

The Star of Bethlehem



February 2020

BLC: THE BODY OF CHRIST

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; . . . So it is with Christ."

I Corinthians 12:12

St. Paul makes a point worth repeating in the twelfth chapter of his first letter to the Christians in Corinth. It is eminently worth your while to read that excellent chapter. It's all based on the presumption that we who are Christians together make up the body of Christ.

Around the fifteenth verse Paul makes a vital point. He writes about how very well the individual members of your body relate to one another. You never hear your right arm criticizing your left, or even acting as if it would like to occasionally. And this in spite of the fact that old lefty doesn't really pull its share of the load, and couldn't, weak as it is. Your right arm doesn't get all upset that, when the work is done, the left arm gets as much credit for it as the right. Being stronger it just naturally takes over the bulk of the work, carries some of the burdens which might naturally fall to its counterpart on the other side. And if your left arm ever gets in trouble or is hurt, the right arm asks no questions, doesn't raise itself in obvious impatience and disgust, but instantly pushes right on over and holds the wound and even, if necessary, applies the bandage.

That is such an apt description of the way it ought to work with Christians. St. Paul can't help but use it, calling us all together Christ's body and thinking of us separately as its members. It keeps cropping up, this picture for the holy Christian church, all through the great Apostle's letters. You can see a hundred ramifications in that picture. And you can put them to work in a hundred different ways.

This body was actively working together during Advent and Christmas here at Bethlehem. You could feel it everywhere you looked or listened. From Advent By Candlelight (ABC) to the choir, bells, and praise team; from the trees decorated inside and out; from the Altar Guild, Elders and Church Council; from our Outreach and In-reach ministries; from the staff to our worship; from our members each participating, helping and serving in their own ways . . . this is what the Body of Christ looks like. Personally, I am so grateful to be a part of this body.

As the Apostle Paul began his letter to the church in Corinth, so too I say to you: *"I always thank God for you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge – because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you"* (I Cor. 1: 4-6).

May our "body parts" continue to work together so that our testimony about Christ is confirmed in us and Christ is glorified.

Grace, peace and mercy,
Pastor Dana Allen Briones

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

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February Birthdays and Anniversaries

David Thies	2/1	Ann Koger	2/14
Wyatt Briggs	2/2	Daniel & Janelle Heumann	2/15
Erica McCarty		Niles Jehn	
Logan Hunter	2/3	William Randolph	
Stephen Smith		Deborah Donnelly	2/16
Janelle Heumann	2/6	Eleanor LoCricchio	
Madilyn Wert		Deborah Addis	2/17
Douglas Brauer	2/7	Elliott Randolph	
Christian Carr		Allan Werner	2/19
Jacob Clawson		Nathanael Adams	2/20
Christopher Johnson		Teri Kientz	
Doug Peacock		Chad Lee	
Barbara Zikeli		Rebekah Romer	
Dale Mills Jr.	2/8	James Pitts III	2/23
Steven Pietrasuk		William Randolph	
Mariah Thies-Johnson		Linda Tester	
Edward & Lorna Boyajian	2/9	Allan & Lisa Werner	2/26
Charlotte Cobb		Carol Jehn	2/27
Robert Corbett	2/11	Neil Robar	
Robert May	2/12	Debra Tate	2/28
Julie Truax			
Lori Bennett	2/13		
Steven Chao			
Sven Helberg			
Scott Kientz			
Mark Starkey			

SENIOR GAME DAY Hand and Foot Monday, February 3

Disciples Hall at 9:15 am

Talk with MaryAnn Lawrence 708-9492

Stewardship

	Dec 2018	Dec 2019
Monthly Totals:	\$130,918.01	\$114,394.26
Restricted:	44,931.89	12,658.76
Annual Totals:	\$737,985.94	\$731,826.75
Restricted:	\$88,457.24	\$72,329.67
Operating Totals:	\$649,528.70	\$659,497.08

