	11:00am	Fellowship Brunch at Charley's
Thursday	9/07/23 9/14/23 9/21/23 9/28/23	9:30am-	Scrappers Meet
Sunday	9/24/23	4:00pm	Every Member Chat Session (Select one of the 4 that best fits your schedule when called)
Wednesday	10/04/23	2:00pm	Every Member Chat Session
Thursday	10/12/23	7:00pm	Every Member Chat Session
Thursday	10/19/23	5:00pm	Every Member Chat Session. Zoom Session.
Sunday	11/19/23	9:00am	Dr. Phyllis Milton, Bishop-elect will visit and provide the sermon and lead a discussion session after the service
Sunday	11/19/23	TBD	Bedford will host the Thanksgiving pie social this year.

**Copy of Pastor Tim's Report
From Issue 44 (July 29th)**

Message from the Pastor – Submitted by Pastor Tim Feaser

Back in 1958, a young newly ordained Lutheran pastor, named Harley Swiggum was called to be Assistant Pastor for Education at the big Bethel Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin. Starting right after his seminary graduation in June, his first task was to recruit teachers for the congregation's Sunday School. Many folks turned him down because they said, "we don't know anything about the Bible!"

So, Harley decided that there was a critical need to teach the Bible to adults. He ended up writing a comprehensive adult study on Biblical content. It was to be a two-year college level course with the first year on the Old Testament and the second year the New Testament. The course became known as the Bethel Series, and it transformed the whole congregation.

Several years ago, I attended a two-week seminar at Bethel Lutheran Church in which pastors were trained to teach the Bethel Series in their congregations. I'd like to introduce BLC to this exciting Bible Study which would begin sometime this fall. Are you interested in a weekly hour and a half course in which you will learn Biblical content? If you decide to participate, I promise that you will be able to hold your own with the Jehovah's Witnesses! In fact, you will know the Bible better than they do.



Pastor Tim Feaser

410-608-9442

timfeaser@yahoo.com

John Goodrich Treasurer

Office Hours Tuesday 9:00am to 12:00pm

treasurerblcva@outlook.com

Michelle Hight Administrative Assistant

Office hours 8:00am to 12:00pm

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

office@blcva.org

If you have any comments about improving the content or structure of this newsletter, please contact Will Engelke at comdirblcva@outlook.com or 434-534-8254.

