



The CHIMES

Monthly Newsletter of
Bethlehem Lutheran Church

A Message from Pastor Jen...

There may well be a thin line between perseverance and bullheadedness. Seriously. For how long does a person stick to a dream or a plan that keeps coming up short of the mark? There used to be a thing called “Midwestern Protestant Work Ethic” that informed us to work hard, set goals, and never give up. For those of us who still remember those days, discerning what is perseverance and bullheadedness can be a difficult task.

As I write this, I think just picking on the older folks isn’t fair. While there are different nuances, this problem is timeless, affecting people of all times and all ages. As I ponder further, it seems to me that the Third Petition of The Lord’s Prayer (a prayer that’s been around for a couple thousand years) speaks to this.

Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

What is this? or What does this mean?

Martin Luther says: In fact, God’s good and gracious will comes about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us.

How does this come about?

Again, from Dr. Luther: Whenever God breaks and hinders every evil scheme and will—as are present in the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh—that would not allow us to hallow God’s name and would prevent the coming of his kingdom, and instead whenever God strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his word and in faith until the end of our lives. This is God’s gracious and good will.

Luther’s instruction regarding the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer doesn’t outright determine perseverance and bullheadedness.

What his instruction does do is, in my opinion, far more important.

First, Luther’s instruction rightly orients us.

Our human tendency is to look at pretty much everything from our own point of view. We begin with I, me, and my. We get tripped up in the ownership of our situations and our stuff and ignore the most important part. Luther begins with God. So should we.

Second, Luther’s instruction reminds us to pray.

Funny that when learning about a prayer we need to be reminded to pray! God’s will happens. When we lift to God our prayers and sit in quiet meditation, listening for God then God’s will “materializes” in our midst. In other words, we begin to know God’s will.

Third, Luther’s instruction points to grace through faith.

Ultimately, God’s will for us is peace, wholeness, and healing. A good word for this is *shalom*. All of scripture points us in this direction; God’s salvation history beginning with Genesis and running through Revelation. We are given both law and gospel. The law shows us our sin and the gospel frees us.

The thin line between perseverance and bullheadedness remains. Even more than that, so does faith. In the end the question isn’t whether we should stick with it or change course. In the end the question focuses on the Triune God.

Amen, amen, amen!

Pastor Jen



Bethlehem Lutheran Church

W8267 Hwy 33 East, Portage Wisconsin

Pastor Jen Johnson

608-742-8502 or 608-485-3976
bethlehemELCA.pastor@gmail.com

Mailing Address

The P.O Box is no longer used; please mail to
W8267 Hwy 33 East, Portage WI 53901

Office Contact Info

Phone (608) 742-8502
Email bethluch@frontier.com

www.BethlehemLCportage.org – New Address!

Committee Reports:

Action Items/Noteworthy Decisions:

a. Personnel: We have accepted the resignation of Lisa Cook. Approved by council. We will be revising the Parish Secretary position into a full-time Office Coordinator position, to be approved by council and posted into the community soon.

b. Finance: The church expenditure process has been approved. Council has approved to move forward with Rhyme for our copier services after our current lease runs out in July 2019. The sermon broadcasts will be suspended until the sanctuary computer is fixed. Council approved to use \$600 from the designated garden funds for grounds projects in 2019 by Dick Olson and the property committee. As a congregation, we will need to look at our goals for benevolence in 2019. Our current budget proposal for 2019 shows a deficit - we will need to look at additional fundraising in 2019.

c. Stewardship/Evangelism: At the request of Pr. Jen, council has approved to collect a free will offering for River Haven during the worship services on November 21st and November 25th. Everything is moving forward with The Gifts of Bethlehem Christmas concert on December 5th.

d. Worship & Music: Nothing to report at the time of the council meeting. Pr. Jen working with Worship & Music to answer a few questions.

e. Property: Del has been working on a couple of pipe leaks. Dirt for the culvert project should be delivered soon.

f. Local & Global: They will be assisting the Women's Group with Our Daily Bread for the Christmas concert.

g. Christian Ed: There have been some discussions about possibly making a few changes to our Sunday School program. Sunday School will be hosting a Congregational Game Day on Sunday, January 6th. The confirmation crew is working hard to finish their project, the bedtime bags. November 11th will be the 3rd annual Soup-er Chili Cookoff fundraiser for the youth mission trip.

From the Council...

We have included a summary of the agenda/minutes from the November church council meeting below. If you would like additional details, please review the posted copy of the meeting minutes which can be found on the council bulletin board in the narthex. The official minutes from the November council meeting will be approved and then posted in the narthex after the December council meeting. If you have any questions or concerns about this, please reach out to any member of council. Thank you!



Church Council Meeting Minutes: Summary November 15, 2018

In Attendance:

Ann Ciske (via phone), Cheri Dvorak, Ed Rohrbacher, Tania Anderson, Tim Kratz, Angela Chappell, Fred Reckling and Pr. Jen Johnson.