December Attendance

Date	8 am	9:30 am	11am	Total
Dec. 2, 2018	57	98	108	263
Dec. 1, 2019	65	85	89	239
Dec. 9, 2018	83	98	72	253
Dec. 8, 2019	74	92	88	254
Dec. 16, 2018	56	73	74	203
Dec. 15, 2019	82	96	116	284
Dec. 23, 2018				202
Dec. 22, 2019	74	104	69	247
Dec. 30, 2018	55	74	129	210
Dec. 29, 2019	66	103	67	236
Advent 1 2018	80		Advent 2 2018	84
Advent 1 2019	106		Advent 2 2019	85
Advent 3 2018		119 (Cantata)		
Advent 3 2019		88		
Dec. 24, 2018	545		Dec. 25, 2018	39
Dec. 24, 2019	543		Dec. 25, 2019	72
Dec. 31, 2018	51			
Dec. 31, 2019	43			

Ash Wednesday

February 26 noon and 7 pm worship

Schedule for February

		Screens	Greeters	Altar	Ushers	Elders
Feb. 2	8 am 9:30 am 11 am	Pat Brenda Gina	Joan R Lee & Joan F	Tami	Val Brenda Carol	Borcherdings Jamie, Howard Joe Dennis, Al
Feb. 9	8 am 9:30 am 11 am	Sam Candice Carol	Joan R	Jenn	Elders Linda Beth	Borcherdings Gordon, AJ Joe Bruce, Alex
Feb. 16	8 am 9:30 am 11 am	Susan Landon Toni	Joan R Bruce & Holly	Carol	Elders Barbara Kathy	Borcherdings Paul, Howard Bernie Dennis, Dan
Feb. 23	8 am 9:30 am 11 am	Val Avery Romaine	Joan R Mary D & Jean S	Anna	Susan Nina Diana	Borcherdings Jamie, David Bernie John, Alex
Feb 26	noon 7 pm			Tami/Jenn Val		Dennis Al

wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger,

because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:7

It is all reported to us so matter-of-factly by the evangelist St. Luke. Like all mothers, she "gave birth." There were no royal courtiers in this make-shift delivery room. And yet, the One who was born was a king. There were no bands and choirs standing just outside to chant their praises to the newborn child. But He who was born is worshipped unceasingly by angel choirs. He just came. It is as the Introit for Christmas midnight says: *When all was still and it was midnight, Your almighty Word, O Lord, descended from the royal throne.*

However, Christians for centuries have understood that the birth on that first Christmas night was the entry of the royal Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of the same, into His creation. He came. And this He did so that He might bear the sin of His sin-scarred creation and set it right again. He came. He lived. He died. He rose in triumph. He ascended to the Father's right hand. And He is coming back at any moment.

This message is not merely a joy for us to treasure only in our hearts, in such a way that we tell no one. This joy is what sent the shepherds to find and to report what they had come to know. And it is this joy that has caused you to partner with us so that the people of the Czech Republic may hear, rejoice, and await with us ... all of us.

We pray that this Christmas season may fill you with heavenly joy. May those matter-of-fact words fill your hearts with great gratitude and indescribable joy that you may praise the Lord who came and that you, too, may tell those around you the joy of Christ in the flesh, having come for the salvation of all!

Vesele Vanoce z Ceske republiky!

Merry Christmas from the Czech Republic!

Pastor Kaster and Suzanne

Like us on Facebook and Instagram for the latest in news, photos and fun!



Your orders from Amazon do help, as of August 2019 we have earned \$375.10 for BLC. All charities as of November 2019 have earned \$156,109,909.51. Keep on shopping and thank you for designating BLC.

Amazon donates to Bethlehem Lutheran Church when you shop at smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7061413. Thank you for your support!

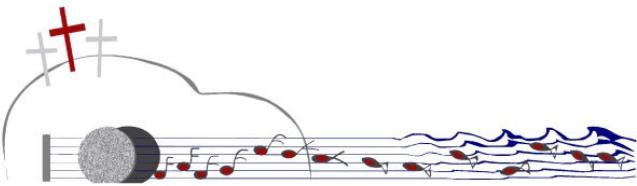
Food Support

We have a great group of ladies that help support grieving families with a luncheon following a Memorial Service at BLC. We are blessed. If you would like to help with your time or with food donations, please talk with Joan Richards or email her at nana-joan1977@comcast.net.

Mission House

Request for all worshippers: We need Mission House help every 3rd Friday. 6:00 to 7:30 PM feeding the hungry and poor. They are always in need of your hotel shampoo and small soaps. A basket is in the narthex. 800 Shetter Avenue, Jacksonville Beach. There is a sign-up sheet is in the narthex.

***Please remember to sign the
Record of Fellowship
that is in your pew and pass it
to your neighbor.***



This winter we plan to attend the Best Practices Conference, one Pastor Dana also plans to attend; we look forward to seeing him there. New ideas, new purpose, new how to's? Maybe. There will be sectionals about many aspects of church life, a lot of them dealing with congregational shrinkage and how to address that. There is also a sectional for songwriters to show their stuff. Hopefully some of the attendees will find a use for us.

Most churches we visit have seen a decline in membership. Sometimes pastors ask us what we have noticed on the road. Our answer is along these lines: churches are aging and have declining membership levels. Many young people are leaving. But let's look at what the Lord has provided and stop looking back at how it used to be. What He has provided is a marvelous story for us to tell. The best practice is to tell that story. Before we can tell the story clearly, we have to know what it is. Let's use the gifts we have together and individually to do what is before us.

The Lord has called us, enlightened us with His gifts and generously provides outlets to use them, if that story is rolling around in our heads, the Spirit prompting and leading us through it. What gifts? Your gifts are what you would do naturally without even giving it a thought, now that God's story has become your story. It's not difficult, as it comes to you supernaturally. Did that recent mission trip to Guatemala bring out gifts in your team they may not have known they possessed? We have recently discovered that walking the dog leads to all sorts of conversations with people we might not have had. Who knew a dog we did not really want (until we had her for, oh, say, five minutes?) could be such a gift. :) God is in the simple things, the simple every-day stories that turn out to mean so much.

Peace to you in Jesus,

Dave and Sabra



LWML

This morning I was struck by something written in my morning devotions. The author wrote: "Christ freed us for something. His truth, the Gospel of our salvation in Him, sets us free to serve Him." He also quoted Gal. 5: 13, "Serve one another in love." I think this sums up what the women of Bethlehem LWML strive to do. At the meeting in January there were several ideas put forward of ways we can serve in love. Please pray for the LWML as we explore these ideas and try to put some into action. I think 2020 is going to be a great year of service for us.

While looking forward we also want to take a look back at 2019 and thank all the wonderful people of Bethlehem for their support in the Pre-School Library Book Drive. Not only was there enough money and donations of books to fulfill the wish list for the library, we had money left to purchase age appropriate books to send home with the students. What a blessing for the students. Thank you also to all the people that filled Christmas Mite Stockings. Over \$600 was given and will be sent to the FL-GA District LWML to help fund Mission Grant Projects. And there was over \$600 collected in regular mites. If you don't have a Mite box at home there are empty ones available in the Narthex. The collecting of mites for Mission Grant Projects continues all year long.

Bethlehem truly has a mission heart and puts into practice "Serve one another in Love".

Thanking God for all the blessings of the past year and looking forward to where He will lead us in service in 2020!

God's Blessings
Becky Bicknase, LWML



Altar Flowers

You can remember or mark a special occasion with Altar Flowers? Each of the beautiful arrangements are \$30 per vase and a sign-up sheet for each Sunday of the year is in the Narthex. This is a great way to acknowledge a birthday, anniversary, and to remember a loved one who has gone before. You can choose to take them home with you after the 11 am service or mark for them to be delivered to a homebound congregant or someone in the hospital. Please put your donation in the offering plate and mark it for altar flowers or mail it to the church.

2020 Bible Study Pro Tips

Greetings, people of God! I hope you have settled comfortably into the year 2020. You've had a month to get acclimated by now. It always takes me a while to get the date right, let alone figure out how to handle my "New Year's Resolution" I made a month ago. Usually the question is, "Shall I modify it, or just pretend I never made it to begin with?"

Now, if your goal was a more fit 2020, or a more ruggedly handsome looking 2020, I'm not your guy. (Duh.) But - if your goal was getting to know the Bible better, I have a few suggestions.