Council has received nominations for two members of the church to fill two positions on council that will be opening in January.

We are looking at a few fundraising ideas for the church. We will be hosting a rummage sale at the church in August 2019. General Engineering in Portage has donated 2 or 3 storage units to store donated items over the winter.

There will be a fire alarm test on November 28th. Del Molden will show staff members what to do in case of a fire alarm. We will create a fire alarm procedure and post it by the end of the year.

The Gift of Bethlehem

A Christmas Concert at Bethlehem Lutheran Church



Bethlehem Lutheran Church will be hosting a Christmas concert of volunteer musicians (members and non-members) on **Wednesday, December 5th at 6:00 p.m.** Prior to the concert, there will be an evening prayer service with communion at 5:30 p.m. This will be a free event (a free-will offering will be collected) and the community is invited to attend. Immediately following the service, there will be fellowship with various breads and beverages, and a silent auction. All of the money raised this evening will go toward our mortgage, bills and the loan certificate fund.

We need your help! We are in need of donations for the silent auction. In the past, members of the church have donated various prizes, gifts baskets, event tickets, etc. that can be used as auction items. Please let us know if you or someone you know has an item to donate. We appreciate your help! Also, please attend the decorating event at the church on Saturday, December 1st to help us decorate for the season! Thank you!

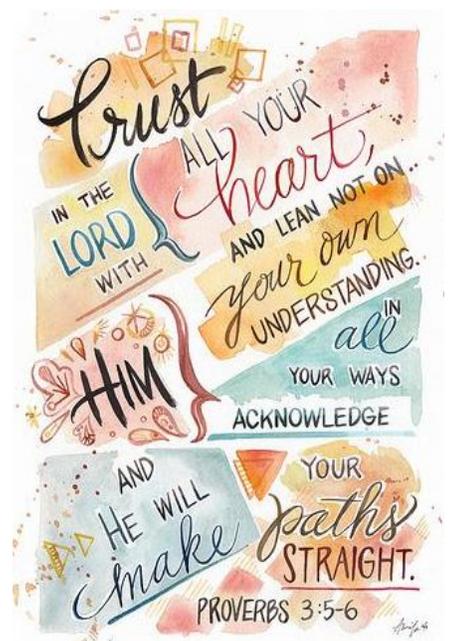
Scrip Program

Gift Cards for the Holiday Season



Stop by the scrip card table in the narthex and place your order for gift cards this holiday season. Hundreds of cards are available to choose from: various restaurants, gas stations, clothing stores, etc. A small percentage of each purchase goes back to the church!

Proverbs 3:5-6, and the guidance it gives, has always been something that both reassures and frustrates me. I know it's true, but that doesn't always make things easier to handle or make decisions easier to figure out. I need lots of reminders to keep this message at the forefront of my thoughts and in my heart. After much prayerful deliberation, a lot of conversations and frankly, more than a few tear-filled moments, I have submitted my resignation to the Church Council in regard to the Parish Secretary position. We aren't always clear about what God has in store for our lives and the decisions that seem to be right at one point, sometimes turn out to take a different path based on a dozen different factors. For now, what is right for me and my family, calls for a change...but I hope to make clear that my decision isn't based on "bad things". I think it's fair to say we've all worked our way through a lot of stuff and changes here at BLC, and some were more difficult to handle than others, but the "good things" far outweigh all of that when it comes to the wonderful people and treasured memories that have become a huge part of my life. There are so many of you who have brightened my day, taught me something, gave me guidance, made me laugh, shared my tears, offered your assistance and otherwise impacted my life in big and small ways. There are not enough ways to say thank you for all of that. I have truly appreciated my time as a staff member here at Bethlehem and I have loved working with everyone, but my place here as a worshipper, with my family, is where God is leading my focus, so this is hardly a goodbye. It's just a change, and one that feels like the right way to make my path a little straighter, with God's help.



-Lisa Cook

Sermon Broadcasts

As we've all noticed, technology is great...when it's working! Unfortunately, the old computer in the Sanctuary is not working, at all, and we've been unable to record services to be played on the radio, along with everything else that computer was used for. As we are not ready to purchase a new computer, we have discontinued our radio broadcast program. It's something we may begin again, but that's another conversation after we've addressed our technology needs. Thank you to everyone who has supported this program over the years and for those of you who are signed up during the remainder of this calendar year, we will be in touch soon to discuss alternatives.



Chancel Flowers

Sign-Up sheets to sponsor the cost of our chancel flowers throughout the year can be found on the big table in the Narthex. The cost is \$28 and you will be billed directly by Edgewater Greenhouse. Thank you for supporting our congregation in this way!

Thank you to this month's sponsors!