1. Keep the bigger story in mind. The Bible tells the story of God's creation: fallen, redeemed in Jesus, and even, its ultimate restoration. If you're reading a biblical narrative or verse, where does it fall in that story? Forget about the confusing minor detail for just a bit and focus on what part of the bigger story is being told just then. Then...
2. Look for Jesus. Jesus said that all the Torah and Prophets and Psalms were written about *Him*, so if you're reading the book of Leviticus, the story of Joseph or Sampson, or even [especially?] a Psalm, ask yourself, "Where is Jesus here? Does it remind me of Him? Is He its opposite?" He's in there; somewhere, somehow.
3. Read *about* the Bible, not just the Bible itself. It's a very good practice to use (reputable) resources that aren't the actual Bible in your Bible study. The books that make up the Bible all come out of certain contexts, and anything that can help you learn about those contexts is going to help you understand what the authors of Scripture were getting at - and how it applies to your life today. I normally avoid "Study Bibles," as they often turn into "axe-to-grind" Bibles – trying to shoehorn all of God's Word into something immediately relevant for a "Women's Bible" or a "Teen Bible." So, with that caveat mentioned, I do heartily recommend the Lutheran Study Bible available from our church body's publishing house, CPH. It is not perfect but it is hands down the most helpful tool for lay readers that I have found.
4. Be humble. God's written word is complicated and can be confusing. It confuses pastors, too! Don't let pressure to "know it all" keep you from exploring God's riches.
5. Use others! Use your pastor. (He has literally been trained to be a professional Bible reader and understander!) Use your Bible Study group. The Scriptures were written by faithful men of God, *in the context* of the whole people of God, *for* the whole people of God. Scripture is a communal thing. There is *much* to be gained from exploring it *together*, rather than in isolation.

Hope these help a bit in the year 2020! "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

Yours in the Light of His Word,
Pastor Nathan McCarty

Picture Directory is available at no charge.
Contact the church office.
Pictures are still welcome!

Music Heals!

Cancer has no friends – many acquaintances – but NO friends. I, however have been blessed with many dear friends and a small, but wonderful family and a large church/music family whom I love dearly and they love me. This is an enormous cancer-intercept! Cancer does not find this friendly.

About 6 weeks ago fluid was discovered in my left lung and I was ordered a thoracentesis (pretty fancy word, don't you think?) which is a draining of fluid from a lung. One and a quarter liters were drained and some of my old breast cancer cells were found in the fluid, in fact were causing the fluid. The good news is that I have been cancer free for many years (pretty much since arriving here at Bethlehem -12 years) and this lengthy hiatus means that if there is a return it is rather weak. For instance if it had returned in a year, this would have indicated a much stronger cancer. So mine is not only pretty wimpy, but relatively easy to treat. It's not a birthday party, but it is very doable. "A brook would lose its song if God removed the rocks." So I am in the brook and there are some stones, but the music is glorious. It is absolutely amazing for me to observe myself experiencing all this. As I play these three services every Sunday, I can feel the healing taking place in my body. Music heals!

All your support and prayers that surround me heal. When I had my previous cancer and was given 3 weeks to live, and the doctors did everything they could and I recovered. At the last visit the doctor said , "I did what I know how to do, but I did not heal you– a much higher power." "God's fingerprints all over me!" This journey that I am now on, I see as an opportunity to 1. Strengthen my faith, 2. Strengthen my relationships with my families (blood and church) and 3. make sure that joy and laughter are in abundance in my life, which they are. I am so blessed!!!

Music, joy, faith, laughter, prayer – they all heal and more importantly **Love heals**.

"We are one with God, full of understanding and faith; we depend on no less supply than the Infinite and here there are no limitations. God has lifted us out of our difficulties and we are grateful."

Sooooo, sing louder during the hymns – it is very healing for you and for me.....