12/2

Marj Margelowsky in memory of loved ones

12/9

Betty Levzow in memory of Don Levzow (12-6-16)

12/16

Don Droste in memory of Deloris Droste (12-5-14)

12/23

Lucile Gauger in memory of Henry Gauger

12/30

Bonnie Dixon and Brian Franson in honor
of their children and grandchildren



Coffee Hour

Coffee Hour Fellowship is a great time to make new friends, catch up with old friends and enjoy time together here at church.

As our worship schedule has changed to one service at 9:00 a.m. on Sundays, coffee hour will follow.



Thank you to everyone who signed up to host coffee hour for this month! There are still 3 spots to fill in so check out the sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

12/2

Wagner Family

Card Party Fundraiser for BLC!

Have some fun and help raise some money for our church by joining Bob and Cloe for a Euchre Card Party on Friday, December 7th at 6:00 p.m.

For just \$5 a person, you'll enjoy snacks, cards (and the chance to win prizes!) and fun fellowship while contributing some extra cash to go towards expenses here at BLC. It's not a high stakes tournament, all Euchre players are welcome!

From the 2018 Quilters...

94 quilts were shipped to Lutheran World Relief at the end of October. We saved 10 quilts for local needs and Cloe sold 10 quilts. This number is a high count for us, thanks to the generous time and talent plus the many supplies that were given to our talented sewers and construction work done by our members. Cloe Rehdantz sews most of the tops and Angie Buchholtz cuts most of the squares. Other members include Ann Ciske, Ginny Paulson, Margaret Molden, Linda Lewis, Cheryl Hebel and Dorothy Waldo. It is our hope that many people will be warmed with these gifts.

Sunday School News

The Sunday School students will be singing on Wednesday, December 5th at 6:00 pm at the beginning of the Christmas concert, *"Gifts of Bethlehem"*. There will be silent auction items to bid on prior to the start of the concert. There will be refreshments after.

This year's Christmas Program will be performed Wednesday, December 12th, at 5:30 p.m. (children should arrive between 5:00 p.m. & 5:15 p.m.) followed by cookies and milk/juice and Sunday, December 16th at 9:00 a.m. (children should arrive at 8:30 a.m.) followed by a brunch. There is a sign up for sheet for the brunch on the Sunday School bulletin board. Our program this year is *"A Lamb's Tale"*.



We will be having a practice day for the program on Sunday December 9th from 10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., with lunch provided. This is in addition to our regular Sunday school time.

During practice time you are welcome to attend and help as needed. We are still in need of someone to be in charge of sound system, microphones etc.

There will be no Sunday school December 23rd or December 30th.

To start the New Year out on Sunday, January 6th starting at 10:15 a.m., we are going to have a game day and potluck. *All are welcome to come!* Bring your family, bring a friend, bring your favorite game (and some will be available here) and a dish to pass. We have hot dogs and individual bags of potato chips that have been donated. There is no charge or limit to the number of people you bring. We are hoping to have people of all ages to enjoy some fellowship and fun!

If you have any questions please call Jeanette Gessner (742-8369, 617-5228) or your child's teacher.

We hope you have a very Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

Your Sunday School Staff

Youth Group News

So much fun stuff happening with the Youth Group this month!



Back by popular demand, the Youth will once again be making and selling delicious casseroles on Sunday, December 9th.

Kids and parents, look for a sign-up sheet from Cheri...and Congregation, get ready to save yourself some time and have lunch or dinner made with love, just for you!

On Saturday, December 5th all kids are invited to join in the Mini Lock-In fun here at church. The Middle School students will be getting together from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and the High School students will gather from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Be on the lookout for more details from Cheri soon!



And on Monday, December 17th, the High School students are invited to hang out for the monthly Culver's Chat at 7:00 p.m. Yum!



And Game Day!

Sunday, January 6th

All are invited to join in the fun and hang out after worship for fun and games, food and fellowship.

Bring the whole family, bring some friends... and bring your favorite games to share!

Hotdogs, chips and beverages will be provided, please just bring a dish to pass, based on last name:

A-G salad or casserole

H-N desserts

O-Z fruit or veggies

This fun event is for the entire congregation and we encourage everyone to invite a friend or relative to come along for worship and this time of fellowship.



Again this year, we will be including poinsettias in our Sanctuary decorating as part of our celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

You are invited to order poinsettias at a cost of \$12 per plant.

Order forms will also be available in the Narthex.

All orders must be received in the church office by Sunday, December 16th.

The plants may not be taken home until after the 6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship Service.

Poinsettia Order Form

Number of plants _____

in Honor of _____

in Memory of _____

given by _____

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____



Be sure to mark your calendars now so you don't miss the Sunday School Christmas Program! The kids love putting on a special show for the congregation and your smiling faces in the pews means a lot to them.

Wednesday, December 12th at 5:30 p.m. , followed by cookies

Sunday, December 16th at 9:00 a.m., followed by brunch

All are welcome; bring a friend and share some special Christmas Joy!