In His service and yours,
Kathleen, Minister of Music and Mirth



February 23rd

Bethlehem Lutheran, Bible Study, Children and Families, Ministry Meetings, Music Ministry, Official Acts, Outside Groups, Pastor/Staff, Preschool, Feb 2020 (Eastern Time - New York)

Special Events, Youth and Young Adults, Christian Holidays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
Mites Sunday Third S. a. the Epiphany 8 am - Donut Sunday @ Disciples' 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Sunday School @	6:30pm - "South of the Border" 7 pm - Executive Council Meeting 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Sunday School @	6 pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal 7 pm - Executive Council Meeting 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Sunday School @	9:30am - Preschool Chapel 11am - Staff Meeting @ Conf. Rm 5:30pm - 8th Grade Confirmation 7 pm - Adult Bible Study @ 7 pm - Strategic Planning	9:15am - Prayer Group @ 9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 6:45pm - AA Meeting @	8:45am - AA Meeting @ 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @ 5pm - Backyard Hoedown @ 500	
LHM Sunday The Purification of Mary and The 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Sunday School @ 5:30pm - 7th Grade Confirmation	9:30am - Senior Game Day @ 6:45pm - Gideon's Meeting @ 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Liturgical Worship @ 11am - Liturgical Worship @ 5:30pm - 7th Grade Confirmation	6 pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal 6 pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal 7 pm - Adult Bible Study @ 7 pm - Adult Bible Study @ 10	9:30am - Preschool Chapel 11am - Staff Meeting @ Conf. Rm 5:30pm - 8th Grade Confirmation 7 pm - Adult Bible Study @ 11	9:15am - Prayer Group @ 9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 6:45pm - AA Meeting @	8:45am - AA Meeting @ 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @	
Africa Mission Trip Fifth S. a. the Epiphany 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Sunday School @ 11 am - Liturgical Worship @ 5:30pm - 7th Grade Confirmation	6:30pm - "South of the Border" 7 pm - Elder's Meeting @ 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Sunday School @ 11 am - Liturgical Worship @ 5:30pm - 7th Grade Confirmation	6 pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal 7 pm - Elder's Meeting @ 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 10	9:30am - Preschool Chapel 11am - Staff Meeting @ Conf. Rm 5:30pm - 8th Grade Confirmation 7 pm - Adult Bible Study @ 11	9:15pm - Prayer Group @ 9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 6:45pm - AA Meeting @	8:45am - AA Meeting @ 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @	
Africa Mission Trip Preschool Closed Presidents' Day 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Sunday School @ 11 am - Liturgical Worship @ 16	6:30pm - "South of the Border" 7 pm - Executive Council Meeting 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Sunday School @ 11 am - Liturgical Worship @ 16	6 pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal 7 pm - Executive Council Meeting 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 10	9:30am - Preschool Chapel 11am - Staff Meeting @ Conf. Rm 5:30pm - 8th Grade Confirmation 7 pm - Adult Bible Study @ 18	9:15pm - Prayer Group @ 9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 6:45pm - AA Meeting @	8:45am - AA Meeting @ 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @ 11:30am - ABC Luncheon	
Mites Sunday The Transfiguration of Our Lord 8 am - Bells playing 8 am - Donut Sunday @ Disciples' 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Sunday School @	6:30pm - "South of the Border" 7 pm - Executive Council Meeting 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 9:30 am - Family: Contemporary 9:30 am - Sunday School @	6 pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal 7 pm - Executive Council Meeting 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 10	9:30am - Preschool Chapel 12pm - Ash Wednesday Worship 1pm - Staff Meeting @ Conf. Rm 5:30pm - 8th Grade Confirmation 7 pm - Adult Bible Study @ 25	9:15am - Prayer Group @ 9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 6:45pm - AA Meeting @	8:45am - AA Meeting @ 10am - Praise Team Rehearsal @	
			Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras	Ash Wednesday		
			6 pm - Hand Bell Choir Rehearsal 7 pm - Executive Council Meeting 8 am - Liturgical Worship @ 9:30 am - Adult Bible Study @ 10	9:30am - Preschool Chapel 12pm - Ash Wednesday Worship 1pm - Staff Meeting @ Conf. Rm 5:30pm - 8th Grade Confirmation 7 pm - Adult Bible Study @ 26	9:15am - Prayer Group @ 9:30am - Bible Study @ Cottage 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @ 6:45pm - AA Meeting @	
				27		
				28		
				29		